
Use your LOAF choose local and Fairtrade

(shortened version of talk by Michael Demidecki at the Eco Fair
at High Street Baptist Church
on 07 October 2017)

Welcome to you all. The title of this talk is 'use your LOAF choose local and Fairtrade'.

'LOAF' stands for food which is Locally produced, Organically grown, Animal friendly and Fairly traded. 'Use your LOAF' is a campaign organised by Christian Ecology Link. CEL asks churches to follow one or more of these principles when planning any communal meal. We are asked to "use your LOAF to make a difference". I shall in this talk dwell on two of these principles, namely 'Locally produced' and 'Fairly traded'.

Locally Produced The food chain contributes 22% of the UK's total CO2 emissions. Mass -marketed food needs lots of packaging to protect it and keep it fresh – which in turn makes more waste, and Importing fresh vegetables from water-poor countries causes damage and hardship to ecosystems and people living in those countries. Buying food from local and regional sources means less climate-damaging food miles, less lorry traffic, fewer new roads and runways, support for the local economy and local farmers and regional variety. If local greengrocers, butchers, bakers, fishmongers and farmers' markets are to survive they need your support. Already here in Tring there is no greengrocer and no fishmonger and we have lost all the abattoirs we used to have which means the meat we can buy though it may have been reared locally has to go some distance to be prepared for us. But we are lucky to have a Farmers' Market, two flour mills, several farms, an orchard and several producers and sellers of locally produced food. Some of these local foods also have interesting stories to tell about their production.

P.E. Mead & Sons who have the farm shop in Wilstone produce cold-pressed oilseed rape oil. The oil comes from their own oil seed rape crops which are locally grown, the oil being then extracted at their premises in Wilstone.. Most farms which grow oilseed rape send away their crops to be pressed, and the nearest other place where oil seed rape is pressed on the farm's own premises is in Bedford. When the oil has been pressed out in Wilstone the remains

which are left are formed into a cake which is fed to the farm cattle, meaning that P.E. Mead & Sons do not need to buy in any concentrates for the winter. The cattle moreover have a richer food source meaning that the beef has a higher omega content than other beef. Then to complete this cycle manure from these cattle is used to fertilise the fields which grow the next crop of oilseed rape. So this an extremely ecologically friendly and sustainable method of farming, and one which I suggest we should support.

To quote from www.bbcgoodfood.com “If you want a light alternative to other cooking oils, rapeseed is a great choice and has experienced a surge of popularity since around 2008. It’s produced from the bright yellow rape plant that grows freely in the UK in large fields. Best cold-pressed the oil can then be used drizzled as salad dressing, or heated to fry or bake. It’s low in saturated fat, so has been hailed for its health benefits and also has other nutritional bonuses – it contains omegas 3, 6 and 9 which reduce cholesterol and help to maintain healthy joint, brain and heart functions.”

Let’s consider another local producer now – a new one to Tring, the Puddingstone Distillery. Their distillery is located in one of the new artisan units on the premises of P.E. Mead & Sons Farm Shop, but they are also to be found selling their produce at Tring farmers’ Market, where incidentally P.E. Mead’s cold-pressed oilseed rape oil can also be bought from the stall of J. Stupples. Puddingstone Distillery is Hertfordshire’s first gin distillery and uses ten different botanicals in its product. One of these when in season is the Himalayan balsam plant. This attractive plant with its colourful red and white flowers is actually a nuisance in waterways, and the Hertfordshire & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, through its volunteers, work hard to remove it from a number of sites in Hertfordshire. Puddingstone have helped the Trust to clear these plants. They have collected the flowers, dried them out and infused them into a special edition of their Campfire range of gins, this one having its own distinct colour. They are currently sold out of this year’s batch but will repeat the process next year when the plant is in flower, probably from June onwards, meaning that their specially flavoured gin will then once again be available in the summer of 2018. So again this is a partnership which not only results in a tasteful local product but one which leads to the benefit of the country-side.

Going back again to produce available at P.E. Mead & Sons Farm shop, Simon Mead has told me that produce from over 30 local producers is available there.

