

## ‘Teach us how to fish - do not just give us the fish’: does buying fairtrade products really make a difference to people’s lives?\*

### INTERVIEW 1 - GERARDO ARIAS CAMACHO, COFFEE PRODUCER, COSTA RICA

Gerardo is a coffee farmer in Llano Bonito, San José, Costa Rica. He is a board member on his village cooperative, which is a member of the Fairtrade consortium COOCAFE. He is married with three children. In the 1980s, the price of coffee fell so low that it didn’t cover the cost of production.



Many farmers abandoned their land and went to the cities to find work. Some even left the country. In the mid-90s, I decided to go to America to make money and support my family. After eight years, I had earned enough to buy the family farm so that my parents could retire. But coffee prices were still so low that I was forced to go back to the States for another two years.

The coffee market was so unstable. We did not have a local school, good roads or bridges. Now that our consortium is Fairtrade-certified, prices are stable and we receive a guaranteed premium. We spend the money on education, environmental protection, roads and bridges, and improving the old processing plant. We have sponsored a scholarship programme so that our kids can stay in school.

I believe that my cooperative would be out of business if it wasn't for Fairtrade. Free trade is not responsible trade. When prices go down, farmers produce more and prices drop further. Fairtrade is the way trade should be: fair, responsible and sustainable.

My oldest son is in college, my ten-year-old has already had as much education as me, and my little princess is in her second year at school. With the help of Fairtrade, they might all be able to go to university and get a degree. They won't have to jump the border from Mexico to America, leaving their country for ten years, like me. They can decide what they want in life. I tell them: 'You have two choices. You can be a coffee grower or you can be something else. But learn how to be a coffee grower first, like your father and your grandfather.'

\*Author: Rachel Dixon

Published: Wednesday 12 March 2008 – The Guardian

Link to article: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2008/mar/12/ethicalliving.lifeandhealth>



Since Fairtrade, our farms have become more environmentally friendly. Our coffee is now produced in a sustainable way. We have planted trees and reduced the use of pesticides by 80% in 10 years. We used to cut 20 hectares (50 acres) of forest down every year to fuel the ovens at our processing plant. Now we have a new oven which is fuelled by waste products, including coffee skins and the skins of macadamia nuts that we buy from farmers on the other side of Costa Rica. It is a win-win business.

Fairtrade is not a closed system, it is open to everyone. But we need more and more people to buy Fairtrade so that the market grows and other farmers can become certified. Fairtrade can be a tool to help farmers who are not certified. We educate the producers around us about market prices so that buyers have to offer them a competitive rate. It also benefits the wider community. When there was a hurricane, the new road became blocked and the bridge came down. We could afford to open the road and fix the bridge.

When you are shopping, look for the Fairtrade label - you can be sure that the money is going straight to the producers. It will help us, but it will also help people around the world, because the benefits of protecting the environment are for everyone. It is a matter of helping each other. As a Fairtrade farmer, I finally feel competitive - I feel that I have a tool in my hand. It has given me knowledge, so that I am more able to defend myself and my people. I feel there is a future in front of us, because we can stay in our own country and make a living growing coffee. Fairtrade is not charity. Just by going shopping, you can make a difference.



## LUXURY BRANDS CAN NO LONGER IGNORE SUSTAINABILITY\*

If I asked you to picture the consumer luxury market, you might imagine jewels, sports cars, watches, premium drinks, high-end shoes and apparel, and so on. A combination of high quality, glamour, celebrity, and attitude. With a few exceptions, it's been an industry not traditionally associated with concerns about environmental impacts, human rights, and wellness, even while those trends have been sweeping through the mainstream consumer products sector. But according to a new report, 2016 Predictions for the Luxury Industry: Sustainability and Innovation, that sustainability gap is closing fast.



**First**, the direct pressure: the laws are changing. The report points to the passage of the Modern Slavery Act in the U.K. in 2015, which requires larger companies doing business in Britain to publish a board-approved, public annual slavery and human trafficking statement. This kind of law clearly drives much more transparency and tracking up the supply chain. And it's a good thing, as 71% of U.K. retailers and suppliers think it's likely there are slaves in their supply chain.

**Second**, the indirect and more powerful pressure: social norms are changing, starting with high-profile tastemakers. Celebrities are more invested than ever in sustainability. Leonardo DiCaprio and Mark Ruffalo have produced movies and started organizations to tackle climate change and promote renewable energy. Harry Potter star Emma Watson is a vocal advocate on gender equality while also appearing regularly in fashion magazines. These names and others are lending their clout to the social and environmental agenda. Given their prominence in the fashion and luxury worlds, their beliefs, statements, and demands on companies matter.



Immagine: <http://www.un.org.ua/en/information-centre/news/3781-dicaprio-climate-change-is-real>

\* Author: Andrew Winston

Published: Monday 8 February 2016 – Harvard Business Review

Link to article: [https://hbr.org/2016/02/luxury-brands-can-no-longer-ignore-sustainability&cm\\_sp=Article-\\_-Links-\\_-End%20of%20Page%20Recirculation](https://hbr.org/2016/02/luxury-brands-can-no-longer-ignore-sustainability&cm_sp=Article-_-Links-_-End%20of%20Page%20Recirculation)



**Finally**, there's the harsh reality of biophysical limits seriously compromising these companies' ability to source their products. Luxury goods require digging up, growing, and processing materials throughout the value chain, and that's all getting tougher.



This industry has some tough history to reconcile. “Blood diamonds” were not just a campaigner’s evocative phrase, but based on real money flows to brutal dictators. Slavery is still a problem. Mines are immense operations that can impoverish people and land — or create jobs and build the economy.

Imagine: <http://www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=11614>

But in our transparent world, the risk of not tackling sustainability is extremely high for this sector. As CSR and sustainability evangelist John Elkington told the report writers, “The implicit promise [in luxury] is that the consumer need not worry about anything. Everything is taken care of... Until it isn’t, at which point the whole impression of invulnerability and perfection can deflate.” An unsustainable piece of clothing or jewel is, in the end, anything but flawless. As we all wake up to that reality, the luxury companies have no choice but to act.



Image on left: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Kalgoorlie\\_The\\_Big\\_Pit\\_DSC04498.JPG](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Kalgoorlie_The_Big_Pit_DSC04498.JPG)  
 Image on right: <https://www.reference.com/science/many-trees-cut-down-day-42bf5e6262028f2d>