

Wales – the world’s first ‘Fair Trade Nation’

10 June 2008

Jane Davidson, Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

I am delighted and proud to report that Wales can now call itself the world’s first Fair Trade Nation.

I was able to congratulate the Wales Fair Trade Forum on this achievement at an international Fair Trade Summit in Newport on Friday 6 June 2008. Their announcement followed a two-year campaign by the Wales Fair Trade Forum, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, to increase the availability of Fair Trade products in towns, cities and counties across Wales, and to encourage schools, businesses and other organisations to support Fair Trade. I would like to give my heartfelt thanks to the people and organisations of Wales who have helped us become the first of hopefully many Fair Trade Nations.

Wales is showing how a small country can take steps to bring about a big change – and in the case of Fair Trade making a huge impact on the lives of third world producers and their families. We heard this directly from Latin American and African Fairtrade producers/farmers themselves, who attended the Summit and spoke passionately of the benefits of Fair Trade to their farms and their communities.

The journey started with a commitment in the Welsh Assembly Government’s Sustainable Development Action Plan in 2004 and more recently in the Sustainable Development Annual Report 2007. The commitment was also reiterated in the Wales for Africa Framework – A Framework for Welsh Assembly Government Action on International Sustainable Development, launched in October 2006.

The criteria for becoming a Fair Trade Nation were agreed in 2006 by the Wales Fair Trade Forum, the Scottish Fair Trade Forum and approved by the First Ministers of Wales and Scotland. An independent panel of Fair Trade experts, appointed by the Wales Fair Trade Forum, reviewed Wales’ achievements and agreed that Wales could be declared a Fair Trade Nation.

The Scottish Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, Linda Fabiani, and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum have congratulated Wales on our achievements and they intend to continue working on this in Scotland. The UK Fairtrade Foundation also applauded the people of Wales for all that has been done to raise awareness and increase understanding of Fair Trade and the need for fairer trading systems.

Wales is pioneering Fair Trade Nation status in a similar way to the Fair Trade Towns scheme. We are developing a blueprint which we hope the rest of the world will follow. We can now build on this success and look forward to seeing other nations joining us as Fair Trade Nations.

Over 60% of people in Wales now recognise the Fairtrade Mark and know what it means. That is up from 44% in November 2006. 41% of shoppers who recognise the Fairtrade Mark are buying at least one Fair Trade item each month – and they know that by doing so it means a better deal for third world producers.

Wales now has active Fair Trade groups in all local authorities and all of our cities have achieved Fairtrade status. Over half of our towns are actively engaged in Fair Trade work and 400 schools are working to become Fairtrade schools – more than the rest of the UK put together.

Everybody can be proud of what has been achieved so far and look forward to building on this success. All those involved in Fair Trade work in Wales are agreed that being a Fair Trade Nation is a journey, not a destination. There is more that can be done to encourage awareness and support of Fair Trade across towns, businesses, schools and education institutions in Wales.

Together we are providing important support to the fair trade movement, which guarantees a fair price for farmers/producers in developing countries and support for community initiatives to improve the standard of living for some of the world's poorest people. This is a way for us all to play our part in Making Poverty History and helping people to trade their way out of poverty.