

The rise of Fair Trade

Started in the 60s, the Fair Trade movement seeks to help producers in developing countries receive their fair share of the revenue from the sale of their products in the developed world.

It promotes international standards for labour practices, environmentalism and social policy. Fair Trade offers consumers the choice of buying goods guaranteed to have been manufactured without exploitation of or harm to people or to the environment. The movement also focuses on empowering workers to become more significant stakeholders in the organisations they work for or to manage their own businesses and, consequently, to achieve greater equity in international trade.

Fair Trade compliant companies are usually members of one or more federations such as FINE (an association of four Fair Trade associations) and The Fair Trade Federation (FTF). Their goods are then labelled with the FAIRTRADE mark. In 2006, FAIRTRADE certified sales amounted to approximately R16 billion worldwide. That's a 41% year-on-year increase although it is, as yet, a tiny portion of world trade. In October 2006, over 1,5 million disadvantaged producers were directly benefiting from fair trade while an additional five million benefited from fair trade funded infrastructure and community development projects.

In South Africa, Fair Trade's main advantage is in providing opportunities for our emerging and black empowered producers to export their goods and benefit from international markets. Also important is the rise of Fair Trade in tourism which seeks to ensure that the people whose land and culture is used for tourism activities, actually benefit from tourism. The Fair Trade in Tourism SA trademark was launched in 2002 to help visitors choose tours and accommodation that will create genuine economic benefit.