

Mankato First Fair Trade Town in Minnesota
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FAIR TRADE FASHION - FURTHERMORE



MAFTTI's Fair Trade Tea and Fashion Focus on April 24 was quite some event, as the 90 present will recall. So will the organizers!

The food was great, the tables attractive, the helpers from Loyola and West High Schools invaluable – and it was all over in 90 minutes. Except that memories will not be only of the Fair Trade tea, but of the film trailer (["The True Cost"](#)) and the special Fashion Focus exhibit that Paulette Bertrand and Deb Fitzloff put together so beautifully. (See [here](#) for a reworked and expanded version.)

April 24 was Fashion Revolution Day and the third anniversary of the Rana Plaza garment factory disaster in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In advance of that date Huffington Post in Canada published an interesting article entitled, ["You Are What You Wear: A Look Into The Importance of Fair Trade Fashion"](#).

Three years after Rana Plaza fast fashion items still fly off the retailer's shelves. The writer continues,

As topics like women's equality and feminism simmer across blogs and the popular zeitgeist, workers' rights are often ignored. Fact is, 80 per cent of the world's garment workers are women, who must contend with low wages, unstable employment and Rana Plaza-like conditions daily.

But what can we do? When nearly every label says, "MADE IN [insert Southeast Asian country here]," it can be overwhelming for consumers to shop consciously. Sure, things can be made with sustainable materials, but how can one ensure that the factory workers are being treated not only fairly, but with dignity?

The rest of the article, in word and picture, illustrates the part that Fair Trade can play in making a difference. It finishes by noting how this all plays into what are called "millennial values". Therein lies hope!

[Fashion Revolution](#) – now active in 89 countries – is very conscious that the effort to change the nature of fashion industry supply chains is a long haul. On the USA page a reflection on [Fashion Revolution Week 2016](#) admits

There is no easy solution. There is not just one enemy, as there is not just one hero.

The fashion industry affects us all. It affects the people who work in it and the people who enjoy the fruits of that work. It has a huge impact both on our global environment and our personal space, from our high street to our individual wardrobe.

Fashion inspires very strong feelings – from disdain, anger, frustration to wonder, empowerment and love. We see Fashion Revolution as a safe place to discover the contradictions that affect this industry to its core. We see ourselves as a springboard and community for citizens to embark on an individual yet collective journey towards positive change. It is complicated, emotional and deeply important.

The article goes on to highlight a new **Fashion Transparency Index** and describes it as "a big learning curve for us". The exercise showed up how few brands are actually willing to share information about their supply chains publicly (out of 40 brands asked, only 10 initially replied) and that "it reiterated the fact that the fashion terrain remains muddy and slippery, and the road to real change is uphill."

We are all complicit. The issue is how MAFTTI supporters can deepen their awareness about why Rana Plaza happened, keep the question, "Who Made My Clothes?" in mind and help in the promotion of more sustainable and equitable supply chains. Start by seeing ["The True Cost"](#) if you haven't.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Small Planet Foods Inc. was started in 1997 in Sedro-Woolley, WA. It was the initiative of Gene Kahn, founder of the [Cascadian Farm](#) organic enterprise in north-west Washington's Skagit Valley in 1972. Small Planet Foods was joined in 1998 by Muir Glen, the nation's first large-scale certified organic tomato producer. In 1999 Small Planet Foods was taken over by General Mills. Until a 2014 re-organization the Small Planet Foods division was responsible for Cascadian Farm, Muir

Glen, Food Should Taste Good (all-natural chips) and Larabar, another familiar Fair Trade item available locally.

There may well be some fans of Cascadian Farm organic products among MAFTTI Newsletter readers. Recently some Cascadian products have been spotted on Mankato area store shelves sporting the Fair Trade USA label. According to FTUSA, Cascadian Farm began sourcing Fair Trade Certified ingredients in 2015, starting with sugar cane and cocoa.



Cascadian Farm has long-established organic credentials. It is over 25 years since it became part of General Mills, i.e. 'Big Food'. Its vigorous [Facebook page](#) provides not only enticing recipes and other news but also questions (still!) from customers about their perception of apparent contradictions over independence and alleged compromise over non-GMO principles. Cascadian Farm responds to these questions, and not just to say that it is all to do with 'going to scale'. Cascadian Farm told MAFTTI that its mission is *"to enable sustainable development and community empowerment by cultivating a more equitable global trade model that benefits farmers, workers, consumers, industry and earth."*



In 2000 Colorado-born Lara Merriken had a brainwave, imagining a simple, all-natural food bar made only of fruits, nuts and spices. Her vision - the Larabar - became a reality in 2003 and was such a success that in 2008 she accepted an offer to sell out to General Mills. Lara became Creative Director, working with most of her original team.

