

## **Sad News from Traidcraft plc**

Many of you have bought Fairtrade goods from Traidcraft stalls or from Oxfam shops over the years and through doing this have helped the producers in the Global South work their way out of poverty. The company, Traidcraft plc, which supplies Fairtrade goods unfortunately may have to cease trading by the end of this year. It pays the producers up front in dollars so when the pound lost value against the dollar, due to uncertainty about Brexit, the company sustained huge losses. It has also, like many companies, seen reduced sales in Britain over the last few years.

This does not mean the end of Fairtrade. There are several companies that sell Fairtrade produce direct to the consumer such as Divine and Cafedirect and of course several supermarkets sell their own brand of Fairtrade coffee, tea, chocolate and wine. However, there are many products that are not sold in supermarkets such as rice and pasta, dried fruit and nuts, biscuits, clothes and crafts. So please buy as much of these as you can before Christmas to support Traidcraft!

### **Traidcraft Exchange**

It is important to stress that the charity arm of Traidcraft plc – Traidcraft Exchange will continue its work as it is separate from the sales side of the company. It is an international development charity which uses the power of trade to bring about lasting solutions to poverty. It runs development programmes in South Asia and Africa, works directly with businesses to improve their supply chains, and does advocacy and campaigning in the UK to promote justice and fairness in international trade. It is hoping to be able to offer support to some of those producers who may be particularly badly affected if Traidcraft plc does have to cease trading.

### **Who Picked my Tea?**

Traidcraft Exchange's current campaign is called 'Who Picked my Tea?' This is focussing on the workers on the tea estates in Assam, Northern India. Some of the tea produced there is sold on Fairtrade terms but the bulk of it is not – most of the Traidcraft tea comes from Africa - and the women who pick the tea have pitifully low wages and deteriorating living conditions. For generations they have picked tea for the British market but instead of being valued they are impoverished. The 'Big Six' tea brands in the UK all buy tea from Assam and they can do much more for the tea workers. Researchers working for Traidcraft Exchange found that on estates that are believed to supply UK companies:

- \* Wages are below Assam and Indian minimum wage levels
- \* Housing is often leaky and in a state of disrepair
- \* Sanitation is minimal or non-existent
- \* Local health facilities often lack medicines
- \* Food rations are insufficient and of poor quality

Tea remains one of the most popular drinks in the UK. The 'Big Six' brands – PG Tips, Twinings, Tetley, Yorkshire, Typhoo, and Clipper together have annual sales of £500 million and all use tea grown in Assam as part of some of their blends. They know about the conditions for women working on tea estates but aren't doing enough to change them.

### **What can we do?**

Traidcraft Exchange is asking us to challenge the 'Big Six' by first of all asking them to say which estates they buy their tea from. Transparency like this would shine a light on exploitation and mean that consumers – and more importantly people in Assam – could hold companies to account. So next time you enjoy a good cup of tea consider asking the big tea brands 'Who picked my tea?' For more information go to [www.traidcraft.org.uk/tea-campaign](http://www.traidcraft.org.uk/tea-campaign) or ask Antonia Tolhurst.