

KNOCK OUT ROUND 2 MOTION:

We must only buy from brands that adopt fair trade practices

“It is not fair to ask of someone else what you are not willing to do yourself.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

In 2005, Concern Debates students tackled the motion “Ireland is committed to fair trade.” The concept of fair trade took off in the mid-20th century, initially with small, nonprofit organisations that sought to ensure fair wages and better working conditions for artisans and farmers. The modern Fairtrade certification system began to take shape in the 1980s and 1990s, with the establishment of key organisations like Fairtrade International (FLO) and the World Fair Organization (WFO).

Today, the fair trade movement continues to grow, with millions of consumers supporting it through purchases of certified products that ensure ethical practices, foster community development and protect the environment. By prioritising fair wages, safe and dignified working conditions and equitable trading relationships, fair trade promotes sustainability and economic empowerment. Additionally, it advocates for environmentally friendly practices and helps build more equitable and sustainable global economies.

While the Fairtrade label is most commonly associated with food products such as chocolate and bananas, the principles of fair trade extend beyond this. Increasing awareness of exploitative practices in industries like fast fashion has brought attention to the importance of advocating for better wages and safer conditions for garment workers.

However, for many, fair trade is often associated with higher costs, which poses a challenge for budget-conscious consumers. Additionally, the availability of fair trade products remains limited in many markets. Critics also argue that the certification process can be inefficient, and while fair trade emphasises fair wages, it may not address broader systemic issues of poverty and inequality. Small producers may be excluded from the fair trade system due to the high costs of certification, limiting its overall impact.

It is clear that fair trade offers many benefits, but is it truly a comprehensive solution? Should we feel obliged to **only buy from brands that adopt fair trade practices?**

Debate it!

