
Opinion Editorial

Don't Sugarcoat the Truth: Fairtrade Sugar

By Zaki Steinberg

Take a moment to reflect on yesterday: did you eat anything sweet? Chances are, you ate something with sugar. Sugar is an essential ingredient! Think about all the delicious foods that have sugar in them; candy, cake, baked goods and many other items. Eighty percent of all the food in the U.S. has added sugar in it. The average American consumes 19.5 teaspoons of sugar a day! But most of the sugar in the U.S. comes from developing countries such as Columbia, Indonesia, and the Philippines where farmers are being treated poorly without fair trade. Fair trade is: trade in which fair prices are paid to producers in developing countries. It's important to buy sugar fair trade because it helps to improve working conditions for the sugar farmers, and it financially empowers farmers and communities in need.

Imagine you are a sugar farmer working long hard hours in very hot temperatures. This is called poor working conditions and happens frequently among sugar farmers whose farms are not fair trade. It poses many health threats such as: death from heat stroke, extreme exhaustion, and serious cuts and injuries from sharp, unsafe machetes used to cut sugar cane down. In a farm that is fair trade certified, farmers get paid more, therefore they get good working conditions. The way fair trade assists this issue is it supports empowering working conditions.

Farmers often can't even afford their business. This happens perpetually among sugar farmers who aren't fair trade. Big companies like Coca Cola and Pepsi switched to using corn syrup instead of real cane sugar which helps the U.S. economy but hurts small sugar farmers. When a sugar farm is fair trade certified farmers receive more income, therefore they can afford production. This is called a fair trade premium.

Buy fair trade sugar because it empowers communities in need. Some things you can do are buy fair trade sugar, donate to the Fair trade Foundation, and raise awareness of conditions of sugar farmers across the world. Look for these fair trade logos at the supermarkets:



As you, the consumer, it is your choice to make a change!



Zaki Steinberg is a fifth grader at Vermont Day School.