

FREE AND FAIR?

**_a briefing paper on
food trade issues**



July 2006

Introduction_

'For what we are about to receive...'

We may know where it's going, but how much do we understand about where our food comes from, about the lives led by the people who produce it? We rely on agricultural and livestock farmers in the United Kingdom and throughout the world to produce the food that keeps us alive, but it's often easy for those of us who don't have much contact with our food producers to forget that many of them, especially those working on a relatively small scale, face enormous challenges as they try to maintain their own livelihoods.

The Judao-Christian tradition is full of both literal and metaphorical references to farming, to seedtime and harvest. Even a cursory study of these, however, reveals an unequivocal concern for justice and declaration of judgement, the stark contrast between God's bounty and the human greed that results in human need:

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Psalm 65.9-13

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and for the alien: I am the LORD your God.
Leviticus 23.22

When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings.

Deuteronomy 24.19

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing. The LORD is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them. The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

Psalm 145.15-20

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. Listen! The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

James 5.1-4

There are many statistics, many stories, many conflicting points of view arising from people's different experiences of the food trade and their relationships with it. These often raise big questions for consumers - and when it comes to food, 'consumers' means everyone. Those who are passionately committed to promoting Fairtrade goods and establishing trade justice globally may sometimes seem to be at odds with those whose interest is the wellbeing of farmers and other food producers in our own country.

The issues are far from simple, and many of us may feel bewildered by what appear to be conflicting but nonetheless equally legitimate concerns, and the temptation is often simply not to think too hard about our responsibilities in this area.

Christians believe in a God who loves all people equally and unconditionally, and are called to reflect this divine love in all areas of our lives. Succumbing to temptation and ignoring responsibility are not what the Christian life is about! Fortunately, there are many sources of information that can help us to look more carefully at the issues and make informed decisions; decisions that can, in turn, benefit our sisters and brothers both in the UK and across the world, whose work provides us with our food. Informed decision-making that brings benefit to others is a rather better reflection of the life to which Christians are called!

While this briefing paper cannot possibly do more than scratch the surface of this extremely complex area, it nonetheless attempts to bring together some of the facts and raise some of the issues around the food trade, and to suggest ways in which Churches can engage in the debate and support those who produce the food on which we depend.

This paper forms part of CRC's commitment to working with rural agencies, local churches and rural communities to promote a positive future for the countryside and to enable churches to take a part in it. It follows a three year programme of activities led by CRC's Rural Renaissance Task Group including publication of 'Sowing the Seed' a report on church action in rural Yorkshire and the Humber, the rural development pilot in the northern dales, events, email group and policy consultation. More information on CRC's rural work can be found on www.crc-online.org.uk.

As always, this is briefing paper is a work-in-progress, and your critical feedback will be greatly appreciated.

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A stark example: Reform cuts sugar production in Yorkshire (July 2006)

'Today's announcement that British Sugar's York factory is to close next year will leave more than 1200 local growers reeling with shock. That's according to the North East NFU (National Farmers' Union), which says the potential impact of the closure will be devastating – not just for growers but for an estimated 1500 people employed in associated sectors such as haulage.'

www.nfonline.com/x8769.xml

'Reform of the EU sugar regime is driving a fundamental restructuring of the sector. With already achieved efficiency improvements, further capital expenditure in retained facilities, and the anticipated reduction in non-quota sugar, the company is able to process the entire UK sugar beet crop in fewer factories. As a result, the company has proposed that beet processing will cease at its Allscott and York factories at the end of the 2006/7 campaign, reducing its production facilities from six to four.'

<http://www.britishsugar.co.uk/IsolatedStorage/94175874-67b5-4c33-9f38-380233f14049/RenderSystem/Gateway/Core/RVE67741fcb37a24905992b710c58007791,,.aspx>

The Context_

Every farmer in the United Kingdom now produces and sells his or her produce in a global marketplace. Farming policy and practice in the UK affects and is affected by policy and practice throughout the world.

Some producers both locally and overseas see each other as competitors in an industry that produces more food than consumers can afford to buy – this is exacerbated by the fact that, while everyone needs food, only one-third of the world's population can afford it.

Other producers feel they may be able to make common cause with farmers everywhere who are facing similar sorts of challenges.

