

PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release



Irish Aid gives EUR15 million to support fair and ethical trade with poor east African farmers

Irish Aid, the Government's official overseas development assistance programme, today announced an internationally significant funding package to support fair and ethical trade with small farmers in east Africa over the next five years.

Making the announcement Minister Peter Power said;

“Poor farmers in east Africa need support to sell their agricultural produce and to access markets in countries like Ireland. Fairtrade offers a fair price to small farmers for tea, coffee and other products. Increasing farmers' incomes vastly improves the lives of their families. So this funding has the potential to benefit 2.5 million people.

Ireland is now one of the largest international donors to the Fairtrade network and we are delighted to work with a partner that is making such a difference to the lives of some of the poorest people in the world.”

This announcement comes one week after one of the largest Fairtrade coffee deals ever in Ireland was agreed with Topaz, for approximately 30 tonnes of Fairtrade coffee a year.

Commenting on the funding announcement, the Executive Director of Fairtrade Mark Ireland, Peter Gaynor, said:

"I think as Irish people we should be proud of this. The average income per person in east Africa is less than US\$1,200 a year - and most of their export earnings come from products like tea and coffee. If they are ever going to have the kind of opportunities we enjoy they need to earn more money from these products through initiatives like Fairtrade. This Irish Aid support will ensure that they are better able to take advantage of the growing market internationally for Fairtrade Mark goods.

Governments, companies and individuals all need to play their part in respecting and supporting people in Third World countries and these examples from Irish Aid, and from Topaz, are another indication that we are beginning to take Fairtrade seriously in Ireland.”

Speaking at the announcement in Limerick today, Minister Power also presented a life-time achievement award on behalf of Fairtrade Mark Ireland to Sr Rosetta Gray from the local voluntary Fairtrade City group. Sr Rosetta Gray (85), who has worked in Latin America and Africa, has been promoting Fairtrade in Ireland for over 20 years.

Ends.

Notes to the editor

The funding from Irish Aid will be used to support producers in four east African countries, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, to benefit from the Fairtrade labelling and the Utz Certified (Good Inside) certification programmes.

Irish Fair Trade Network (IFTN) is the owner of the FAIRTRADE Mark in Ireland and the Irish member of Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International (FLO).

Sales of FAIRTRADE Mark products grew by 101% in 2007 and the FAIRTRADE Mark can be found on a growing range of goods from Third World producers.

Internationally sales of FAIRTRADE Mark products grew to over EUR2.3 billion in 2007 and sales in Ireland grew from EUR11.6 million to EUR23.3 in the same year.

It is estimated that over 1.5 million people in developing countries now benefit from these sales. However as the average sales by groups registered with Fairtrade in developing countries is only 20% of what they produce – they are still hoping for much bigger growth in future years.

For further information, photos, contact Fairtrade Mark Ireland.

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