

FAIR TRADE IN
EDUCATION WEEK
4-8 MARCH 2024

Presentation notes

SLIDE 1

This presentation was originally delivered by Catherine Newman from the Scottish Fair Trade Forum and Andy Ashcroft from Koolskools. It looks at how Fairtrade pushes the cotton industry to be more sustainable for both people and for the planet.

SLIDE 2

So what's the problem?

SLIDE 3

The problem is summarized well in an animation about *The International Fair Trade Charter*. [WATCH](#).

We know about global poverty and the climate crisis. This is especially the case for already marginalised people. So, for example people who may live in extremely rural places in many cases who rely on farming to make a living. Fair Trade was started back in the 1960s as an alternative way of doing global business and trade that cares about people, especially the most marginalised people, and the planet.

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The world is aware of this problem – it's why we're interested in this topic.

SLIDE 4 CONT.

According to the United Nations, by 2030, a staggering 575 million people will remain trapped in extreme poverty and 84 million children will be out of school.

World leaders came together in 2015 and made a historic promise to secure the rights and well-being of everyone on a healthy, thriving planet when they adopted the 17 sustainable development goals.

The idea is that economic growth should create greater opportunities for all, reduce inequalities, raise basic standards of living, and should promote sustainable management of our natural resources and ecosystems.

But there's a lack of progress on the 17 targets (in 2023).

Fair Trade aims to be a solution to some of the issues, particularly when it comes to goal 12 Responsible Consumption and Production.

Later on we are going to hear how Fairtrade, organic cotton, Koolskools and their suppliers are working towards SDG12.

SLIDE 5

Before moving on, let's have a look at the production of a standard (non Fairtrade non organic) cotton T-shirt by watching this Ted Education short film from a few years ago from the USA called *the Life-cycle of a T-shirt* by Angel Chang.

[WATCH](#)

SLIDE 6

Here's a Fair Trade quiz for you.

SLIDE 7

As many as 100 million households are directly engaged in cotton production in around 85 countries.

That's a lot of people involved in making our clothes.

Source: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/media-centre/blog/top-10-facts-about-fairtrade-cotton/>

SLIDE 8

Ok it's 13%. That means there's a lot of room for improvement. It's estimated that the environmental and social footprint of Fairtrade cotton is five times lower than conventional cotton farming. The Fairtrade Standards have led to many environmental benefits, including a reduction of the use of harmful pesticides, and the introduction and strengthening of sustainable farming methods.

Source: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/media-centre/blog/top-10-facts-about-fairtrade-cotton/>

SLIDE 9

Cotton's dependency on water makes cotton growth and yields very vulnerable to water shortages which occur as a result of higher temperatures and changes in the volumes and patterns of rainfall caused by climate change. Also, if you think about it, that's a lot of water to throw away on fast fashion. By the end of this session today we'll have considered a sustainable alternative.

Source: <https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/media-centre/blog/top-10-facts-about-fairtrade-cotton/>

SLIDE 10

The answer is 70%

That's a lot of our clothes!

Source: Koolskools

SLIDE 11

The answer is less than 1%.

So when we talk about certified Fairtrade cotton, we mean a fair price for cotton farmers and the additional money for the communities in the form of the Fairtrade Premium.

Source: Koolskools

SLIDE 12

An introduction to Koolskools.

£2 billion is spent in the UK every year on school uniform. That's massive. But very few schools know where the uniforms come from – whether it is made sustainably or whether the people who make it are paid a fair price.

SLIDE 12 CONT.

Koolskools was set up to do things differently. Koolskools is the only UK Fairtrade certified supplier of school uniform. This means that the cotton farmers are paid fairly and all the factories involved in production are signed up to Fairtrade minimum standards. This means that they are audited to make sure among other things that there's no child labour, enforced overtime, or bad working conditions.

Koolskools suppliers are based in India, and Scotland is the fastest growing market for Koolskools Fairtrade school uniform. 60 schools in Scotland currently order uniform through Koolskools. Koolskools also deliver free Fairtrade assemblies and class sessions with schools to share their stories.

Andy Ashcroft spent a week in India in November 2023 and the photos in this slideshow are from that visit. He spent one week with cotton farmers and one week in the factories. He saw once again (visited before) for himself how Fairtrade supports the people there through fair prices and decent working conditions. And through totally organic cotton growing and eco factories, Koolskools is proud to be working at the UK end with one of the most sustainable supply chains on the planet.

It's really great that you are interested in this topic. What we need is more young people - tomorrow's customers to be interested in sustainable living.

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The polo shirts are made with a mix of 50% Fairtrade organic cotton and 50% recycled polyester. For the people in the supply chain, the journey starts with the Fairtrade organic cotton farmers being paid fairly, and receiving the important Fairtrade Premium (an additional amount of money) that they spend on development projects that benefit their communities - e.g. on education, health, fresh water wells in remote farming villages. The key thing is that with the Fairtrade Premium, it is their decision on how to spend this money.

The people in Koolskools factories are paid 25-30% above the national minimum wage in India. They work the same hours that we do in the UK. The factory has a clinic and looks after their health needs by offering private health insurance. There is a creche and school adjoining the factory where some of the workers send their children for free. Free transport is also provided to and from the factory.

For the planet, the farmers grow their cotton 100% organically that means with no pesticides and harmful fertilisers at all on the farms. This means the farms are making a big contribution to sustainability.

The principal factory uses solar power and 90% waste is recycled – so the clothes are made in the most sustainable way possible. Even the clothing labels and swing tickets are made from recycled cotton. All the factories in the supply chain, so that's five, use sustainability friendly processing techniques.

