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# Fairtrade and Ethical Purchasing: Survey Results

## Executive Summary

This paper outlines the results from the Fairtrade and ethical purchasing survey that was open to University staff and students. This survey was designed to canvas opinions regarding the University and Students' Association's progress to support Fairtrade and ethical purchasing at our food and retail outlets across campus.

A total of 52 responses were received to the Fairtrade and ethical purchasing survey, which was open from 21<sup>st</sup> July to 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Of these responses, 25 were Staff and 27 were Students. It should be made clear that this sample is not representative of the University population. However, as the respondents noted high interest in the subject and factored in ethical considerations when purchasing, this survey does offer an opportunity to explore a subset of the University population that are interested in the topic of ethical purchasing.

The main barriers to purchasing Fairtrade or ethical produce focused on a lack of reliable information from retailers and manufacturers, with a distrust of these information channels also noted compared to information provided by third parties such as charities, as well as external accreditation schemes such as the Fairtrade standard. The additional cost associated with Fairtrade and ethical produce was noted as a barrier for Students in particular. Respondents purchased Fairtrade over alternatives on a focused number of products - in particular bananas, tea, coffee and chocolate – and were aware that Fairtrade was stocked at various outlets across the University and Students' Association, though there was discrepancy in knowledge around which outlets included relevant produce.

Suggestions for improving ethical purchasing at the University include: improving information on Fairtrade and ethical produce – with a particular focus on providing information to students; increasing awareness of the range of Fairtrade products available, and where at the University these are stocked; stocking Fairtrade items in a wider range of outlets (e.g. vending machines); stocking limited non-Fairtrade produce in certain categories such as biscuits or cakes; and supporting alternative accreditations – in particular around products where Fairtrade accreditation is not available.

## Method

The survey was available via the online tool “Online Surveys” and open to all University Staff and Students from the 21<sup>st</sup> of July to the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 2021. During this time, it was promoted through SRS channels including social media, newsletter (Staff and Student editions), and Sustainability Champions network (e.g. via Yammer). In addition, the survey was promoted directly to students by the Students' Association and student groups such as the Planetary Menus project.

The survey consisted of 18 questions, of which three were open ended (text based). The remaining 15 questions were a mix of multiple choice, ranking and Likert scale questions. Open-ended questions were thematically analysed by the author.

The full survey is available in Appendix 1.

# Results

## Demographics

A total of 52 responses were received to the survey. Of these 25 were staff and 27 were students. A further breakdown can be seen in Table 1. Due to the low number of responses, this report will look to evaluate responses at a staff and student level only.

Staff	Academic Staff	4
	Professional Staff	20
	Technical Support Staff	1
	<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>25</b>
Students	Other (Alumni)	1
	Postgraduate Student	12
	Undergraduate Student	14
	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Total Participants</b>		<b>52</b>

Table 1. Overview of respondents by role at the University.

## Interest in Fairtrade

Respondents were predominantly interested in the topic of Fairtrade and ethical purchasing, with 57.6% of respondents purchasing an item based on the ethical standards of the producer within the last week, and 78.8% of respondents purchasing an item based on the ethical standards of the producer within the last month. When asked, all respondents considered ethical elements when purchasing to be important, with no negative responses received to Q4 (*To what extent are the ethical standards of the products you buy and the companies that sell them an issue that matters to you?*). Individual responses as to motivations for purchasing in a responsible manner included:

*"Knowing that they are produced in line with my own values without compromising on quality" (Student)*

*"[It] Just doesn't feel right to buy things known to involve harm" (Student)*

*"I want to use my power as a consumer to encourage responsible behaviour and discourage harmful behaviour by producers and retailers. I want to help mitigate climate change, and protect biodiversity and I don't want to support unfair working practices." (Staff)*

When considering what would stop respondents from purchasing in an ethical manner, respondents considered additional costs to be most prohibitive, followed by a lack in availability of information regarding the ethical nature of the product. The third most prohibitive reason was that the information provided by producers was not reliable, suggesting a distrust of some ethical credentials.

When examining staff and students, it is clear that students noted cost to be a significantly greater prohibition compared to staff, with 24 of the 27 student respondents stating that cost was a barrier, compared to 13 of 25 staff respondents. The number of staff and students respondents to *lack of easily available information* and *lack of reliable information* were similar between staff and students (Table 2).