In 2004, farmer Edward Dennison from North Yorkshire and three colleagues visited fellow livestock farmers in Burkina Faso, West Africa. *'The trip proved to be an eye opener for both the English and African farmers...'* Keith Scott from Northumberland, said: *"I don't think it is wrong that the UK protects its own farmers but for the IMF to turn round and say to this country that you can't do the same, you can't protect the farming industry, is absolutely ridiculous."*
www.christianaid.org.uk/news/features/0404farmers.htm

Challenges 1: Trends_

One set of challenges arises simply from local and global environmental and economic trends, where the increasing impact of human activity leads to a deterioration in land quality, unusual weather patterns and price inflation:

- As long ago as March 2000, an Oxfam discussion paper for the Department for International Development said *'It must be*

noted at the outset that the present state of small-scale agriculture in the developing world is far from satisfactory. In many countries, even without conflict or disasters, the sector is in crisis, a situation aggravated by environmental degradation, and causing food emergencies and a continued exodus to the cities.'

www.oxfam.co.uk/what_we_do/issues/trade/agricultural_trade.htm

- DEFRA reported in 2001 that *'Autumn 2000 was the wettest for at least 230 years and wet weather continued to be the main feature of the 2000/2001 winter. Much of the land normally sown in the autumn was left unsown for many weeks. Where crops were eventually sown, growth was hindered in the cold, wet soil and crop damage was sometimes severe enough to necessitate re-drilling.'* This led to yields described as *'disappointing'*.
www.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/auk/2001/chapter1.pdf
- Writing in Country Life on 13 December 2005, Anna Tyzack explained that *'over half the farms in the UK failed to make a profit, when unpaid labour was accounted for with farm's averaging a £16,625 loss. Cattle and sheep farms were the worst affected, with over 80 % of farms losing income. Fuel price rises of 17% and seed and fertiliser prices escalating at a similar rate account for some of the losses.'*
www.countrylife.co.uk/countrysideconcerns/news/demisefarmer.php

Challenges 2: Economic decisions_

Other challenges are a more direct result of economic decision-making by governments and other agencies, such as the provision of subsidies for home-produced food and the imposition of quotas and tariffs on imported food, or the tying of aid and development packages to the liberalisation and/or privatisation of agriculture.

- The National Beef Association and Tenant Farmers Association have said that *'farmer-led projects that would help reconnect with the consumer to create a healthy food culture in the UK are blocked by the DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) under EU (European Union) State Aid Rules. Under article 28 of the EU Treaty, these prevent a member state from promoting its own food produce within its home country.'*
www.nationalbeefassociation.co.uk/NBA_New/HTMLDocs/Press'2005/nba'tfa'07'02'05.htm
- Christian Aid reports that that *'In 2004, 2,115 farmers from India's Andhra Pradesh region took their own lives. India had been encouraged by the IMF, the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) to liberalise and privatise its agricultural sector. However, removing government support and protection led to increasing levels of debt for poor farmers.'*
Christian Aid: *Trade Justice Turning words into action*
www.christianaid.org.uk/campaign/resource/campaignguide.pdf

Challenges 3: Disasters_

Sometimes the challenges are the consequence of disasters, such as floods, droughts or disease.

- After the 2004 floods in Bangladesh, a Damage and Needs Assessment undertaken by a Joint Asian Development Bank and World Bank Mission, 12-27 September 2004, reported that *'Agriculture, particularly the crop and animal farming subsectors and small and medium scale industries, are likely to be the most adversely affected in the short run.'*
www.adb.org/BRM/flood-statement.asp
The damage to agriculture (including livestock and fisheries) was estimated at \$580 million or 27% of the total loss.
www.adb.org/Documents/Economic_Updates/BAN/2004/eco-update-ban.pdf
- DEFRA reported that 6.1 million diseased or suspect animals were slaughtered as a result of the foot-and-mouth epidemic. Throughout the crisis, the export of livestock and livestock produce was banned.
www.defra.gov.uk/esg/publications/auk/2001/chapter1.pdf

Benefits of buying local produce_

Oxfam reports that *'The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) lavishes subsidies on some of Britain's wealthiest farmers and landlords. Losers include small farmers, consumers, taxpayers, and the environment in the UK - and millions of people in developing countries.'*

www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/trade/bp55_subsidies.htm

"The importance of using locally sourced food cannot be over emphasised," says Nigel Pulling, Chief Executive of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society. Since its formation back in 1837, one of the Society's aims has been to support the farming industry as producers of the nation's food. "Over the last decade it is clear that as a nation we want to be better informed about how our food is produced and farmers are now very aware of the need to provide what their customers want," says Mr Pulling. "Quality is a key factor and traceability is also important and here in Yorkshire we produce some of the finest food in the country. The growth in popularity of Farmers Markets is a clear indication that customers want to engage with those who produce their food."

www.yas.co.uk/process/11/YorkshireFood.html

Buying locally-produced food not only supports farmers and other workers in the the industry in this country, but also affirms and encourages good practice: such support minimises the environmental damage done by transport emissions resulting from sea- and air-freighting. Moreover, UK health and safety legislation protecting food producers, and rules ensuring the wellbeing of animals from farms to abattoirs, are usually stronger and better regulated than overseas. All of these considerations are strong arguments in favour of buying local produce wherever and whenever possible.