Tomorrow, Sunday 8th October there will be a chance during Tring's Own Apple Fayre, to visit Tring's last surviving orchard, Jeacock's Orchard in Cow Lane, Tring, from 10am to 4pm. This orchard was saved from development in 2004. Nationally important, the smallholding of which the orchard is a part, is the country's only surviving First World War smallholding, along with its historic bungalow and nationally scarce wildlife. Featured in The Times and on BBC's Countryfile, it helped to establish Tring Farmers' Market in 1999, one of the first in the country, and has hosted our Apple Day since 2005. This has grown into Tring's Own Apple Fayre which we are celebrating now. Do go along tomorrow if you can to this 'Scrumptious Apple Day' event. There will be a wide variety of apples for sale, a range of Farmers' Market stalls, apple pressing and many other events.

I would just mention here also, another event tomorrow Sunday 8th October, at 10am namely the Harvest Service at St. Peter & St. Paul's Church in the High Street. This is being led by Bishop Wood School. I understand too there will be a special 'Apple Peel' of bells.

So we now come to the 'F' in 'LOAF' which stands for Fairly traded.

Fairly traded: The Fairtrade mark

On 15th July 2017 there was a very special event in London Road, Tring when members of the Justice & Peace Group, affiliated to Churches Together in Tring, and others gathered to witness a presentation to the Mayor of Tring Town, Councillor Mr. Gerald Wilkins. The Mayor was presented with the certificate renewing Tring Town's status as a Fairtrade Town and he formally unveiled one of three new signs proclaiming Tring a Fairtrade Town.

Michael Demidecki, Secretary of the Justice & Peace Group, introduced this special occasion as follows:

"I am delighted that we have with us today the Town Mayor of Tring, Councillor Mr. Gerald Wilkins. This is a very special occasion for the town of Tring. We are celebrating today the successful renewal of Tring's Fairtrade Town status for two years, following the Town's long commitment to promoting Fairtrade principles.

"Tring was first awarded the Fairtrade status on 20 October 2007 in recognition of the strong support for Fairtrade within Tring and the

achievement of five qualifying goals, such as a wide availability of Fairtrade products in local shops and catering outlets, high levels of support from local people, businesses, Tring Town Council, faith groups and schools.

“I am very pleased today to present the renewal certificate of Tring’s status as a Fairtrade Town to the Town Mayor of Tring Town, Councillor Mr. Gerald Wilkins.”

The Worshipful the Mayor of Tring Town responded as follows:

“Thank you Michael for your presentation on behalf of the Justice & Peace Group of the renewal certificate of Tring’s status as a Fairtrade Town in this year, the tenth anniversary of the first grant of its status. I am very pleased that Tring has renewed its Fairtrade status and am delighted to accept this certificate on behalf of the town. I would like to commend for its work the Justice & Peace Group, affiliated to Churches Together in Tring, who have acted for all these years as the Fairtrade steering group for the town.

“It gives me great pleasure now to unveil one of three new signs for Tring which announce to all those entering Tring from either London Road, Bulbourne Road or Aylesbury Road that Tring is a Fairtrade town. These signs are welcome additions to signs first put up by these approach roads to Tring in 2015 as part of the celebration of the 700 years since King Edward 11 signed Tring’s original market charter in 1315.”

So what is Fairtrade?

Fairtrade was established specifically to support the most disadvantaged producers in the world by using trade as a tool for sustainable development, The Fairtrade movement and certification scheme were born from the needs of farmers and workers in developing countries living on the absolute poverty line with little or no social safety net and far removed from the markets they sell to.

When a product carries the FAIRTRADE Mark it means the producers and traders have met Fairtrade Standards. The Fairtrade Standards are designed to address the imbalance of power in trading relationships, unstable markets and the injustices of conventional trade.

The key objectives of the standards (see <https://www.fairtrade.net/standards/aims-of-fairtrade-standards.html#c3782>) are to:

- ensure that producers receive prices that cover their average costs of sustainable production;
- provide an additional Fairtrade Premium which can be invested in projects that enhance social, economic and environmental development;
- enable pre-financing for producers who require it;
- facilitate long-term trading partnerships and enable greater producer control over the trading process;
- set clear core and development criteria to ensure that the conditions of production and trade of all Fairtrade certified products are socially, economically fair and environmentally responsible.

The Fairtrade Premium enables farmers and workers to invest in their communities to improve access to basic services. Co-operative members or workers on plantations are consulted to identify the most urgent needs and where Premium money can have most impact. 106.2 million Euros in Fairtrade Premium was paid to producers in 2013-14.

