



THE F OR THE O WORD?

Lifescape keeps track of the fairtrade/organic dilemma: This month Lisa Jackson offers guidance

WHAT'S YOUR PREFERENCE?

For green stalwarts amongst us it's music to our ears to hear "fair trade" and "organic" in everyday conversation as ethical awareness climbs steadily up the public agenda. The UK is the world's highest consumer of fair-trade goods but despite certifications it is easy to wonder if some producers are simply jumping on the latest green PR bandwagon. Logos such as the Soil Association and Fair Trade symbols emerging into the mainstream is vital – not only to ensure good practice is carried out, but in order to inform and even encourage the consumer to choose fair trade and organic products over their standard counterparts – but what do they actually represent?

ROOTS OF THE MATTER

The organic movement was pioneered over 60 years ago by The Soil Association, which "works with consumers, farmers, growers, processors, retailers and policy makers... to create an informed body of public opinion and promote organic agriculture as a sustainable alternative to intensive farming methods." The Fairtrade Foundation was established in 1992 by a group of charities and is the UK member of Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) which

has 21 members and has been responsible for stopping exploitation of thousands of workers across the globe. Their mark "is an independent guarantee that disadvantaged producers in the developing world are getting a better deal", and the criteria aim to cover small farmers and workers on larger plantations and in factories.

A HARMONIOUS BALANCE

Sonia Kalia-Sagoo of organic on-line store buyOrganics says, "Fair trade is an important concept for ensuring that as human beings, we treat the people who provide us with our goods with the integrity and the treatment they deserve. I believe that organic products also do this as most are grown in line with fair working laws. Organic production however takes fair trade a step further by ensuring that manufacturers, growers and the end user are also released from exposure to chemicals that can injure health. It further stops the unnecessary pollution of ground water and poisoning of animals. By growing and producing products in harmony with man and nature and not against it, integrating fair trade and organic produce should be the primary choice for shoppers globally."

Local organic produce is fresh,

guaranteeing a higher vitamin content and low food miles, plus it supports local growers, and if Biodynamic, it's even better. But how do we choose products like bananas – the most popular fruit in Britain, with sales of £750 million a year. The ideal choice is organic and fairly traded, because many growing economies are actually dependent on the west buying bananas and other key crops for their survival, and bananas are shipped, not flown.

THE HUMAN COST

Workers involved in growing key imported commodities benefit from being certified fair trade, but choosing organic as well ensures they receive a higher standard of health and safety. Non-organic bananas are the second most sprayed crop in the world.. The World Health Organisation estimates there are over a million deaths every year from cotton pesticide poisoning. There is a growing trend for companies catering for the organic marketplace to work towards fairly traded ingredients. So a strong union of both fair trade and organic movements with common ideals, really does seem to be the way forward. **L**

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Soil Association

HELPFUL WEBSITES: WWW.FAIRTRADE.ORG.UK * WWW.SOILASSOCIATION.ORG * WWW.BIODYNAMIC.ORG.UK * WWW.BUYORGANICS.CO.UK