	Information not easily available	Information provided not reliable	Higher prices for ethical products	Preferred brand doesn't provide ethical option	Ethical credentials not well advertised	Ethical products are lower quality
Staff	17	11	13	3	7	1
Student	18	12	24	4	4	1
Total	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 2. Response to Question 6, “Which of the following reasons makes you less likely to buy products that are produced in an ethical way?” split by staff / student. Only options with responses are noted in this table. Full list of possible responses shown in Appendix 1.

This is supported by the ratings provide by respondents to sources of information, with manufacturer and retailer statements ranking as least trustworthy, while accreditation marks such as the Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade, as well as information from charities or campaign organisations scored most trustworthy for staff and students (Table 3).

	Manufacturer statements / adverts	Accreditation marks	Retailer statements / adverts	Information from charities / campaign organisations	News reports and the media
Staff	3.32	1.38	3.54	1.62	3.15
Students	3.19	1.89	3.63	2.00	2.81
Total	3.25	1.77	3.54	1.85	2.88

Table 3. Average scores for Q8 “Thinking about the information that is available on the ethical credentials of products. Please rate the following sources of information according to how much you trust them (1 = most trusted, 5 = least trusted)”.

## Understanding of Fairtrade

The Fairtrade logo was recognised by 90% of respondents and, when the open responses to Q10 “What do you think Fairtrade means?” were grouped by key themes (see Table 4), the majority of respondents (36 responses, 69.2%) noted fair pay as a key aspect to Fairtrade. Second to this were comments regarding working conditions (17 responses, 32.7%), with other themes not accounting for more than 13.5% of responses (social impact). There was no significant difference in responses of staff and students.

Theme	Fair Pay	Working conditions	Workplace safety	Impact on people	Impact on planet	Fairtrade organisation as a charity	Ethical sourcing	Social impact
Staff	16	7	1	1	3	2	1	4
Students	20	10	1	3	1	1	1	3
Total	<b>36</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

Table 4. Thematic grouping for open text responses to Q10: What do you think Fairtrade means?”

Examples of free-text responses include:

“The workers who were in the production chain had fair working conditions and wages” (Student)

“A charity that sets regulations for ethical products” (Student)

“That it was produced in a manner that ensures fair pay and ethical working conditions to all shareholders in the production of a good” (Student)

## Product specificity

Respondents were more likely to purchase Fairtrade for a small number of categories which included tea, coffee and bananas (where the option *always* or *often* was selected most frequently). Purchasing Fairtrade chocolate was considered over alternatives *often*, while purchasing Fairtrade biscuits, clothing, and wine were *rarely* considered over non-Fairtrade alternatives. Fairtrade gold, jewellery and flowers were also less frequently purchased over non-Fairtrade alternatives. However, there was a significantly lower purchase of gold, jewellery and flowers compared to other items (Table 5a). There was little difference in purchasing frequency between staff and students (Tables 5b & 5c),

(a) Total responses	Tea / Coffee	Chocolate	Biscuits / Cake	Flowers	Clothing	Gold / Jewellery	Bananas	Wine
<b>Rarely</b>	8	6	18	4	12	6	6	12
<b>Sometimes</b>	8	16	14	11	17	5	5	11
<b>Often</b>	19	22	9	7	7	2	14	6
<b>Always</b>	15	6	0	1	1	1	22	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>30</b>

(b) Staff Responses	Tea / Coffee	Chocolate	Biscuits / Cake	Flowers	Clothing	Gold / Jewellery	Bananas	Wine
<b>Rarely</b>	2	2	4	0	3	2	0	4
<b>Sometimes</b>	2	7	10	5	9	1	2	6
<b>Often</b>	11	13	7	4	5	1	8	3
<b>Always</b>	10	3	0	1	0	0	13	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>

(c) Student Responses	Tea / Coffee	Chocolate	Biscuits / Cake	Flowers	Clothing	Gold / Jewellery	Bananas	Wine
<b>Rarely</b>	6	4	14	4	9	4	6	8
<b>Sometimes</b>	6	9	4	6	8	4	3	5
<b>Often</b>	8	9	2	3	2	1	6	3
<b>Always</b>	5	3	0	0	1	1	9	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>

Table 5 Responses to Q11: "When you have the choice, how often do you buy a product with the Fairtrade label over a product without the Fairtrade label?" (a) total, (b) Staff, (c) Students. Shading represents proportion of respondents.

