

Fairtrade Foundation

Olive Oil Q & A



Why hasn't there been Fairtrade Olive Oil before now?

The opportunity for Palestinian olive farmers has been made possible through extending the scope of international Fairtrade Nuts and Oil Seeds Standards in 2008 to include olives and olive oil from Western Asia and North Africa.

Will the oil be organic or conventional olive oil?

Both. The standards include regionally-based minimum prices for both organic and conventional olive oil and were developed through close consultation with producer groups and exporters.

How many Palestinian olive farmers is Fairtrade working with?

Initially some 265 growers will benefit from Fairtrade certification, but the intention is to bring as many growers as possible into the scheme through the registered small farmers' co-operatives, which include some 1700 growers.

How will the Palestinian producers benefit from the Fairtrade Minimum price?

The minimum price has been calculated to cover the sustainable costs of production. In addition the Fairtrade premiums that are being paid to the certified farmers organisations will be used to invest collectively in community development and quality business improvements.

By choosing to work with Palestinian farmers is the Fairtrade Foundation making a political statement?

The Fairtrade Foundation has producer or partners in 58 developing countries. The objective of Fairtrade is to ensure a better deal for disadvantaged producers – either members of democratically-run farmer's organisations or farm workers whose employers support their social and economic development through Fairtrade. This is totally independent of the political situation in any of those countries.

Is this oil the same as Peace oil?

No. As explained on its website: 'Peace oil is produced in Israel by Jews, Arabs, Druze and Bedouin working together...[and] encourages co-operation between communities. By helping to market their produce it hopes to bring economic prosperity to such enterprises, encouraging other to follow their example.'

Are these not the same as the aims of the Fairtrade Foundation?

Internationally recognised Fairtrade certification of registered small farmers associations will support and encourage the Palestinian producers to work collectively and be a stronger voice in vocalising their desire to farm in peace. The FAIRTRADE Mark will also increase their access to international markets and provide opportunities to earn more sustainable incomes and improve future prospects for their communities

Are the Palestinian farmers as poor as the farmers in other developing countries that the Fairtrade Foundation works with?

Almost three-quarters of Palestinians live on less than US\$2 a day – below the United Nations poverty line. Olive trees and the olive harvest provides Palestinian farmers with anywhere between 25 to 50 percent of their annual income. Olive and olive oil production is a vital source of livelihood for Palestinian communities. As the economic crisis deepens, for many, the olive harvest provides their main means of survival.

What are the main difficulties faced by Palestinian olive farmers?

With its borders completely contained within a network of walls, fences and checkpoints, Palestinian farmers face severe difficulties in marketing their products abroad. Of around 15,000 tons of olive oil produced each year, as little as one third leaves the country. Unable to reach foreign markets, Palestinian farmers are depleting their savings, selling their assets and entering a cycle of debt.

How will the Fairtrade Foundation make sure that Fairtrade premium is being used for community projects?

The Fairtrade premium is a sum paid on top of the Fairtrade minimum price. This forms part of the Fairtrade standards, set by our partner Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO. www.fairtrade.net) which producers and traders are audited against. FLO guidelines explain that the premium is to be used for the improvement of the socio-economic situation of producers, their families, and their communities.

Is it true that the Fairtrade Palestinian olive oil is a high quality product?

Yes – Palestine is the land where olive oil cultivation first began. The soil and the climate produce some of the world's highest quality olive oil.

Where can I buy the olive oil?

The olive oil will be sold by two Fairtrade licences Equal Exchange and Zaytoun. The Equal Exchange Fairtrade Palestinian Extra Virgin Olive Oil will be available in around 300 Co-operative stores around the UK from March onwards. Zaytoun Organic Fairtrade Olive Oil will be available from a wide range of health food shops, delicatessens and online stores including Whole Foods Market.