

# Spotlight: CRS Fair Trade Program Q & A

## What is Fair Trade?

Fair Trade is a model of international trade that provides a clear and just alternative to the free trade system. Fair Trade is built on right relationships—direct human relationships between consumers and producers that respect the human dignity, promote economic justice, and cultivate global solidarity.

## What is the CRS Fair Trade Program?

Overseas, the CRS Fair Trade Program supports low-income farmers and artisans and helps them enter the U.S. Fair Trade market. Here in the United States, the CRS Fair Trade Program creates opportunities for Catholics and other socially conscious consumers to make trade fairer for poor farmers and artisans through the purchase of Fair Trade products.

## Does CRS sell Fair Trade items directly?

No, CRS does not sell Fair Trade items directly. But the CRS Fair Trade Program works with more than one dozen Fair Trade organizations all across the United States that are deeply committed to promoting economic justice for their producer partners overseas. These exemplary organizations are all committed to uphold the following principles in their work:

- Pay producers a fair price for the items they create,
- Purchase directly from

democratically run cooperatives,

- Offer technical assistance and credit on fair terms to producers whenever possible,
- Encourage environmentally friendly production, and
- Make long-term commitments to the farmers and artisans who they work with.

## How do my purchases of Fair Trade coffee, handcrafts, and chocolate help?

Your purchase of Fair Trade items puts more money directly into the hands of the farmers and artisans who created them, and supports right relationship between small-scale producers overseas and consumers in the United States. And when you purchase those items through the CRS Fair Trade Program, you give twice, since every organization that participates in the program contributes a percentage of your total sale to the CRS Fair Trade Fund to support our work with low-income farmers and artisans overseas.

## What does Fair Trade have to do with my faith?

For Catholics, Fair Trade allows us to live our faith more fully by acting in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in need overseas. In terms of our role as consumers, this means seeking alternatives to a system

that channels as little as 1 percent of the end value of the products we buy back to the low-income farmers or artisans who created them. Making the conscious choice to consume Fair Trade products is consistent with the social principles of our faith. It requires little of us, but can have a decisive impact on the lives of our brothers and sisters in need overseas.

## How can I get involved?

Here are six easy ways to get involved:

**EDUCATE** yourself and members of your parish, school, office, and community about the struggles of low-income farmers and artisans overseas and how the decision to buy Fair Trade items can help;

**SERVE** Fair Trade coffee after Mass and at other special events to raise awareness about Fair Trade;

**ORGANIZE** a Fair Trade sale in your parish, school, office or community to raise funds for your favorite cause;

**BUY** Fair Trade items for your home;

**SPREAD THE WORD!** Tell your family and friends about Fair Trade and how they can help build a better world, one purchase at a time.

[www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org)

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