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IRISH RETAILERS SLIPPING UP?
REPORT CRITICAL OF IRISH RETAILERS POOR COMMITMENT TO FAIRTRADE BANANAS

A report titled, 'Fairtrade Bananas – Time for a Change', released this morning criticises Irish retailers lack of commitment to Fairtrade Bananas and urges Tesco Ireland, Dunnes Stores, Musgrave, Marks & Spencers, Lidl, Aldi, and Spar, to divulge the current percentage of Fairtrade bananas they stock, and to commit to supplying 100% Fairtrade Bananas.

The report, which was compiled by The Bureau for the Appraisal of Social Impact for Citizen Information, France (**BASIC**), the UK based NGO, **Banana Link**, and **Fairtrade Ireland** (bio details below) reveals that in spite of 82% awareness of Fairtrade, (second only to the UK - Globescan Report 2013), consumption of Fairtrade bananas in Ireland is just 8%, compared to 35% in the UK, and 60% in Switzerland, which the report directly attributes to the failure of Irish retailers to support Fairtrade.

Bananas are the third most popular fruit consumed in Ireland after apple and citrus, and represent more than 16% of the retail value of fruits sold in the Republic of Ireland each year. Almost 50% of Irish consumers eat bananas on a daily basis, which amounts to an annual average consumption of 11 kg of bananas per person, -slightly above the European average consumption.

Data on Fairtrade banana consumption in Europe:

Country	FT consumption Kg/person/year
UK	3,33
Switzerland	3,67
Austria	1,71
Ireland	1.21

Alistair Smith, International Coordinator of BananaLink and Co-Author of Fairtrade Bananas – Time for Change report, commented on the purchasing power dictated by Irish Retailers,

“The Banana Report reveals that 90% of Irish shoppers purchase fresh fruits from a mainstream supermarket, by far the most popular channel, it is clear to us that Irish retailers remain weakly committed to Fairtrade when compared to other European countries, they could do a huge amount more to address the negative impacts of the conventional banana trade. If the top Irish retailers, namely Dunnes Stores, Tesco Ireland and Musgraves committed to stocking 100% Fairtrade bananas, similar to European counterparts, this would have a dramatic and significant impact on the livelihoods of workers, families and communities in developing countries”

Consumer Spending on Fairtrade products in Ireland have increased by 12% from €197 million in 2013 to €221 million in 2014, however sales of Fairtrade bananas represents only 5% of total consumer spending on Fairtrade products in Ireland, compared to 60% for coffee and 26% for chocolate.

Peter Gaynor, Executive Director of Fairtrade Ireland challenges the Irish Retailers,

“A recent Eurobarometer report shows that the Irish are second only to people in Sweden in believing that individuals can play a role in tackling poverty in the developing world. This is clearly demonstrated by the amount of coffee shops that serve 100% Fairtrade coffee, and it is now time for the retailers to step up to the mark. It has been well established that a small number of Irish retailers wield huge power in the Irish market, but the opportunity exists for them to use that power to exert a positive influence and make a real difference. Converting to 100% Fairtrade bananas, similar to Sainsburys, Waitrose and the Coop in the UK, would have a tangible impact on many small farmers and workers in banana producing countries. We think it’s the right time for Irish retailers to accept our double challenge; of being transparent about the percentage of Fairtrade bananas they sell, and more importantly, to commit to supplying 100% Fairtrade bananas.”

The Banana Report reveals a market concentration between producers and consumers, the banana value chain looks like an hour glass: a large number of farmers and workers at the base sell to a few international traders and supermarkets in the middle, who in turn sell to a very large number of consumers at the top. This concentration of power exerts a strong backward pressure on prices, often leading to large-scale negative impacts like; unsustainable living and working conditions for workers, health deterioration and environmental pollution.

Since the 1990s, Fairtrade has emerged as an alternative model and a solution to overcoming these negative impacts, ensuring a fair price to producers, decent working conditions and wages for workers, and improved environmental practices in banana production.

Stephen Best, a banana farmer from the Windward Islands and Chairperson of the Windward Islands Farmers’ Association (WINFA), has travelled to Ireland as part of Fairtrade Fortnight 2015, and has first-hand experience of the impact of Fairtrade,

“For Fairtrade Fortnight, we are asking Irish people that every time they pick up a banana from a supermarket shelf, they visualise a face, and this is the face of a small farmer, a person who takes pride in his or her work, to generate the necessary income to sustain their livelihood, and that of their families and workers. When you buy a Fairtrade banana, you are giving us this opportunity. Since converting to Fairtrade, we have experienced increased earnings, better worker representation, and significant health benefits.”

Fairtrade Fortnight 2015 will take place from 23rd February – 8th March, and will be celebrated with a series of nationwide events. Fairtrade Ireland will take over The Culture Box in Temple Bar, Dublin, and have planned a programme of events that will include educational talks, tasting workshops, coffee labs and film screenings.

www.fairtrade.ie / www.facebook.com/FairtradeIreland / [@Fairtrade_ie](https://twitter.com/Fairtrade_ie)

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Notes to Ed:

Bio

The Bureau for the Appraisal of Social Impact for Citizen Information (BASIC) is a French research institute specialized in global value chain analysis and social and environmental impact assessment of business sectors

Fairtrade Ireland works to promote fair trading practices between Ireland and developing countries. It is a founder member of Fairtrade International, based in Germany, the organisation responsible for setting international Fairtrade standards.

Banana Link is a not-for-profit co-operative based in Norwich, which works for fair and sustainable banana trade. We raise awareness of the poor living and working conditions faced by plantation workers and small producers in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean

Fairtrade Visitor Bios

Bio details

Stephen Best

Stephen Best is a banana farmer on the Island of St Lucia in the Windward Islands in the Caribbean. His farm is about 7 acres – 5 in bananas and 2 growing vegetables. It provides gainful employment and sustainable livelihood for both his family and 5 workers. His banana farm is both GLOBAL GAP and Fairtrade certified. Stephen is also the Chairperson of the Mabouya Valley Fairtrade Group, Vice Chair of the St. Lucia National Fairtrade Association, and the Chairman of the Windward Islands Farmers' Association (WINFA).

Prior to the introduction of Fairtrade banana production, Stephen was engaged in conventional banana production which was proving to be non-financially viable for all Windward Island banana producers. Flight away from banana production and the ultimate demise of the banana industry was arrested when WINFA in concert with the Fairtrade provided an alternative to address the plight of small disadvantaged vulnerable producers.

Chief Adam Tampuri

As chairman of the Fairtrade-certified Gbankuliso Cashew Farmers Association, which represents 800 cashew nut smallholders, Chief Adam Tampuri has been actively involved in the Fairtrade movement for many years. His co-operative is based in Bole, a small town in northern Ghana, where he lives and also serves as the traditional ruler of the area. Currently he chairs the board of Fairtrade Africa, the producer network representing Fairtrade certified producers across Africa. Additionally he is serving as a board member of Fairtrade International. Chief Adam has been very active within the Fairtrade Climate Advocacy Working Group since its formation. He also joined other producer representatives from around the world at the UN Climate Change Conferences COP 16, 17 and 18 in Mexico, South Africa and Qatar, to make the voices of smallholders heard and to call for more support for small farmers to adapt to the pressing challenges they face through climate change. His message is a powerful message on the benefits that Fairtrade brings to families, farmers and communities particularly in Northern Africa.

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