



# FAIRTRADE CAMPAIGNERS' GUIDE TO THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION

## INTRODUCTION

The general election will be on 7 May 2015. Candidates have been announced and hustings and informal meetings organised around the UK to debate and discuss what matters to people. Getting involved with the general election is an important way of showing how important Fairtrade is to your community.

This is an opportunity to remind candidates that a significant number of voters are concerned about issues of fair trade, ethical business and global poverty. If you are attending hustings or meeting the candidates for your constituency please say that you support Fairtrade and raise some of the issues of concern to small farmers and workers around the world.

You don't need to be an expert – constituents' concerns are very important, and your point of view matters whether you know a lot or a little. Here's our quick guide to what we will be campaigning about in the future and some key questions to ask.

## BACKGROUND

Fairtrade is a global movement with a strong and active presence in the UK, represented by the Fairtrade Foundation. Fairtrade works for better prices, decent working conditions and fairer terms of trade for farmers and workers.

More than 1.5 million farmers and workers in 74 developing countries are part of Fairtrade which can enable them to benefit by earning a fair price and a Fairtrade Premium, which they can invest in their businesses and their communities, for example to build maternity hospitals, provide access to clean water, and enable children to go to school.

Many politicians across the political spectrum already support Fairtrade. Justine Greening MP, the Secretary of State for International Development, spoke at Fairtrade's 20th anniversary conference in the autumn and Mary Creagh MP, her Labour opposite number, spoke in support of Fairtrade in Parliament during Fairtrade Fortnight 2015. Politicians from other parties have also shown their support in many different ways. Whoever forms the next government, we hope that strong support for Fairtrade will continue.

## FAIRTRADE AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

One of the tasks of the new government will be signing the UK up to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a new set of poverty and environment goals which world governments will agree in September and will replace the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which expire this year. They aim to tackle crucial issues faced by Fairtrade farmers and workers, including rural poverty, the lack of decent work, women's rights, environmental damage and unfair trade. They call for concerted action in both low and high income countries to make the world a better place for all.

It is vital that the goals are tough enough to do the job, and that governments don't just 'sign up and forget' but work hard to deliver them. Fairtrade wants the new government to understand how important the new goals are, and make sure that the UK pulls its weight in delivering them. This will mean working hard for Fair Food, Fair Business, and Fair Trade at home and abroad.

## ATTEND OR ORGANISE A HUSTINGS

These meetings, where candidates speak and answer questions, will take place in many constituencies. They're often hosted by trade unions, places of worship or local community organisations. They're a very good opportunity to raise your issues of concern so do go if there's one in your constituency.

If you are organising a hustings check out the Electoral Commission website for guidance.

## CANVASSING

If a candidate or one of their supporters phones you or knocks on your door, do take the chance to say what's important to you and ask them a question about it. A few ideas are supplied below.

## TAKE THE INITIATIVE

Contacting your local candidates is an easy and straightforward way of letting them know what's important to members of the community. Details can be found by searching each political party's website. You can prioritise the candidate most likely to win, the ones that align with your own views or all that are standing. It's important to talk to them about the issues that matter to you and your community – use the questions below as a starting point:

## FAIR FOOD

The UK's international development programme has a welcome focus on the livelihoods of people in rural areas – people like Fairtrade farmers and workers. But too often the ideas of farmers and workers themselves about their priorities don't get heard or taken on board. Take a look at our recent report *A seat at the table? Ensuring smallholder farmers are heard in public-private partnerships* for deeper insight.

**Q** How will you make sure that the UK's international development programme listens to farmers and workers and meets their real needs?

## FAIR BUSINESS

We want UK business to show they treat those who grow our food fairly – including Fairtrade farmers and workers. Four out of five members of the public want retailers to sell fair and ethically sourced produce, but only half believe that this is what is on offer (source: independent survey for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2014).

**Q** How will you hold UK businesses accountable to deliver high standards on human rights, environment and fair prices, when they are buying from farmers overseas?

## FAIR TRADE

International trade rules have huge power over people in developing countries. Often, too little thought is given to how trade rules will harm or benefit poor farmers and workers in developing countries.

Changes to subsidies taxes, and other regulations can make it easier for farmers to sell produce than before – but too often they make it harder. For example, recent changes to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy mean that many Fairtrade sugar cane farmers have seen the price of sugar fall dramatically, and are at risk of losing their livelihoods. Read our *Sugar Crash* report for more information.

**Q** How will you ensure that the UK's trade deals are fair for poor farmers and workers in developing countries, encourage sustainable livelihoods and do not undermine poverty reduction?

Thank you for speaking up for Fairtrade during the lead up to the general election. We wish you the best of luck and would love to hear about your experiences. Tell us at [campaigns@fairtrade.org.uk](mailto:campaigns@fairtrade.org.uk)