Benefits of buying overseas produce_

There are, however, compelling ethical reasons also for helping poor producers in developing countries by buying Fairtrade produce from overseas: *Trade*

Justice – Yorkshire Churches points out that: 'Unfair trade rules rob poor countries of 1.3 billion pounds a day – 14 times what they get in aid. We believe everyone has the right to feed their families, make a decent living and protect their environment. But the rich and powerful are pursuing trade policies that put profit before the needs of people and the planet. For example, world trade rules force poor farmers in countries like Mexico to compete with giant American agricultural businesses whose subsidies average 14,000 pounds (US\$20,000) a year. In countries like Zambia, poverty amongst poor farmers is rising as the country opens up agricultural markets to cheaper imports from abroad - told to do so by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. At meetings of the World Trade Organisation - where governments get together to agree international trade rules - the European Union and USA send hundreds of delegates each to negotiate on their behalf. This compares to Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere, with no delegate at all.'

www.tradejustice-yorkshirechurches.org.uk/pages/why_trade_justice.html

National governments are mandated with a responsibility to protect their own producers, which they achieve by subsidising home-produced food and imposing quotas and tariffs on imported food. These measures can have a devastating impact, however, on poorer overseas farmers. On the other hand, the same poor farmers could not compete in a global market free from any intervention by governments. Trade justice campaigners argue that the present situation demands the rebalancing of trade regulations in favour of poorer farmers.

Is there an answer?_

There is no escaping the fact that the food trade IS unfair, and that farmers both in the UK and in developing countries are the victims of an almost obsessive pursuit of the cheapest ways to source and market their produce. British consumers and British supermarkets have colluded with and exacerbated these injustices, albeit often sometimes unwittingly, through cut-throat competitiveness and their desire to buy and sell the widest range of produce all year round, ignoring the natural rhythm of seasonal production, demanding milk priced at less than the cost of production or fresh strawberries in December.

While the injustices remain, we need to ask ourselves whether it may be possible to address both the consequences and (to some extent at least) the causes of this unfairness by modifying our shopping habits. Could we buy more seasonal produce from local farmers, and also make a genuine effort to seek Fairtrade sources for produce that cannot be grown in the UK (e.g. tea, coffee, cocoa and chocolate, tropical fruit and vegetables)

What can Churches do?_

- Give thanks and pray for all food producers both in the UK and overseas.
- Use the resources listed below to ensure that we are properly informed about the Food Trade.
- Invite speakers from a range of organisations to explain the different points-of-view.
- Organise prayer and discussion groups around the issues.
- Buy and promote seasonal produce from local farmers
- Buy and promote fair trade produce
- Give serious consideration to the impact of our shopping habits on food producers, and think about modifying these accordingly.
- Support Fair Trade Fortnight every spring www.fairtrade.org.uk and participate in British Food Fortnight in October www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk
- Participate in the Fair Trade seminar led by Fr Shay Cullen of PREDA (see resources) as part of CRC's convention February 23rd 2007. Details available August 2006 from www.crc-online.org.uk tel. 0113 244 3413
- Keep in touch with CRC, its Policy Officer Robert Beard and Rural Development Officer Bob Baker, for information and updates on Food Trade issues.

Resources: regional_

Catholic Agency For Overseas Development

CAFOD is the official overseas development and relief agency of the Catholic Church in England and Wales, and campaigns on Trade Justice among many other issues. See

www.cafod.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning/trade_justice

Regional offices:

- CAFOD Hallam, St William of York, Ecclesall Road, SHEFFIELD S11 8TL
Tel: 0114 268 7817
Fax: 0114 266 2594
hallam@cafod.org.uk
www.cafod.org.uk/hallam
- CAFOD Leeds, Hinsley Hall, Headingley Lane, LEEDS LS6 2BX
Tel: 0113 275 9302
Fax: 0113 275 9331
Email: leeds@cafod.org.uk
www.cafod.org.uk/leeds

Christian Aid

Christian Aid is the UK's largest aid and development agency. Its webpage of Frequently Asked Questions on this issue outlines the reasons for asserting that the move towards global free trade will leave poor farmers in developing countries worse off.

