

# *Fair Trade at the University of Chicago*

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We took a trip to the campus bookstore, and looked for items that rely on products from developing countries and could be fair trade certified. We found:

- Chocolate
- Quinoa
- Tea
- Coconut chips
- Apparel

For most of these categories, we found both fair trade and not fair trade options .Consumers **have a choice** in determining how products are sourced.

# Chocolate

In West Africa and South America, land for cocoa plantations is obtained by clear cutting rainforests. Soil quality is quickly depleted through the overuse and the application of chemical fertilizers, requiring more land to be cleared. On these plantations, child labor and other human rights violations are rampant. Many cocoa farmers in West Africa and South America live on wages of less than \$1 per day.

Although Mars has plans to become fair trade certified by 2020, its trade policies are still rated poorly by independent reviewers.

In contrast, Divine is a fair trade chocolate company co-owned by cocoa farmers in Ghana. Its farmers practice sustainable agriculture to ensure environmental conservation. The company considers its environmental impact across the entire supply chain by limiting their airfreight shipping and using minimalist, plastic-free packaging.



**M&M's: Not Fair Trade**



**Divine: Fair Trade**

# Quinoa

Conventional quinoa farming for foreign markets has substantially raised prices of the traditional staple crop. Local consumers find themselves unable to compete with foreign demand. Extractive trade policies have devastated local economies and food supplies.

However, alternatives do exist. For example, I Heart Keenwah sources its quinoa from local Bolivian farmers and ensures that they are paid a living wage and that farming does not damage the local economy. These farmers follow sustainable practices and avoid the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides.



Simply 7: **Not Fair Trade**



I Heart Keenwah: **Fair Trade**

# Tea

Most tea is grown on large plantations where workers suffer from low wages and long hours.

Fair trade tea support small farmers and ensures fair working conditions. Fair trade provides a safety net to protect against market fluctuations. It also invests money into the system to support better farming practices, education, and clean water.



Tazo Tea: Not Fair Trade

# Apparel

The university-branded sweatshirts and jackets are not fair trade certified. Their labels note that they were produced in Pakistan, which is notorious for its egregious child labor problems. Bonded children are forced to work to pay off the debts of their parents.

Fair trade certification ensures that every step of production is ethical and equitable, from cotton farmers to seamstresses.



League Sweatshirts: **Not Fair Trade**



# Coconut Chips

While demand has increased in the west for coconut products, increased prices have not benefitted farmers. Coconut farmers typically practice monoculture, making them sensitive to environmental fluctuations. Middlemen extract most of the profits from coconut sales.

Other companies, such as Dang and Whole Foods, offer fair trade versions of these products.



Bare: Not Fair Trade

# *Steps Toward a Fair Trade Campaign*

The University of Chicago does NOT currently have a fair trade campaign. We can take the following steps to promote fair trade on campus!

1. Develop education initiative
  - Administrators, faculty, and students must understand the advantages of fair trade and become well-informed consumers.
2. Work with campus vendors
  - Campus stores already supply some fair trade products. We must ensure that fair trade alternatives exist for all products.
3. Coordinate with events and meetings
  - Events and catering should source fair trade products during large-scale meetings.
4. Draft a fair trade resolution
  - The University must make an official commitment to fair trade in its investments and in supplying goods on campus.



# References

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