

## Extend Your Listening What's For English?

### What is Fair Trade Coffee?

Hello and welcome back to Extend Your Listening on What's for English.Com. This is the podcast that aims to improve your listening ability and even speaking fluency by giving you interesting content to listen to.

We've been focusing on coffee in these recent blogs and podcasts. The idea is **to get you so familiar** with this content and context that you'll be using some of these words and expressions in no time at all.

Today we're going to talk about "Fair Trade Coffee." You're going to learn about how coffee is grown, and you'll learn about this new **movement**. It's called, "Fair Trade." It aims to provide you with good coffee and makes sure the farmers get a wage they can actually live on.

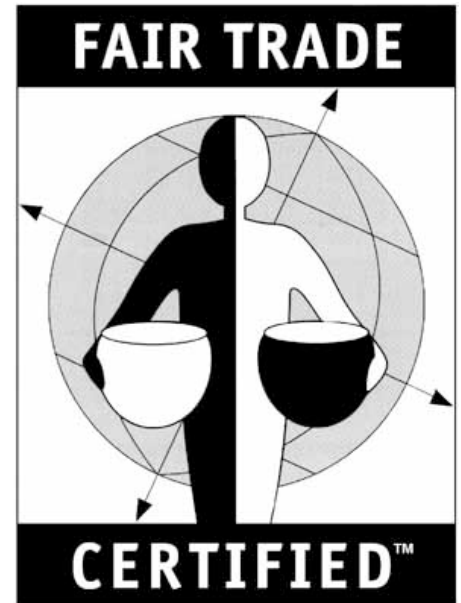
When you drink your morning cup of coffee, do you ever think about the farmers who produced the coffee beans?

Even if three or four dollars seems like a lot of money for a Cafe Latte, the worldwide, global coffee trade has actually provided you with a pretty cheap morning **beverage**. It's very cheap - once you consider what the farmers go through to provide you with high quality coffee beans.

In the coffee industry, free trade has provided us with inexpensive coffee. But it hasn't been fair at all to the farmers. But now "Fair Trade Coffee" is a new way of buying and selling coffee in the coffee business. It allows coffee farmers to grow good quality coffee and get paid a decent **wage**.

Growing coffee is hard work. Growing coffee is what we call **labor intensive**; it takes the labor of many farmers to grow and harvest the coffee plants.

For the best quality, coffee plants should be grown in the mountains. When the fruit of the coffee (also known as "cherries") fall to the ground, the farmers pick them by hand. The coffee harvest can take many weeks or even months. Many workers are also needed to **process** the coffee fruit. They are needed to sort and wash off the pulp of the coffee cherries and to remove and dry the beans.



**To get familiar with:** to learn, to get to know. *I'd like to get more familiar with modern art.*

**Movement:** ideas, opinions and actions moving toward a goal - usually to promote a change in society. *The human rights movement aims to improve conditions for prisoners.*

**Beverage:** a drink.

**Wage:** the money paid to people for doing a job - usually calculated by the hour, the day, the week or by the piece. *Factory work used to pay good wages.*

**Labor intensive:** requiring a lot of workers or a lot of human effort. *Rice farming in Thailand is labor intensive, but in Japan it is not.*

**Process:** to treat or transform some agricultural product into a product that can be sold.

There are around 25 million farmers - all living in poor countries - who work hard on small farms to produce coffee . But hundreds of millions of people drink coffee everyday. Can you imagine? Coffee drinkers consume 500 billion cups of coffee every year! Therefore, in global terms, coffee is just a **commodity**. It's bought and sold like oil or corn. There are lots of middle men in the coffee business. Some sort of coffee traders buy the coffee beans from the farmers. Or maybe the country has some sort of state-controlled coffee purchasing agency. In the western countries, coffee "**brokers**" purchase coffee from the traders in the coffee-producing countries, and then they sell the coffee to the coffee **roasters**. Some roasters such as Nestle or Starbucks are giants that buy millions of kilos of coffee every year. The worldwide price of coffee is established on an **exchange** in New York. Around the world, the price of coffee can rise or fall for many reasons: bad weather in Brazil one year may raise prices around the world, but an increase in production in, for example, Vietnam, can cause prices to fall.

**Commodity:** a good that is sold in a relatively untreated or unprocessed state. Commodities are usually produced in large quantities. Prices may closely follow supply and demand

**Broker:** a "middleman" who tries to bring buyers and sellers together . There are *stock brokers, real estate brokers...*

**Roaster:** a company that roasts (and sells) coffee.

**Exchange:** a place where commodities or stocks are bought and sold. *The New York Stock Exchange is the largest in the world.*

**Pesticide:** chemicals used to kill insects.

**Fertilizer:** Organic or chemical compounds that provide nutrients to crops to help them grow.

**According to...** : following... *The architect will design a house according to the wishes of the client.*

But here's the problem for the farmers. When the coffee prices rise, the farmers don't get paid more for their product. The profits seem to go to the big companies. But when coffee prices fall, the farmers are usually paid a lot less.



Around 20 years ago, many people began to realize that the situation was not fair. We all want farmers to produce good quality coffee. We want them to use less **pesticide** and **fertilizer**. We'd like the coffee to be organic. But farmers cannot produce good coffee if they're paid **according to the rises and falls** in the global coffee market - especially if the worldwide coffee price falls to such a low level.

[Coffeebean Farmers in Africa](#)

The Fair Trade movement got started in order to help the small coffee farmers survive in the giant coffee market. **Consumers** and **activists** (who work to improve conditions for workers) and some coffee roasters realized it was not fair to pay the lowest price possible for coffee if the farmers were suffering as a result. These consumers and activists **put pressure on** the coffee roasters to provide more money to the coffee farmers. In particular, they encouraged the roasters to pay the farmers directly. Fair trade organizations help the coffee roaster- such as Starbucks -- to buy coffee directly from the farmers. The coffee roasters agree to pay a specific minimum price - even if the worldwide price is lower. They will get good quality coffee that has been produced in the the best manner, and the farmers will earn a decent living. Coffee that is bought through the Fair Trade process can have a label attached to it that certifies the coffee as a fair trade product.

If you buy coffee that has a Fair Trade label on it, you may pay a little more. But you can feel better about your daily coffee habit. When you drink a cup of Fair Trade coffee, you have a direct connection to a family in Columbia, Kenya or Sumatra.

**Consumers:** Those who buy and use products. *Coffee consumers are buying more fair trade coffee lately.*

**Activist:** A person who is active in promoting political or social change. *Fair Trade activists protested against Starbucks for many years until Starbucks agreed to support fair trade coffee.*

**To put pressure on:** to influence others or to push others toward an action or a goal.