## Fairtrade at the University

Both staff and student respondents overwhelmingly felt that it was important that University takes action to use and promote Fairtrade (98.1% selected *important* or *very important* to Q13: "How important, if at all, do you think it is that the University takes action to use and promote Fairtrade?"). However, a much smaller percentage of respondents recall seeing Fairtrade on campus (Table 6) and 25 of the 40 eligible respondents – 62.5% - (i.e. were part of the University community at the time) where unaware of activities linked to 2021 Fairtrade Fortnight.

When looking in more detail at where respondents noticed that Fairtrade produce were available, the University cafés / restaurants and Students' Association Shop were the primary locations for both staff and students, followed by Students' Association cafes and restaurants and University Shop (Table 6), although awareness of Fairtrade produce did not reach over 50% of the total responses for any of the locations.

	Market on campus	Vending machines on campus	University café / restaurant	University shop	Students' Association café / restaurant	Students' Association shop
Staff	2	3	15	8	10	15
Student	1	1	9	4	5	8
Total	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>

Table 6. Responses to Q14: "Thinking about the University, which of the following places do you recall seeing Fairtrade products available?" divided by role at the University.

Examples of free-text responses include:

*"Increase education and awareness on the matter. Recognise challenges of purchasing fair trade products" (Student)*

*"Looking at what the University buys across its whole estate eg stationery, furniture, contractors" (Staff)*

*"I wouldn't limit it to Fairtrade - there are other ethical products without the Fairtrade label. Fairtrade is not perfect so it would be good to be clear on both the pros and cons of Fairtrade, and explain why the uni [University] chooses to support it." (Student)*

When considering what the University should be focusing on to increase support of Fairtrade (Q18), the key themes from the open text responses focused on providing information on Fairtrade and raising awareness of Fairtrade to students (10 responses). Other suggestions included: Incentivising purchasing of Fairtrade produce (noted by 4 respondents); increasing the range of Fairtrade produce offered; resourcing to support Fairtrade uptake; and promoting alternatives to Fairtrade (3 responses each) while mandating the stocking of Fairtrade items was suggested by 2 respondents (Table 7).

Response Theme	Number of responses
Improve information provided to Students on Fairtrade	10
Support alternative accreditations	3
increase awareness of Fairtrade products to students	6
Incentives to reduce cost of Fairtrade produce	4
Mandate stocking of Fairtrade produce	2
Increase offering of Fairtrade produce	3
Increase resourcing to introduce Fairtrade	3
Evaluate Fairtrade offering	1

Table 7. Themed responses to Q18: "What else do you think the University could be doing to support Fairtrade?"

## Discussion & Recommendations

It is important to reiterate that the sample size of this survey is very small within the context of the University, and so it is not possible to state that the survey is representative of the whole University. However, there are some interesting results, especially considering the vast majority of respondents self-reported as knowledgeable on Fairtrade and ethical purchasing more generally.

Within the responses, it is clear that providing reliable information on the ethical credentials of a product / service is important for those with existing knowledge of the topic. There is a distrust of information provided by retailers or producers, and greater trust for information supported by an external accreditation.

What is not clear from this survey is whether the same findings are true of those who are not engaged with ethical purchasing at the University.

When considering Fairtrade produce, there is a clear behaviour for certain ranges to be selected when a Fairtrade option is presented. Many of these are already provided within the University and in many instances there is no option to purchase non-Fairtrade produce from the category (e.g. Coffee, tea, bananas). It may be that this restriction in choice could be applied to a wider range of categories (e.g. biscuits, cakes, or wine) to increase visibility of Fairtrade options for these categories. It should be noted that the University does not currently stock a Fair Trade wine option within its hospitality services, though it does offer Fairtrade cakes in the form of flapjacks.

Aside from food, there should be an attempt to look at ethical purchasing of goods across the University. When considering Fairtrade, this could be in the clothing we retail (e.g. within the Gift Shop or for Student Societies and Sports Clubs) or provide to staff (e.g. uniforms or PPE). These discussions form part of the University Fairtrade Award, though these criteria were not met on this accreditation cycle. There are a number of other purchasing categories where ethical purchasing could be considered. This will require colleagues across the University and Student's Association to evaluate social sustainability within our purchasing processes which will require dedicated resource and time to ensure due consideration is given within procurement cycles.

