
Opinion Editorial

Don't Go Coco for Coconuts...Unless They're Fair Trade

By Quinn Bagnato

Have you ever thought about where you get your food? In the Philippines, the world's second largest coconut producers, 41-60% of coconut farmers live on less than \$2 a day. Fortunately, fair trade programs are fighting for the rights of these workers. Fair trade gives farmers benefits such as extra money, safe working conditions, improving communities and more. Fair trade has given coconut farmers 1.7 million dollars to improve their communities. Due to the increasing demand it is important to support fair trade coconut products to ensure that farmers are getting paid fairly enough to continue growing coconuts.

First, the demand for coconuts has gone up in the last few years and will continue to grow, but farmers do not get paid enough to keep up with the demand. The demand for coconuts has gone up by 10% while the supply has only grown up by 1.3%. The supply has only gone up by 1.3%, because it takes 10 years for a coconut tree to produce coconuts and coconut trees will only produce coconuts for 20 years. This negatively affects farmers, because they don't have enough money to plant and harvest more coconuts. In 2017 coconut water alone was a \$300 million industry, and is anticipated to grow to an \$8.3 billion industry by 2023. Think of all the other coconut products such as coconut oil, coconut butter, coconut flour, coconut milk, coconut cream, and more. Fair trade helps with this issue by giving farmers more money to plant more coconuts trees to meet the growing demand.

Next, climate change related typhoons often destroy coconut trees, and remember, it takes 10 years for a tree to start producing coconuts. The Philippines are the third most exposed country in the world, and 20 typhoons hit the Philippines a year. For example, in 2013 Typhoon Haiyan damaged 44 million trees. Fair trade helps with this issue by giving farmers more money to plant more coconut trees, and repair their farms. Also, fair trade standards prevent the use of harmful chemicals so when farmers replant coconut trees it is assured that they are healthy and organic coconuts, and they keep the environment healthy.

Even though fair trade products cost a little more than regular products, the extra money you pay goes to the farmers who harvest and make the products. This is called a fair trade premium. Fair trade premiums are extra money to help farmers communities to become more sustainable. Some of the ways price premiums affect their communities is they use the money for a dental clinic, or free lunches for school kids.

In conclusion, it is important to support fair trade Farmers and companies. To help this problem buy coconuts products with Fair Trade labels and stickers. Remember fair trade is always fair!



Quinn Bagnato is 12 years old and is a 6th grader at Vermont Day School. He lives in Charlotte Vermont and enjoys playing baseball and soccer.

Sources

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