

THE PLACE OF FAIR TRADE IN DEVELOPMENT AND THE INPUT OF MIGRANT WORKERS.

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Anyone who is in touch with mass media can see that the theme of Fair Trade is recurrent. It is high on the agenda, and the frequent object of articles and programmes.

i- THE IMAGE OF FAIR TRADE IS SOMEWHAT UNCLEAR

The multiplication of labels and alternative circuits today is behind this lack of clarity. The result is that the criteria of Fair Trade are increasingly numerous and disparate, thereby generating distrust of the guarantee of fairness of the product.

The proliferation of designations is due to the fact that including the expression 'Fair Trade Produce' is neither defined nor protected at legal level. This situation is all the more serious as many shops sell third world products without their having been produced in decent working conditions. So the confusion can easily occur. Because there are no precise criteria for all players, the outline of Fair Trade is vague, which has a negative impact on products and the visibility of fair activities.

ii- THE INACCESSABILITY OF THE IDEA OF FAIR TRADE

Fair Trade exists on the fringe of traditional world trade; it is against injustice and unhealthy development produced by this kind of trade. To understand the stakes of fair trade, it seems important to become aware of what makes alternative trade necessary. Without a minimum knowledge of the situation and of on the terms of exchange, on the international organisations like UNCTAD, IMF, ILO etc. or the workings of multinational firms, the message loses its strength of impact, and fair trade becomes a simple ideology that can seem scarcely viable to the passing consumer. Therefore the fact that fair trade is not a notion that can be immediately and wholly grasped has two impacts in terms of media: on one hand it is necessary to be well informed on the subject to answer relevant questions of consumer-players; on the other hand many people have no interest in economy and are convinced that the subject is too complicated for them.

iii- EQUITY AS A FUNDAMENTAL VALUE OF FAIR TRADE

Fair trade has a dual objective: firstly it aims at a better understanding of the world in which we live, through the practice of exchange, but it also aims at equity for all workers in a given branch: from the producer to the final buyer.

Let us use NGOs and Associations to develop this notion of fairness via popular education

According to article 60, 1 Fair Trade is part of a national strategy of sustainable development.

The objectives of fair trade are developmental objectives. But what are the facts? To what extent are these objectives achieved, Does fair trade really contribute to the development of our countries, and how,

Fair trade is not an end unto itself. It allows all kinds of producers to live better and allows consumer (in the North for the moment) to act in a responsible fashion in terms of their consumerism, which is no mean thing in itself. It is necessary to remember that the objective of the movement is to transform a major part if not all of international trade into fair trade. This comes from a more global idea according to which it is necessary to reintroduce ethics into exchange, commercial or otherwise. Furthermore we consider trade as a means of becoming more autonomous, of gaining access to markets and earning an income for better living. In this way the entire rural community should benefit from this improvement and trade should contribute to development.

In our countries, fair trade does not exist, or at least if it does it has no great impact inasmuch as it never or rarely produces a true dynamic or is part of stronger local development policies.

In Africa Fair Trade is not really showcased as a factor of development. Arts and crafts frequently represent a marginalised sector of development compared with the tourist industry and agriculture.

Fair Trade does not carry a lot of economic weight. Arts and crafts could easily be showcased at national level by suitably adapted policies.

Let us recognise the value of our producers and artisans and give them access to their rightful place in decision-making.

iv- MIGRANT WORKERS AS PLAYERS IN FAIR TRADE

It is necessary to realise that migrant workers have already developed projects in the framework of fair trade. This is the case of the association called ATB (Aide Technique Bénévole), created in Annemasse in 1984 by Pierre and Martine Kakpo, who come respectively from Bénin and France. In 1997, after much preparation, they created the Centre for Tropical Fruit Drying of Bénin which produces dried pineapple according to fair trade principles. The products are exported and bought essentially by the Solider'Monde purchasing platform.

What can we identify as the interests of existing fair trade structures? It is true to say that many of them are already well known to the public and recognised within the fair trade platform and the fair trade sector. Others are in the process of being built, and chains of specialist shops are emerging. They could benefit from many advantages if they worked with migrant workers.

Firstly from a cultural point of view; migrants know their country of origin and its culture very well. So they are an important source of information on how to produce in certain regions, on existing groups, on how to communicate with local populations (customs etc), on arts and crafts products, foodstuff or other goods that can be made in any given region. This can be illustrated by the case of fair trade textiles. Migrant workers know the manufacturing processes used in their countries of origin. They also know the markets here. For let us remember that fair trade is first and foremost trade. In order to achieve an important market segment, it needs to be 'competitive' in its own right. This is all the more true in the garment industry. Migrant workers can inform local producers of the taste of western consumers so that the products that will be exported have optimum

impact here. This can be very useful in putting producers and other structures in touch with each other. Even if for the moment it is not the structures based here in the West that get in touch with the producers there. Migrants can also inform local producers of the fair trade branch, which places them the role of mediators. They can explain how the system works, which can help structures here inasmuch as they do not necessarily know how to communicate with them : cultural and language barriers...Furthermore, migrants who have gained knowledge on the fair trade system are certainly more capable of talking to other migrants and using a language common to themselves.

It is also worth noting migrants are highly interested in working with these structures. Firstly the Solidarity Organisations that result from migrations could gain the recognition of the non-migrant structures. By developing partnerships they could become better known and encouraged in the work they already have been doing for many years. They could also benefit from their support (logistics, communication...) to open shops for example. This would allow them to organise bigger events to raise awareness of the problem of fair trade and questions relative to international trade.

v- DEVELOPMENT AT THE HEART OF WTO NEGOTIATIONS

Development of exchange should be appreciated in terms of its contribution to sustainable local development and the fight against poverty and inequalities. It is one among many means of achieving this end.

An in-depth reform of the WTO is indispensable to:

- Question its founding objective, that is to say the elimination of all obstacles to trade exchange. The objective of the WTO should be to enable the establishing of trading rules that contribute to sustainable development that is favourable to the populations of the South, and that guarantee the respect of all human rights.
- Guarantee that all countries, particularly those of the South, can implement the developmental policies that they wish and that correspond to the interests of their peoples.
- Render the working more transparent and democratic in order to allow full participation of all countries in trade negotiations.

vi- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN SYMPOSIUM ON FAIR TRADE (ASFT)

The ASFT should encourage two things:

a- The participation of migrant workers in Fair Trade

Suitably adapted information aimed at this specific public: the information should be shared among migrants and non-migrants alike, each having complementary knowledge on the fair trade branch itself and on local culture.

b- Recognition of migrants who are already involved

Migrants are already involved in fair trade projects. Trade is above all trade to achieve an important market penetration. Migrants who have gained knowledge of the fair trade system are undoubtedly more apt at being able to go and talk to other non migrants on the ground and use a language that is understood by them.

Fair trade should fight poverty and allow the peasants of the South to have hope. It should contribute to the fight against dumping of the western trade system. In order to do this several factors come into consideration:

- The balance of exchange
- Accompanying the peasants of the south
- Information and awareness raising among peasants

Humanists have for several years denounced the existing imbalance that makes the peasants of the south more fragile.

The Economic Group for Solidarity and Fair Trade (GISEE) that I represent has as its object the mobilisation of joint energies in favour of the values of solidarity and exchange to serve sustainable and viable development in the north and in the south.

We propose there be information, support, accompanying as well as a system of local collective savings made available.

As representatives of the Togolese Federation of NGOs in France, we are in the process of establishing projects aimed at using NGOs and associations working in this field for providing information, as it is very judicious to guarantee fair pay for the work of growers and artisans who are the worst off, and allow them to meet the basic needs of health and education.