## Recommendations

1. **Improve knowledge of Fairtrade**, with a focus on the range of issues that Fairtrade looks to address (including environmental and social elements)
2. **Increase awareness of the locations that Fairtrade items are stocked** at the University, and which items are Fairtrade within these locations
3. **Increase awareness of range of Fairtrade items available**, even when not stocked at the University (e.g. flowers, gold and jewellery)
4. **Encourage inclusion of Fairtrade items in new locations** such as vending machines on campus, noting that these may be managed by external companies and so the University may have limited influence in the short term (potentially this will be possible during the procurement of these services)
5. **Evaluate wider range of accreditations and compare to Fairtrade**, to establish whether the University should include additional sustainability accreditations within purchasing as standard, in particular for items where Fairtrade accreditation is not applicable.

## Appendix 1: Copy of Fairtrade and Ethical Purchasing Survey

- Q2: What is your role at the University?
  - Academic Staff
  - Postgraduate Student
  - Professional Staff
  - Technical Support Staff
  - Undergraduate Student
  - Visitor
  - Other
- Q3 When, if at all, did you last make a buying decision that was specifically influenced by the ethical standards of a retailer or producer?
  - In the last week
  - 1 week to 1 month ago
  - 1 to 3 months ago
  - 3 to 6 months ago
  - More than 6 months ago
  - Never have
  - Don't know / Can't say
- Q4. To what extent are the ethical standards of the products you buy and the companies that sell them an issue that matters to you?
  - Matters a great deal
  - Matters a fair amount
  - Matters just a little
  - Does not matter at all
  - Don't know
- Q5. What motivates you to buy products that are produced in an ethical way? (open text response)
- Q6. Which of the following reasons makes you less likely to buy products that are produced in an ethical way?
  - Ethical products tend to have higher prices
  - Information about the ethical credentials of products isn't easily available
  - Information about the ethical credentials of products isn't reliable
  - Ethical options aren't well advertised
  - The brands I prefer don't offer ethical options
  - Ethical products tend to be lower quality
  - I'm not concerned about whether products are produced in an ethical way
  - Other (please specify)
  - None of these
- Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements (choices: Strongly agree, Agree, No strong opinion one way or another, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Don't know)
  - 7.1. I try to buy products from companies that act in an ethical way, even if it means spending more
  - 7.2. I don't think its enough for companies to say that they are ethical, they need to prove it to me
  - 7.3. It is important to me that companies are clear about where they source their raw materials, components or ingredients
  - 7.4. Companies need to be more responsible and ethical than they are at the moment
  - 7.5. I want to buy and use more products that don't harm the people who produce them

- Q8. Thinking about the information that is available on the ethical credentials of products. Please rate the following sources of information according to how much you trust them. Please select one for each option (Scale: 1 is the most trusted, and 5 is the least trusted)
  - 8.1. Manufacturer statements / adverts about their products
  - 8.2. Accreditation marks e.g. Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade
  - 8.3. Retailer statements / adverts about things they sell
  - 8.4. Information from charities and campaign organisations
  - 8.5. News reports and the media
- Q9. Have you ever seen this logo?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not Sure
- Q10: What do you think Fairtrade means? (open text response)
- Q11. Please think about the categories of products listed below. When you have the choice, how often do you buy a product with the Fairtrade label over a product without the Fairtrade label (choices: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always, Don't know)
  - 11.1. Tea / Coffee
  - 11.2. Chocolate
  - 11.3. Biscuits / Cake
  - 11.4. Flowers
  - 11.5. Clothing
  - 11.6. Gold / Jewellery
  - 11.7. Bananas
  - 11.8. Wine
  - 11.9. Other
- Q12. How much do you care about the following issues? (choices: I care a lot, A bit, I am indifferent, I don't care, Don't know)
  - 12.1. Farmers in developing countries getting a fair deal for the products they grow
  - 12.2. Knowing that the products you buy have been grown / made without child labour
  - 12.3. Farmers / manufacturers in developing countries choosing how they improve their communities with the money they earn
  - 12.4. Having an independent third party check that brands are treating their suppliers fairly
- Q13. How important, if at all, do you think it is that the University takes action to use and promote Fairtrade?
  - Very important
  - Important
  - Neither important nor unimportant
  - Unimportant
  - Not important at all
  - Don't know
- Q14. Thinking about the University, which of the following places do you recall seeing Fairtrade products available?
  - Students' Association shop
  - Students' Association café / restaurant
  - University shop
  - University café / restaurant
  - Vending machines on campus
  - Market on campus
  - Other

