

Talon Sports Ltd., Pakistan

Location: Sialkot, northeast Pakistan

Fair Trade Certified: 2002

Permanent male factory workers: 694

Permanent female factory workers: 2

Temporary male factory workers: 575

Male stitching centre workers: 564

Female stitching centre workers: 629

Production volume: 3.3 million sports balls (July 2003-June 2004)

Canada Fair Trade Certified sales: 2948 sports balls (2006)

BACKGROUND

Pakistan supplies around 70% of the world's footballs, with an estimated 44,000 men and women stitchers in the Sialkot region of Pakistan involved in the production of 35 million footballs every year. The industry has been criticized for low pay, poor working conditions and the widespread illegal employment of children who are forced into work because adult wages are often too low to support a family. International campaigns in the 1990s have succeeded in virtually eliminating child labour by gradually moving production away from home-based stitchers to independently monitored stitching centres and providing constructive alternatives for children such as basic education and skills training. However, low pay and a lack of social benefits remain issues for workers in the industry.

TALON SPORTS

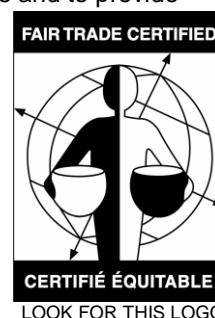
Talon Sports is a large-scale producer employing around 2,500 factory workers and contract stitchers. Production is split 50/50 between sports clothing and sports balls – mainly footballs but also rugby balls, basketballs and indoor and beach volley balls – that are assembled at more than 50 stitching centres. It is currently the only supplier of sports balls to the Canadian Fair Trade Certified market.

PRODUCTION

The patches and internal rubber bladders that make up each football are produced at the Talon factory. The workforce comprises around 700 permanent workers and 600 sub-contracted piece-rate workers and, apart from a handful of women, is entirely male. Leather has been replaced with polyurethane or PVC in the production of footballs (PVC will be phased out and not used for Fair Trade Certified sports balls in Canada following the lead of several European countries). The synthetic panels are laminated then tailored and glued to the textile that makes up the inner casing. They are then printed and cut into the 32 pentagonal and hexagonal panels which make up each ball. The bladder and panel sets are delivered to over 50 small stitching centres in villages around Sialkot where the balls are stitched together then returned to the factory for washing, quality control and packing. The stitching centres employ up to 15 workers who each stitch a maximum of three balls a day, each one requiring around 650 stitches. The centres are operated by subcontractors and employ a total of 1,200 stitchers, roughly equal numbers of men and women. The centres are segregated by gender in accordance with religious and cultural values.

FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED

Talon Sports was certified by the Fairtrade Certified Labelling Organisations International (FLO) in 2002 and now supplies Fair Trade Certified markets in Canada, the UK, Italy and Germany. The objective of Fair Trade Certified in the sports ball industry is to ensure good working conditions for factory and stitching centre workers and to provide



328 Somerset St. West, Ottawa ON K2P 0J9 • Phone 613.563.3351 • Fax 613.563.1462 • email: info@transfair.ca • www.transfair.ca

decent wages so that employees can send their children to school rather than out to work. The additional Fair Trade Certified premium is invested in projects that support the empowerment and social development of workers and stitchers. Although there is a government-set minimum wage for the sports ball industry in Pakistan, workers are often paid less and struggle to provide for their families. All Fair Trade Certified producers pay factory workers at least the minimum wage, and piece-work rates for stitchers are calculated so that the minimum wage can be earned within normal working hours. Talon Sports pays its workers 50% more when they produce Fair Trade Certified balls. Fair Trade Certified buyers negotiate a contract price with football producers in the same way as conventional buyers, with the stipulation that the agreed price must be above the cost of production. Fair Deal Trading, a UK company licensed to import and market Fair Trade Certified sports balls in the UK, sources from Talon Sports and has negotiated a contract price 20% higher than the usual price. The Canadian importer, Y FOCUS-Ottawa also pays the 20% premium. This enables Talon to pay their workers 50% more when producing Fair Trade Certified balls.

FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED PREMIUM

On top of the contract price, Y Focus pays the Fair Trade Certified premium which is used to fund social projects that benefit Talon employees. The premium, 20% of the contract price, is paid directly into the bank account of the Talon Fair Trade Certified Workers' Welfare Society, a joint body of management and elected workers' representatives, which decides on the projects to be funded by the premium payments.

The Fair Trade Certified premium has been used to provide basic health insurance, a first for workers in this industry. Eighteen-year-old Sameena Nyaz works at a village stitching centre an hour from Sialkot where they stitch footballs for Talon Sports. She recently needed a thyroid operation which would normally be a source of real worry as medical care is very expensive. But her treatment was paid for by the healthcare scheme set up by the Welfare Society and funded by the Fair Trade Certified premium. The Welfare Society has also set up a micro credit fund so that workers and their families can take out loans to set up small businesses to increase their incomes and reduce their financial dependency on stitching.

Brothers Zulafkar Ali and Saftaz Ahmad, both stitchers with young families to support, applied for a loan to start a tea shop in the annex of one of the stitching centres. A couple of years later and the shop's monthly turnover is as high as their original loan, providing them with a good additional income. In fact the milk used in the tea is supplied by a neighbour who purchased a buffalo with the help of a loan from the credit fund. The brothers now want to take out a further loan so that they can expand their product range to include convenience products and household items.

Forty-five-year-old Mohammad Riaz is happy that he is now able to provide better for his wife and four children. His main occupation is stitching footballs for Talon Sports, which gives him the opportunity to increase his wages when stitching Fair Trade Certified balls. But like most of his fellow workers he also works the fields to supplement his income. He cultivates winter wheat and a main crop of rice on his two hectares of land. A few years ago he took out a loan from the credit fund to help pay for an irrigation pump. The next season he harvested a bumper crop of five tonnes which he sold to the rice mill for \$1100 Cdn. Further good harvests have allowed him to pay back the loan, so replenishing the credit fund and making small loans available to his colleagues.

Although only a small percentage of footballs produced by Talon Sports are Fair Trade Certified certified, it is clear that Fair Trade Certified is having a positive impact on the lives of the workers, and the extra income is contributing to the economic development of village communities around the stitching centres.

Adapted from the Fair Trade Certified Foundation June 2006