See

www.christianaid.org.uk/campaign/trade/trade_eq.htm#anchor3

Regional offices:

- Lincolnshire (also Leicestershire & South Derbyshire) office:
Christian Aid, 70-72 Market Street, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, LE65 1AN
Tel: 01530 417 522
- North and West Yorkshire Office:
Lindsey Pearson/Steph Cooper,
Christian Aid, Oxford Place Methodist Church, Oxford Place, LEEDS LS1 3AX
Tel: 0113 244 4764
Email: leeds@christian-aid.org
- South and East Yorkshire Office:
Richard Buckley, Christian Aid, Victoria Hall, Norfolk Street, SHEFFIELD S1 2JB
Tel: 0114 279 6215
sheffield@christian-aid.org

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

– England Rural Development Programme in Yorkshire and the Humber

ERDP contributes to the delivery of the Government's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food by helping farmers and foresters to respond better to consumer requirements and become more competitive, diverse, flexible and environmentally responsible. It also provides help to rural businesses and communities which need to adapt and develop. See

www.defra.gov.uk/erdp/regions/yh/default.htm

– Rural Development Service

The largest deliverer of ERDP. See

www.defra.gov.uk/rdp

Defra, Customer Contact Unit, Eastbury House, 30-34 Albert Embankment, LONDON SE1 7TL

Tel: 08459 335577

Fax: 020 7238 2188

Email: helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

www.defra.gov.uk

Environment Sensitive Farming

Practical advice for land managers in the English regions.

www.environmentalsensitivefarming.co.uk/dataviewer/index.html?tag_ids=3

Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber – Rural Directorate

Includes information on the regional strategy for an entrepreneurial, dynamic and sustainable farming and food industry
Rural Directorate, Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber, City House, PO Box 213, New Station Street, LEEDS LS1 4USTel: 0113 283 0600

Email: yhRural@goyh.gsi.gov.uk

www.gos.gov.uk/goyh/menvrur/farm/?a=42496

National Farmers Union – North East sector represents the farmers and growers of Yorkshire and Northumberland. Its central objective is to promote successful and socially responsible agriculture and horticulture, while ensuring the long term viability of rural communities
Agriculture House, 207 Tadcaster Road, YORK YO24 1UD Tel: 01904 451550
Email: North.East@nfuonline.com
www.nfuonline.com/x147.xml

Regional Food Group for Yorkshire and the Humber

Promotes excellence in food produced in the region, offers an information service to producers, consumers and the media, a support network to the industry, and owns the DeliciouslyYorkshire brand

Yorkshire and Humber Regional Food Group,
2 Grimston Grange, Sherburn Road,
Tadcaster, North Yorkshire Tel: 01937
830354 Email: team@rfgyh.co.uk
www.foodyorkshire.com

Rural Community Councils

Independent voluntary organisations working to support rural communities by offering information, advice, support and training

- Humber and Wolds Rural Community Council
14 Market Place, Howden, GOOLE
DN14 7BJ
Tel: 01430 430904
- Yorkshire Rural Community Council
William House, Shipton Road,
Skelton, YORK YO30 1XF
Tel: 01904 610985

Trade Justice – Yorkshire Churches

An ecumenical Church organisation whose comprehensive website features information, worship materials and examples of good practice.

Nicholas Nightingale, Westfield Farm, Sheriff
Hutton, YORK YO60 6QQ
Tel: 01347 878423 Fax: 01347 878031
tradejustice@barbicannet.demon.co.uk
www.tradejustice-
yorkshirechurches.org.uk/pages/resources.ht
ml

Yorkshire Agricultural Society

Dedicated to all that is best in agriculture and the countryside. www.yas.co.uk

Yorkshire Organic Centre

A comprehensive directory of organic farmers and food processors in the region, plus a noticeboard where goods and stock can be advertised for sale or as wanted.
www.yorkshireorganiccentre.org

Yorkshire Rural Support Network

Formed in 1994 by a group of organisations who felt there was a need to come together to help combat rural distress.
www.yorkshireruralsupport.org.uk

Resources : national_

Action Aid

An international development agency whose aim is to fight poverty worldwide. One of their priorities focuses on food rights

