



Fair Trade Sugar 101

Use these facts to educate yourself and others about the need for Fair Trade sugar

Fast Facts

- Around **80 percent** of the world's sugar comes from sugarcane. Most of the remaining 20 percent is derived from sugar beets.
- The world's largest producer of sugarcane is **Brazil**, accounting for almost **25 percent** of global sugar supply, followed by India, China, and Thailand.
- The sugarcane industry is a significant source of rural employment, supporting about **100 million** livelihoods.
- In the United States, the world's largest sugar consumer, the average person consumes **126 grams** of sugar per day (approximately 10 tablespoons).

The Need for Fair Trade Sugar

- Low profit margins leave sugarcane farmers vulnerable to debt – in years with low yields or low market value, earnings can fail to cover the cost of production. Without access to microloans or other resources, small-scale farmers struggle to recover after falling into debt.
- Studies conducted in Asia, Latin America and Africa show that children between the ages of five and 17 are engaged in child labor on sugar plantations.

Conventional Sugar

- Sugarcane is a water-intensive crop and can deplete local reserves if not managed efficiently. This is especially challenging in the face of changing weather patterns and prolonged droughts.
- World sugar prices are highly volatile and the price of raw sugar frequently falls below production costs, leading to economic instability for sugarcane farmers.
- Sugarcane is usually cut by hand using machetes, putting workers at risk of injury both from the machetes and from repetitive stress of the physical labor.

Fair Trade Sugar

- Fair Trade standards require safe working conditions for farmers, and prohibit child labor. Requirements for safe conditions include annual trainings on workplace risks, regular medical exams for workers handling hazardous pesticides, and access to cool water and shade to protect against heat stress.
- In addition to their wages, farmers and workers receive a Fair Trade premium to support community development projects. The Fair Trade committee conducts a needs assessment, and the farmers and workers vote to decide how the funds will be used.
- On Fair Trade farms, producers adhere to strict standards regarding the use and handling of pesticides, protection of natural waters, virgin forest and other ecosystems, and management of erosion and waste disposal.