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From the planting of the cotton seed to the final factory in the process (the cut, make and trim factory) it takes around about one year. So it's a long time to produce cotton clothes. A supply chain (as we see in this slide) is a network of all the people, organisations, resources, activities and technology involved in the creation and sale of a product.

Here there are five different factories involved and being part of a Fairtrade certified supply chain helps to ensure that the many people who produce the clothing (the many thousands of farmers and the thousands of people who work in the factories) are paid and treated fairly. The cotton growing and clothes making is being as kind to the planet as it possibly can be. This is what Fairtrade certification is all about - a sustainable supply chain.

SLIDE 15

On to the cotton fields. The photo on the left shows a typical organic cotton field. You have the cotton lines in the middle of the photo and on either side there are plants growing. This is called intercropping. These are food crops grown by the farmers, organically.

This helps farmers to become self-sustainable in food production as well as being able to sell their cotton. These plants are lentils used to make one of India's favourite dishes - dahl.

SLIDE 15 CONT.

The second photo shows a yellow sticky trap. It's a yellow piece of board that a special organic gum is applied to. This attracts some of the insects that are harmful to the plants. This is used instead of harmful pesticides that are used as part of crop spraying which uses vast amounts of water. Going back to the animation *the Life-cycle of a T-shirt* - the difference is that these organic cotton fields are rain-fed. They are not using excessive amounts of water.

The next photo shows daughters of cotton farmers who report improved education their villages as a result of the Fairtrade Premium. The fourth photo is a cotton storage facility. It makes a huge contribution to the cotton community. It was paid for with the Fairtrade Premium and it allows farmers to store their cotton there rather than in their front rooms at home!

SLIDE 16

Now we're on to ginning which is the first factory process. The cotton is cleaned in giant sieves to get rid of the impurities like dead bugs, live bugs and dirt. Importantly too the cotton seeds are sifted out (see the middle photo). The best seeds are kept for the next year's harvest. The sifted cotton is then sent to the spinning factory.

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The cotton is really soft just like cotton wool.

SLIDE 18

Giant 225kg bales arrive from the ginning factory. The cotton fibres are combed, aerated and gradually twisted together. It goes from being similar to rope (middle photo) to yarn or thread (third photo). In this third photo, we are seeing a mixture of Fairtrade organic cotton thread and recycled polyester thread being mixed together. The recycled polyester comes from plastic bottles and the two are knitted together to make the clothes.

SLIDE 19

The fabric arrives at the dyeing factory and is a light brown - grey colour called greige. It is inspected for flaws (middle photo). The photo on the right shows the giant dyeing vats and for Koolskools the colours used are those found in school uniforms. What makes this factory different to the factories mentioned in the animation is that the waste water goes to effluent treatment plants, and to reverse osmosis plants.

These are both employed as an advanced treatment technology for the treatment and reuse of textile and dyeing waste water. So there's total water recycling going on in this dyeing factory.

Some of the certifications held by this factory are:
ZDHC certificate - Zero Discharge of Harmful Chemicals
Members of the HIGG Index - measures social and environmental impacts in the apparel industry

And they do detox dyeing to eliminate hazardous chemicals.

SLIDE 19 CONT.

The dyeing factories used by Koolskools are the complete opposite of the factories seen in the animation earlier.

SLIDE 20

The cut, make and trim factory workers' children are able to go to the school beside the factory, partially funded by the Indian Government and partially by the factory. There is also a free creche. This is so important as 65% of the workers in the factory are single Mums. Due to local cultural barriers they would otherwise be unable to find work. So with this provision, it really is a life line for these women. They are wonderful, happy people. They are also happy in their work as the factory treats them fairly. This is what Fairtrade is about.

This is an eco-factory. 95% of the energy is solar powered, as is 95% of the water - it's recycled for reuse. Workers are paid 25-30% over the national minimum wage, and they have health insurance paid for by the factory.

They work an eight hour day and have free transport to and from work.

You might have heard of a 'sweatshop' when describing some factories that make clothes. The factories used in this supply chain are the complete opposite of what is often associated with a sweatshop.

SLIDE 21

The finished clothes are packed in biodegradable bags and cartons and are taken by road from Tirupur to Chennai. They are then shipped through the Suez Canal taking normally between 25-30 days. At the moment with the problems in the Red Sea (January 2024) the journey is taking 35-40 days, is more costly and has greater carbon emissions.

SLIDE 22

We can do our bit too at home, it makes a big difference to the carbon footprint of a garment if we:

Wash it less (so think before you put your clothes into the washing pile when you've worn it once or twice)

Wash it at a lower temperature like 30 degrees

Line dry clothes either in or outside instead of tumble drying

Repair garments

And reuse, hand down and donate clothes and uniform that no longer fits.

SLIDE 23

In this slide we see SDG 12 that we all have a responsibility as sustainable consumers. We also have the two labels associated with Fair Trade products.

So if we can, we could bear SDG 12 in mind when we're shopping. Not just for cotton but for everything.

SLIDE 23 CONT.

Ask yourself, do I need it, how many times will I wear or use it. And has the product been produced sustainably with people and planet in mind (does it have any labels that tell me its sustainable). Am I part of the solution or the problem?

Those are good starting points to being a responsible consumer.

Ask questions. Ask your favourite brands why they do not have any Fairtrade cotton in their clothes. Younger people are the consumers of the future.

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To get started with finding out more about Fair Trade, search for and consider the [10 Principles of Fair Trade](#).

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Please get in touch if you have any questions.

If it's Fair Trade in Scotland, in general, it's Catherine and if it's Fairtrade cotton uniform it's Andy.

THANK YOU