

# BY BROOK SUSTAINABILITY CALENDAR - MARCH

## FAIRTRADE & FAIRNESS

Welcome to the latest edition of the By Brook Sustainability Calendar, a local initiative to encourage local people to live in harmony with our planet. Each month we'll tackle a topic covering facts and innovations, then we'll provide tips and advice. This month we look at fair trade and fairness.

### What has fairness got to do with sustainability?

Fairness is important because people in different parts of the world consume resources at vastly unequal rates. Rich countries take more than their fair share; poor countries much less. For example, if everyone in the world consumed at the same rate as the average person in the UK, we would need three Planet Earths to support us. This shocking statistic comes from the environmental charity Bioregional. For more see [www.bioregional.com](http://www.bioregional.com)

Global inequality is also reflected in our trading relationships, with richer countries exploiting poorer ones, using their financial power to demand goods at prices that prevent workers earning fair wages.

### So how can we help overcome this unfairness?

The answer is simple: fair trade.

### OK. What is fair trade?

As the name implies, it's trade where neither sellers nor buyers are exploited, thanks to a set of standards across production and supply. For farmers and agricultural labourers, fair trade means workers' rights, safer conditions and fairer pay. For shoppers, fair trade means high quality, ethically produced items.



By choosing to buy fair trade products, you are supporting farmers in their struggle against some of the world's biggest challenges and helping them create change, for example by investing in climate-friendly crop techniques. You also show businesses and governments that you believe in justice and equality.

### How can we buy fair trade products?

The world's largest fair trade system is called simply Fairtrade, with similar schemes including Cocoa Life and Rainforest Alliance, so look out for these logos on products when shopping.

Bananas are perhaps the most famous Fairtrade product. All bananas in Sainsbury's, Co-op and Waitrose (generally rated as the top three fair trade supermarkets) are Fairtrade.

Coffee and tea are also widely certified, with products from companies like Cafédirect and Clipper available in many restaurants, shops and supermarkets.

Lidl uses 100% sustainable cocoa in its own label products (and has just been named by Which magazine as joint 'greenest' supermarket with Waitrose), while Greggs sources all coffee and chocolate, and much of its tea and juice, from Fairtrade suppliers.

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## Is Fairtrade just about food?

Fairtrade is best known for food, but also certifies other products such as gold and silver. For example, the renowned Bristol-based jeweller, Diana Porter, uses only Fairtrade gold. Clothing is another product that can be Fairtrade accredited, most appropriate perhaps as the fashion industry often receives criticism for its negative impacts on people and environments. Fashion Revolution, established after the Rana Plaza disaster in Bangladesh in 2013, when a garment factory collapsed killing over 1000 people, has a mission to create 'a global fashion industry that conserves and restores the environment, and values people over growth and profit'. Find out more at [www.fashionrevolution.org](http://www.fashionrevolution.org)

## What about unfairness in the UK?

While unfair trade between rich and poor countries is under the spotlight, unfairness is also an issue here in the UK. With rapidly increasing prices – for fuel, food and other essentials – many people in employment cannot make ends meet.

The Living Wage Foundation (LWF) calculates that to properly afford these items, a full-time worker should earn a Living Wage which is £1930 a year more than someone on the current government minimum wage. Some businesses are voluntarily committing to this Living Wage, but LWF estimates that one in six UK workers are still paid less than the Living Wage. Find out more at [livingwage.org.uk](http://livingwage.org.uk)



## Who wants to be a billionaire?

To finish, here are some more facts to consider about global unfairness: According to figures from Oxfam, the world's ten richest billionaires own six times as much wealth as the bottom 40% of the entire global population (3.1 billion people).

What's more, Oxfam calculate that the billionaires' wealth increased by \$1.3bn a day during the Covid pandemic, largely due to huge stimulus payments from rich nation governments.

This additional wealth for the billionaires, says Oxfam, could pay for enough jobs to vaccinate the entire world, and provide the resources to tackle climate change, and provide universal healthcare and social protection, and address gender-based violence, in 80 of the world's poorest countries. Find out more at [www.oxfam.org](http://www.oxfam.org)

## What can we do now?

At a local level there are many steps we can take:

- Buy Fairtrade and other certificated food where possible.
- Support Fairtrade Fortnight from 21st February to 6th March.
- Sign the petitions on the Fashion Revolution and Oxfam websites.
- Write to your own regular supermarket demanding more fairly-traded produce, and ask them to become a Living Wage Employer.
- Support Fairtrade shops and businesses, and Fairtrade towns - including Bradford-on-Avon, Calne and Corsham in our area (some local churches are also Fairtrade accredited).

**Next month** we cover Waste. If you have **comments or ideas**, contact us at [mike@vertigosdc.com](mailto:mike@vertigosdc.com)

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