ActionAid UK Head office, Hamlyn House,
Macdonald Road, Archway, LONDON N19
5PG Tel: 020 7561 7561 Fax: 020 7272 8099
Email: foodrights@actionaid.org.uk
Email: mail@actionaid.org.uk
www.actionaid.org/index.asp?page_id=324
www.actionaid.org/wps/content/documents/F
oodRights2004_2232005_72721.pdf
www.actionaid.org.uk

Action with Communities in Rural England

ACRE promotes the interests of rural communities, and acts as the national umbrella organisation for 38 Rural Community Councils throughout England
www.acre.org.uk

Arthur Rank Centre

ARC serves the rural community and its Churches. The website contains a wide range of information and resources

Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh Park,
Warwickshire CV8 2LZ

Tel: 02476 853060

Email: arcadmin@rase.org.uk

Briefing paper on supermarkets:

www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/arc3/readnews/
923/Briefing+304++Supermarkets.html

Worship material:

www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk/arc3/topics/36/
Worship+Material.html

www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk

British Food Fortnight

Promotes awareness of issues and purchase of British produce around October.

Resources and ideas including 14 things that you can do to eat more healthily, more variedly and to discover the diverse and delicious range of food that Britain has to offer
www.britishfoodfortnight.co.uk

Christian Ecology Link

CEL offers insights into ecology, the environment and the Green movement
3 Bond Street, LANCASTER, LA1 3ER
Tel: 01524 33858 Email:
webeditor@christian-ecology.org.uk

Church Army

Church Army is a society of evangelists linked to the Anglican Church, which explores ways of being Church in rural areas, among other activities. The CA's Wilson Carlile training college is located in Sheffield.

For information about CA's work in rural areas, see *Encounters* issues 27 & 28 at www.encountersontheedge.org.uk
Church Army, Marlowe House, 109 Station Road, Sidcup, KENT DA15 7AD
Tel: 020 8309 9991 Fax: 020 8309 3500
Email: info@churcharmy.org.uk
www.churcharmy.org.uk
(see also Good News below)

Fairtrade Foundation

The Foundation works to raise awareness and develop Fairtrade criteria, and licenses the FAIRTRADE mark. Established in 1992 by CAFOD, Christian Aid, New Consumer, Oxfam, Traidcraft and WDM.

Fairtrade Foundation, Room 204, 16 Baldwin's Gardens, LONDON EC1N 7RJ
Tel: 020 7405 5942 Fax: 020 7405 5943
Email: mail@fairtrade.org.uk
www.fairtrade.org.uk

Good News

A Christian website reporting on national and global Church activity. The following web page looks at the work of the Church Army in rural areas of the UK:
www.thegoodnews.co.uk/regionFeaturesstory.asp?id=645®ion=reg14

Oxfam

The economics of farm and the food trade is a major policy area for Oxfam. Their Briefing Paper no. 55 on the effect of EU Common Agricultural Policy subsidies on rich and poor farmers in the UK and in developing countries, and on the environmental impact of intensive agriculture

Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, OXFORD OX4 2JY Tel: 0870 333 2700
Email webpage:
www.oxfam.org.uk/contact/forms/general.htm
www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/trade/bp55_subsidies.htm
www.oxfam.org.uk

PREDA

A Movement founded by Fr Shay Cullen that promotes international fair trade with online resources and showroom of products
www.preda.net

Royal Agricultural Society of England

The RASE is committed to the successful development of all aspects of the nation's rural life and the economic activity which serves and supports it. As a non-political organisation the RASE promotes an independent and balanced approach to agricultural and countryside issues
www.rase.org.uk

Tearfund

Tearfund is a Christian charity that addresses both the causes and the consequences of poverty.

100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE
Tel: 0845 3558355 Email:
Email: enquiry@tearfund.org
www.tearfund.org

Trade Justice Movement

TJM is a coalition of more than 70 member organisations campaigning together for trade justice – not free trade – with the rules weighted to benefit poor people and the environment.

Tel: 020 7404 0530
Email: mail@tjm.org.uk

UK Food Group

A UK network working on global food and agriculture issues, based on a vision of 'food security' for all.

ukfg_susag@yahoogroups.com
Briefing Paper on supermarkets and Fairtrade:
www.ukfg.org.uk/docs/UKFG_Briefing_Fairness_in_Trade_Sept_2005.pdf
www.ukfg.org.uk

World Development Movement

WDM works alongside people in the developing world, lobbies decision makers, and researches and promotes positive alternatives to unjust practices.

25 Beehive Place, London, SW9 7QR
Tel: 020 77276215
Email: campaigns@wdm.org.uk
www.wdm.org.uk