Some years ago I visited the Thandi wine project in South Africa, where wines were grown to Fairtrade standards and marketed in this country under the Fairtrade mark. I was told that the Fairtrade Premium had been used there to buy a minibus to take children to school, saving a long and sometimes arduous walk.

FLOCERT is the independent certifier for Fairtrade. By checking compliance with Fairtrade Standards, the company ensures that the relevant economic, social and environmental standards are met and that producers receive the Fairtrade Minimum Price and premium.

The Fairtrade Foundation was established in 1992 by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Traidcraft, Global Justice Now, and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. The Foundation is the UK member of Fairtrade International, which unites over 20 labelling institutions across Europe, Japan, North America, Mexico and Australia/ New Zealand as well as networks of producer organisations from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Within the UK there are hundreds of Fairtrade Towns, Faith Groups, Schools and Universities.

Brexit negotiations are currently taken place and the following statement is currently on the Fairtrade Foundation's website www.fairtrade.org.uk:

“Brexit - time to make trade fair

“As Brexit moves ahead, we're in an unprecedented situation. The next few years will see our trade rules rewritten and new trade deals negotiated. It's likely to mean big changes for us. But for millions of farmers and workers from the world's poorest countries who rely on trading with us, it could be make or break.

“The Fairtrade Foundation is campaigning with Traidcraft and other organisations including Christian Aid, Oxfam, the Trade Justice Movement, Global Citizen and One for our post-Brexit trade deals to deliver a fair deal for millions of vulnerable farmers and workers in developing countries.

“This could be the moment the UK starts trading in a way that delivers a fair deal for everyone. We could set the gold standard in trade policy that tackles global poverty by seizing opportunities such as:

- Making it easier for farmers in developing countries to process and package their produce themselves, increasing the income they can earn from their exports
- Putting in place trade rules that allow the poorest countries to import their produce into the UK tariff and quota free without us forcing them to do the same for our goods, so they can truly benefit from trading with us
- Making sure our trade rules and investment deals work towards international commitments on the environment, climate change, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

“But too often in the past, changes to trade rules and new trade deals have harmed not helped the poorest people who work hard to grow the food we love. We need to manage risks such as:

- Leaving the EU's single market and customs area without putting in place measures similar to the ones which currently protect farmers in the poorest developing countries. Doing this would immediately punish millions of farmers and workers with an extra £1 billion import tax bill
- Rushing into free trade agreements with wealthier countries such as the US, China and Brazil without ensuring that these deals won't undercut very poor countries which depend on the UK for much of their sales.

“If we can seize the opportunities and manage the risks Brexit presents, we have the chance to change trade for good. Brexit is our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver truly fair trade that brings prosperity to the poorest countries around the world as well as the UK.”

The good news is that Our prime minister, Teresa May, has said in a letter to the Chief Executive of the Fairtrade Foundation that her government is ‘committed to creating a trade policy that will work for everyone, including the world’s poorest.’

I began when talking about Fairtrade by saying that Tring is a Fairtrade Town. Within the UK there are hundreds of Fairtrade Towns, Faith Groups, Schools and Universities. Here in Tring we have promoted Fairtrade first of all in order to achieve Fairtrade status for our town and then throughout the last ten years that we have enjoyed such status. For example in 2015 we organised two ‘Taste the Difference Chocolate Challenge’ events, each time in Church Square Tring where we challenged passers by to see if they could tell the difference between Fairtrade and non Fairtrade chocolate. Each time Fairtrade milk and Fairtrade plain chocolate was preferred. Look out for future Fairtrade events in our town particularly during Fairtrade Fortnight which in 2018 will be between February 26th and March 12th.

The Justice and Peace Group have for several years published a Guide to Local produce and Fairtrade in Tring and District and copies of the 2016 Guide are available at our stand. We have just updated the online October 2017 version of this guide on our website www.justiceandpeacetring.org and I do very much encourage you all to consult this Guide but above all to use your LOAF and purchase at least some locally produced and Fairtrade products each time you go food shopping. Thank you very much.

The Justice & Peace Group is made up of people of all ages and from very different backgrounds. We believe in justice and peace for the world and for every individual within it. We champion respect for the environment, human rights, the afflicted and assistance for the needy. We act as the Fairtrade steering group for Tring. We meet on the last Wednesday of each month (except in December) from 7.30pm to 9pm.

For further information see www.justiceandpeacetring.org or contact Michael Demidecki, Secretary on michaeldemidecki@gmail.com or 07887 980004.