- None of these
  - Not applicable – I'm not aware of any places which sell products at the University
- Q15. Other than on the products themselves, where else have you seen the Fairtrade logo at the University?
  - University website
  - Students' Association website
  - Posters
  - Displays in shops / cafes
  - Product tastings
  - Events and meetings
  - Other (Please specify)
- Q16. Fairtrade Fortnight is an action-packed two weeks of events and activities taking place across the UK. During the 2020-21 academic year, do you remember seeing any activities, campaigns or events taking place during Fairtrade Fortnight (22 February to 7 March 2021)?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Don't know
  - I wasn't part of the University at this time
  -
- Q17. How would you rate the University's performance in relation to purchasing ... (scale: 1- Very poor to 5 – Very good)
  - 17.1. Products with positive ethical credentials?
  - 17.2. Fairtrade products?
- Q18 What else do you think the University could be doing to support Fairtrade? (open text response)

### When last purchased based on ethical standards of producer

	In the last week	1 week to 1 month ago	1 to 3 months ago	3 to 6 months ago	> 6 months ago	Don't know / Can't say
Staff	15	6	1		2	1
Student	15	5	2	1		4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>

All high ethical consideration when purchasing (matters a little > matters a great deal). No negative responses to Q4

- Just doesn't feel right to buy things known to involve harm (Student)
- Knowing that they are produced in line with my own values without compromising on quality (Student)
- I want to use my power as a consumer to encourage responsible behaviour and discourage harmful behaviour by producers and retailers. I want to help mitigate climate change, and protect biodiversity and I don't want to support unfair working practices. (Staff)

Row Labels	Information not available	None of these	Information not reliable	Higher prices	Brand doesn't provide option	Not well advertised	Lower quality	Not concerned
Staff	17	0	11	13		3	7	1
Student	18	0	12	24		4	4	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>

Average scores (1 = most trusted, 5 = least trusted)	8.1. Manufacturer statements / adverts about their products	8.2. Accreditation marks e.g. Rainforest Alliance, Fairtrade	8.3. Retailer statements / adverts about things they sell	8.4. Information from charities and campaign organisations	8.5. News reports and the media
Staff	3.32	1.38	3.54	1.62	3.15
Students	3.19	1.89	3.63	2.00	2.81

Vast majority aware of FT logo (90%)

Fair Pay	Working conditions	Workplace safety	General Impact on people	Impact on planet	Fairtrade organisation as a charity	Ethical sourcing	Social impact
<b>37</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

- that it was produced in a manner that ensures fair pay and ethical working conditions to all shareholders in the production of a good (student)
- The workers who were in the production chain had fair working conditions and wages (Student)
- a charity that sets regulations for ethical products (Student)

## Some products more likely to be purchased as FT

- High: Tea / Coffee & Bananas,
- medium: Chocolate (sometimes)
- Low: Biscuits, Clothing, Wine \* Gold / jewellery, Flowers (but much lower purchase of these)

## FT at the University

Very important that University takes action to use and promote Fairtrade (both staff and students)

Fairtrade fortnight not really seen

Row Labels	Market on campus	Vending machines on campus	University café / restaurant	University shop	Students' Association café / restaurant	Students' Association shop
Staff	2	3	15	8	10	15
Student	1	1	9	4	5	8
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>23</b>

What should Uni be doing to support FT

information to students	10
Alternatives to Fairtrade	3
increase awareness to students	6
Incentives	4
Mandate	2
Increase offering	3
Increase resourcing	3
Evaluate offering	1

Questions we want answered

- What do students want
- Did students see messages in students' association
- Did staff & students see messages in uni catering
- What can the Uni / Sa do to improve fairtrade uptake
- What motivates staff /students to purchase Fairtrade
- Do staff / students understand fairtrade?