

# FAIRTRADE COTTON



## Fairtrade Cotton Fashion Project 2010

As the fashion buyers and designers of the future, you have the power to have a huge positive impact on how the fashion industry works. Choosing Fairtrade cotton can directly improve the lives of the people growing the cotton used in the garments that you design and sell. We're asking fashion students to put their skills to the test and join us in spreading the word about the impact cotton farming has on people in the developing world.

## The Task

Your task is to research the challenges facing cotton farming communities, study the benefits of Fairtrade, and develop an original piece of work in response to your findings.

Fairtrade cotton has exactly the same qualities as conventional cotton. It can be used in any of the fabrics you would normally associate with cotton – voile, calico, jersey, denim, cord, and knitwear. We are challenging you to use this fabric in an innovative way: **creating fashionable garments with Fairtrade cotton at the core.**

We want students and tutors to incorporate work on Fairtrade cotton throughout the academic year. This guide will give you some ideas for completing a research project about Fairtrade cotton, which fits perfectly alongside the wider themes of ethical fashion and sustainability.



Look for this Mark on cotton products

'Thanks to Fairtrade, now we are able to eat every day and all of my children go to school. With the premium we have built two class rooms'. Moussa Keita, Fairtrade cotton farmer in Mali.

7.5 million people, in 58 disadvantaged countries benefit from Fairtrade.

'Sales of ethical clothing have more than quadrupled in the last 5 years'.

Mintel Ethical Clothing UK report 2008.



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Here are some ideas – you and your tutor are free to develop a proposal which works for your studies. Everyone needs to complete Part One and then choose an option from Part Two:

## Part One

Research the challenges facing cotton farmers in the developing world and look at the benefits Fairtrade brings to their lives, their community and the environment. Present your findings on mood boards which can be used to communicate the Fairtrade message to other students at your university.

## Part Two

- 1) Identify a fashionable retailer or brand which is not currently using Fairtrade cotton in their collections and, in response to your research, design a small range of garments for them to be made from Fairtrade cotton fabrics. How can you communicate the Fairtrade message through your garments whilst ensuring that they remain fashionable and commercial? Look at ways to make Fairtrade appeal to the fashion consumer.
- 2) Using your research as inspiration, design and make a one-off statement piece using Fairtrade cotton. Focus on one Fairtrade cotton producing region and use your design to communicate the cultural heritage of where the cotton was produced. The piece should show that Fairtrade cotton can be used in cutting edge fashion.
- 3) Organise a Fairtrade cotton Fashion Show in conjunction with other Fairtrade groups and campaigners in your area. We can send you a guide to putting on a successful Fairtrade fashion show.
- 4) Look at ways to communicate the Fairtrade message through fashion graphics, point of sale information, ticketing and advertising. Put together a mood board showing how you would target fashionable consumers with the branding of a new range of Fairtrade cotton garments.
- 5) Write a short magazine article detailing your research findings in a format that would appeal to an 18-25-year-old fashion consumer. Include images and graphics to illustrate the Fairtrade message. Present your work on mood boards.

When you have completed the project, why not exhibit your work for the rest of the university to see? This could be at a specially organised Fairtrade event, involving students from across the university, to tell everyone about Fairtrade. We can help you out with marketing materials such as bunting, posters, leaflets: please contact us for more information. We'll be on the look out for work which we feel best communicates the Fairtrade message in a new and exciting way, to highlight on our website and at Fairtrade events through 2010.

Why not link your project with other university activities, local Fairtrade campaign groups or retailers in your area, to make sure you are spreading the Fairtrade message to as many people as possible.

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Fairtrade provides stability for farmers through a guaranteed minimum price and additional Premium for their community.

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UK retail sales of Fairtrade cotton reached approx £100 million in 2008.

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Clothing, bed linen, cushions, duvets, bath mats and even canvas trainers are just some of the many cotton products which have been Fairtrade certified.

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## Project background

Cotton is a crucial cash crop for many developing countries. In West Africa, for example, cotton makes up 40% of all exported goods and growing cotton can often be the only means of income for farmers. As world prices for cotton decline small-scale cotton growers around the world are struggling to survive.

The FAIRTRADE Mark on cotton means that farmers receive a fair and stable income for the cotton they produce and sell under Fairtrade terms. In addition, farmers receive an extra premium for their goods which they invest in their wider communities; such as building schools and improving water supply. Fairtrade standards have specific environmental requirements and supports farmers in the conversion from conventional to organic practices. Many of the farmers we work with are also certified as organic. Crucially, the Fairtrade model is about empowerment and providing a way to tackle poverty in the developing world through trade, not aid.

It is estimated that 7.5 million people in developing countries benefit from Fairtrade – that's the farmers, workers and their families and their wider communities. To see the difference Fairtrade cotton has made to farmers in Cameroon, take a look at the following link to our website:

[www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources/films/cotton\\_cameroon.aspx](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources/films/cotton_cameroon.aspx)

Fairtrade certified cotton was launched in November 2005, with sales of garments made from Fairtrade cotton reaching 20 million units in 2008. Fairtrade cotton clothing and accessories are now sold by over 80 licensees through retail partners including Topshop, Warehouse, Debenhams, John Lewis, Sainsbury and Tesco.

## Useful links

Contact [commercial@fairtrade.org.uk](mailto:commercial@fairtrade.org.uk) to let us know about your project. We might be able to put you in touch with your local Fairtrade campaign group or People and Planet campaigners near you.

The Fairtrade Foundation website  
[www.fairtrade.org.uk](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk)

The Fairtrade Labelling Organisation website  
[www.fairtrade.net](http://www.fairtrade.net)

The Ethical Fashion Forum website for general information on ethical garment production  
[www.ethicalfashionforum.com](http://www.ethicalfashionforum.com)

Bishopston Trading – supplier of Fairtrade cotton fabrics  
[www.bishopstontrading.co.uk](http://www.bishopstontrading.co.uk)

People and Planet Wear Fair campaign for schools and colleges  
<http://peopleandplanet.org/wearfair>

People Tree – a Fairtrade cotton fashion pioneer  
[www.peopletree.co.uk](http://www.peopletree.co.uk)

Gossypium – a Fairtrade cotton fashion pioneer  
[www.gossypium.co.uk](http://www.gossypium.co.uk)

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20 million garments made using Fairtrade cotton were sold in 2008.

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Over 70% of the UK population recognise the FAIRTRADE Mark.  
TNS Sept 2009

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There are over 440 Fairtrade Towns, 5,000 Faith groups, 3,000 schools registered for the Fairtrade Schools programme and nearly 100 Fairtrade Colleges and Universities.

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