Committed to eschew GMO products, Larabar is a licensed partner of Fair Trade USA. Its [website](#) explains the general purposes of Fair Trade and Larabar's specific uses of Fair Trade Certified cocoa.

INTERNATIONAL FAIR TRADE TOWNS



Ever since a special Resolution was agreed by the City Council on October 24, 2011, Mankato has been part of an international network of 'Fair Trade Towns'. Mankato became the 25th in the USA; now there are 44. In October 2011 there were about 1,000 Fair Trade Towns in 22 countries. At the time of writing there are 1,807 in 27 countries. By the time this is read there may be more!

If you go to the new Fair Trade Towns International [website](#), you can see at a glance how far the Fair Trade Towns movement has progressed.

It is intriguing to think that all this began at the turn of the Millennium in Garstang, a small town in north-west England, half the size of St.Peter.

It is quite clear that in the UK a combination of factors led to rapid growth of Fair Trade Towns. After five years there were already 131. In the USA, by contrast, five years after the first declaration in Media, PA the number was only 26.

There is plenty of scope for research projects on the subject of Fair Trade Towns! Why are they more numerous in Belgium than the Netherlands? Why is Austria streets ahead of Switzerland, which has only just come on board? Why some in Spain and none in Portugal? Where is the greatest potential for growth in the Global South?

Over the next year something to look out for is whether Sweden achieves the status of first sovereign Fair Trade Nation. (Sweden likes to point out that Wales and Scotland, the first two 'Fair Trade Nations' are not actually fully sovereign.) On May 13, [Stockholm](#) became the world's 13th Fair Trade capital city!



A good sense of how the movement is growing can be found in the [report for 2015](#) by Bruce Crowther, founder of Fair Trade Towns and now the International Fair Trade Towns Ambassador.

Last July, MAFTTI Chair Paul Renshaw attended the 9th International Fair Trade Towns Conference in Bristol, England. His report is [here](#). Also present were three Mayors from Lebanon. Since then the International Fair Trade Towns Steering Committee decided that the 10th annual conference be held July 1-3, 2016 in Baskinta, Lebanon, the first in a 'producer country'. (The 2017 conference will be in Saarbrücken, the first Fair Trade Town in Germany.)

CARBON

In the fight against too much climate change, the idea of Carbon Credits has been doing the rounds for some years. Universal agreement about their relevance and efficacy has been hard to find. In 2011 ["The Ecologist"](#) published an article looking at the pros and cons of 'Fair Trade carbon credits' as far as Africa was concerned. It ended on an equivocal note.

In December 2015, at the time of the Paris Climate Change Conference, [Fairtrade International](#) announced a new Fair Trade Carbon Credit initiative in collaboration with [Gold Standard](#). This agency was established in 2003 by WWF and other international NGOs as a best practice benchmark for energy projects developed under the UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

To help readers understand the basic idea of Fair Trade Carbon Credits, here's a useful [animation](#). It's only 3mins.44secs. long.

FAIR EMPORIUM NEWS



REVY is a new source of Fair Trade gifts - from El Salvador - at the Fair Emporium. Based in Cleveland, OH, [REVY](#) imports

- Jewelry created from clay, bamboo, coconut shells and a variety of seeds.
- Handbags dyed with indigo, teak, tree moss and other organic materials.
- Recycled materials including plastic bags, glass, used tires and leather scraps.

REVY is a member of the Fair Trade Federation, a Green America Approved Business and a partner in the [Carbonfund.org Foundation](#). In REVY's words,

"REVY means revitalization. We approach nature as we do our artisans. With nature, our emphasis is both on recycling and natural materials.....Remember, when you purchase an item from REVY, you help the people of El Salvador and the planet at the same time."

[Stories of the artisans](#) who supply REVY, illustrate the value of development within the Fair Trade system, helping a country emerge out of civil war and enabling women to find a new level of independence and dignity.

The Fair Emporium is at 213 Minnesota Avenue, St.Peter (check hours at [www.thefairemporium.com](#)).

CATCHING UP WITH MAFTTI



July 9 is the day of the North Mankato Fun Days Parade. For the seventh year in a row MAFTTI will take part. Carmen Miranda will ride again!!

MAFTTI will, of course, need YOU, if you are free, willing and able.

The float will be assembled 4:00-6:00p.m. on the 8th (Friday). This just needs 2-3.

On Parade Day itself MAFTTI hopes that something like 15 will turn up at 10:30a.m. at our allotted spot in North Mankato and be ready to walk with Carmen Miranda, holding up Fair Trade placards, when the Parade sets off at 11:00. We expect to be through about 1:00p.m.

This is always good fun. But it also costs money. (You might be surprised at the charge, actually.) So we want to make the best of it – and hope you'll join us.

If you would rather leave it to a younger generation, ask them to contact MAFTTI through the website – www.maftti.org. It'll be second nature to them.

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