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FOCUS ON CHIAPAS

On June 4, 60-65 people attended a MAFTTI program focused on [Chiapas, Mexico](#) kindly hosted by Grace Lutheran Church. There were three main attractions:

- The Chiapas segment of the must-see film [Connected by Coffee](#), including footage of [Maya Vinic Cooperative](#).
- Personal experiences of relating to [Maya Vinic Co-op](#) shared by Tamika Bertram and Helena Shanks, guests from [River Rock Coffee](#), St.Peter.
- The Guatemalan desserts produced by friends of MAFTTI, along with Fair Trade coffee from [Kickapoo](#), the Wisconsin coffee roaster with which River Rock Coffee has a long-term relationship based on "a common belief that direct, fair and sustainable practices are the way to do business, as well as participate in a global community". [Here are recipes](#) for most of the Mexican desserts served on June 4.

Tamika and Helena spoke graphically of their encounters at Maya Vinic. They shared their conviction that the vulnerability of coffee farmers in politically-marginal Chiapas to vicissitudes both financial (swings in the world coffee price) and biological (the devastating impact of coffee rust) poses two challenges to coffee consumers in the Global North:

- to take the Fair Trade purchasing option whenever and wherever it is feasible.
- to go beyond Fair Trade and support the kind of development work epitomized by the [Chiapas Water Project](#), another feature of the story told in "[Connected by Coffee](#)".



It's estimated that farmers across Central America lost between 50 and 70% of their crop to coffee rust in 2013. A new coffee plant takes 3-4 years to become productive and costs thousands of dollars to buy the seedlings.



Maya Vinic, a coffee cooperative of nearly 500 farmers in the southernmost region of Mexico is trying to deal with combatting the fungus and reinvigorate their coffee fields.

BUGGED BY LABELS

Aren't we all?

MAFTTI's new table tent tries to combine good design with simple messaging. Five Fair Trade logos occupy part of one side – all product labels except for that of the Fair Trade Federation.

Fair Trade

- a system of exchange that honors producers, communities, consumers and the environment.
- a model for the global economy rooted in people-to-people connections, justice and accountability. (Adapted from Green America)

Fair Trade aims to

- combat child labor
- empower women
- keep families together
- finance development
- protect the environment
- promote democracy
- encourage economic stability

Produced by the Marquette Area Fair Trade Town Initiative
www.maftti.org

Labels tell us when a product has been certified as **'Fair Trade'**. Sometimes a marketing company uses different certifiers for different products - and you wonder why. Sometimes products appear with more than one Fair Trade certification label – and you wonder why. **Sometimes genuinely Fair Trade products are sold with no Fair Trade label (like Kickapoo coffee).**

Labels are not everything. Words matter too. [Kickapoo's](#) website makes its Fair Trade commitment clear. Coffee is said on its tins to be produced *"through sustainable and socially just means"* involving the payment of *"a fair price"* and donation of rural development funds from company profits.

Cub Foods offers coffee as an in-house **Wild Harvest** brand. **It is certified by Fair Trade USA.**



Even the logo is placed visibly!

The text on "Why We Only Select Fair Trade Certified Coffees" reads,

Fair Trade organic coffees are better for you, the environment and our fellow man. They are grown free of chemicals under the natural forest canopy, and benefit from a natural processing system practiced since the beginning of time.

Your cup of Fair Trade organic coffee is simply the most delicious, the freshest and the purest that any coffee can be. And when you drink it, you know you're making life better for farming families all around the world.

Most coffee packet have fewer words of explanation. **However, in this case the environmental criteria of Fair Trade are emphasized at the expense of the social and economic criteria** (cooperative organization, minimum guaranteed price and the social premium for development). As such, the text could as well appear on coffee certified by the Rainforest Alliance. Why does the text not reflect the breadth of the certification?

Would a reader like to approach Cub Foods or SuperValu in Eden Prairie to take up this point? Please contact MAFTTI through the website – www.maftti.org.

TAIPEI – Fair Trade City



Fair Trade in the sense that MAFTTI uses the term is quite new in what we tend to call the 'Far East'. Are we, then, in the 'Far West' to someone living in, say, Taiwan?

It's worth mentioning Taiwan because the capital, Taipei, has just become a Fair Trade City, the first in the country and only the second in the 'Far East'. The other one, Kumamoto in Japan, was

declared in 2011.

Fairtrade International has the [story](#).

[Here](#) is some inspiration from Taipei for next World Fair Trade Day, perhaps.

Whatever else Fair Trade does, it pushes back boundaries....

FAIR TRADE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Mainstream media outlets don't bring much positive news from the 'Middle East'. Fair Trade producers are not thick on the ground, but they do exist. Here are three, all working in difficult environments.

[Sindyanna](#) is located in Galilee, Israel. "Our aim is not just to make an outstanding olive oil. We strive to enhance Arab-Jewish cooperation, promote Fair Trade and economic opportunities for Arab women, and assist growers and producers from the Galilee."

[Canaan Fair Trade](#) is based in Jenin, Palestine. "Canaan Fair Trade uses the fair trade concept to empower marginalized Palestinian rural communities caught in conflict so they can sustain their livelihoods and culture. To that end, we have built direct working relationships with these communities, paying sustainable prices for their agricultural products to ensure fair wages for labor along the supply chain."

[Fair Trade Egypt](#) works at "empowering local communities by offering disadvantaged Egyptian artisans marketing and support, and developmental services. Fair Trade Egypt promotes the application of [Fair Trade principles](#) as cultural, socially and environmentally responsible business ideals."



PRODUCT NEWS



You may or may not be aware that the **nation's leader** in Fair Trade, Organic and Non-GMO sugars, molasses, syrups, stevia and honeys is, or rather, was **Wholesome Sweeteners of Sugarland, TX.**

Recently renamed Wholesome! the company "remains committed to organics and staying on the cutting edge of eco-friendly agriculture since its founding in 2001. **Wholesome! is dedicated to Fair Trade** and partners with caring farming families across the globe ensuring them a fair price for their crops. Since 2005, Wholesome! has paid more than \$10 million in Fair Trade premiums to farming co-operatives and partners worldwide helping bring clean water, electricity, schools and health care to villages in Malawi, Mexico, Brazil and Paraguay."

Wholesome!'s impressive celebration of World Fair Trade Day is [here](#).

MAFTTI is also aware that Fair Trade USA has started to certify coconuts. If you see any in the Mankato area, please let us know.

CATCHING UP WITH MAFTTI



The International Labor Rights Forum has announced that, after two years' campaigning, the target of \$30m as basic compensation for Bangladeshi workers and families who were affected by the Rana Plaza garment factory collapse in April 2013 has been reached.

As Judy Gearhart, ILRF Executive Director, said

"We're glad to have finally secured this basic compensation to help ease the suffering of the survivors and families who have been living in dire economic hardship." ... "Looking ahead, the government of Bangladesh should establish a proper workplace injury compensation program, and apparel brands must factor the cost of safety into the price they pay to factories so that they are paying for the real cost of business in Bangladesh."

The full ILRF Press Release is [here](#).

An ILRF delegation visited Bangladesh in April. Its report is [here](#).

There is plenty of work ahead – by factory owners, trades unions, Bangladesh Government, international retailers, agents of influence within the fashion business and consumers conscious that very cheap 'fast fashion' clothing off a peg in a major retailer probably has a less than ethical back-story.

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