

# The [WEAR FAIR] Shout Out to Asda

The Wear Fair campaign, launched by People & Planet in September '09, aims to get Fairtrade uniforms and sports kits in all schools and colleges by 2015.

Over £1 billion is spent per year on Uniforms in the UK and millions more on other cotton products worn in schools. If these products were made from Fairtrade cotton, this money would help improve the livelihoods of disadvantaged farmers in the global south. However, the vast majority of this money is currently spent on conventional cotton and so contributes to the economic marginalisation of farmers who are suffering from sharply declining cotton prices.

Research commissioned by People & Planet showed that seventy percent of students wanted the opportunity to buy Fairtrade uniforms. There is also a growing concern amongst parents that the school uniforms they are buying are contributing to the hunger and hardship faced by cotton producers.

'I want to ensure that no one has been exploited in making my children's school uniform but like most parents I haven't got the time or knowledge to start investigating the supply chain of my daughter's school jumper or all the different ethical schemes that the High street stores and supermarkets claim to sign up to. The Fairtrade label is the only guarantee that can instantly assure me that the producers are being treated fairly'. **Anna Heywood, mother of two from Newcastle**



Messages from students at Lady Eleanor Holles school

People & Planet's **Wear Fair** campaign then, inline with the demands of students, asks that schools and colleges switch their stocks of uniforms and sports kits to Fairtrade cotton. Wholesalers such as **Trutex**, **Epona** and **Cotton Roots** have proved the viability of stocking reasonably sized Fairtrade ranges. However, eighty percent of all school uniforms are actually purchased through supermarkets and not schools or independent stockists. Therefore a vital aspect of the campaign involves demanding that major supermarkets increase their supply of Fairtrade uniforms, which currently stand at very low levels.

Students in schools and colleges around the UK have been busy showing supermarkets that there is great demand for Fairtrade uniforms, taking part in a 'Shout Out' to Asda of over 2000 students. See the giant Shout Out photo petition and add your own online at [peopleandplanet.org/shoutout](http://peopleandplanet.org/shoutout).

The Shout Out will be delivered by school and college students alongside TV campaigner Stacey Dooley to Asda during Fairtrade Fortnight, to let CEO Andy Bond know that students want the supermarket to stock Fairtrade uniforms.

'Because of this campaign I've realised how big Fairtrade is and what great things it does for farmers'. **Malek Araki, student at Ealing College**



'This campaign is a great idea as I never even thought about where my uniform comes from' **Olivia Macdonald, student at St Mary's**

People & Planet is the largest, student network in Britain campaigning to **end world poverty, defend human rights and protect the environment**. The People & Planet network consists of groups at Universities, Colleges and Schools, plus many other individual supporters, supported by an office staff team. Students in 2009 started campaigning for their schools and colleges to Wear Fair, and change to Fairtrade cotton school uniforms and staff and sportswear in colleges.

### Campaign success: Fairtrade cotton uniforms at Tesco

In response to student pressure and the Wear Fair campaign, Tesco has agreed to dramatically increase its commitment to Fairtrade. The number of Fairtrade lines offered by Tesco's will be increased by over 50%, while the volume of sales is projected to grow by 85% in 2010/11. This will make them the UK's leading retailer for Fairtrade cotton school uniforms, pushing them ahead of rivals Marks & Spencers. The move by Tesco to increase their stock dispel the myths that there is 'not enough Fairtrade cotton' to switch to Fairtrade on a large scale, putting pressure on other supermarkets to stop making excuses.



### Case Study: Fairtrade Cotton, Cameroon

There are 320,000 cotton farmers in Cameroon, with 10% of them belonging to a Fairtrade organisation. While conventional cotton farmers receive 20p for each kilogram of cotton, farmers in Fairtrade certified organisations receive 27p. Furthermore, in 2005 and 2006 farmers spent over 422,000 on development projects because of the social premium that comes with selling Fairtrade cotton. Langui Mahol has been a Fairtrade certified organisation for 2 years and the community, particularly the women, has benefited dramatically from the social premium, which has been used to build three wells providing clean, local drinking water. They now hope to build a classroom and buy desks and books to educate their children.

'We need to look for new markets so that we can sell the products we already have & so that we can integrate other producers. What I am worried about is the future. Neighbouring villages are looking at the villages involved in Fairtrade hoping to join in as well, and if we cannot respond favourable to their hopes then we risk having problems.'

*Hamadou Nouhou, OPCC technical director*

## Why target asda?

### What they say

\* Asda's website states that 'We're so passionate about Fairtrade at Asda' but are the worst supermarket on the high street at committing to Fairtrade for the people that farm and make their clothing. [1]

### What they do

\* Unlike Tesco's, Marks & Spencers and Sainburys, or ethical suppliers like School Uniform Shop, Asda do not sell any Fairtrade cotton school uniforms.

\* Employees of factories making clothes for George at Asda said to the Guardian newspaper that their wages were so low that, despite working up to 84-hour weeks, they struggled to provide for their families. There were also reports of physical and verbal abuse by supervisors and of workers being sacked for taking sick leave. [4]

\* According to Labour Behind the Label, an NGO supporting workers who make clothing, there are two million factory workers in the Bangladeshi textile sector, mainly producing low-cost clothes for companies like ASDA, Tesco and Primark. 90% of these workers are women. "Their earnings are so low that they can't even afford to send their own children to school, let alone buy them a uniform". [2]

\* In comparison to the progress of their high street competitors, a report by Ethical Consumer in October 2009 placed Asda George School-wear 16th out of 17. [2]

### Where they are heading

\* A report published by the NGO War on Want in December 2008 showed that factory workers in Bangladesh who supply Asda, Tesco and Primark are in a worse position than they were two years ago. [3]

\* In 2009, a report estimated that Asda was the biggest player in the UK clothing market with 10.1%. The schoolwear market is worth around £1 billion. [5]

**Contact** Fiona Ranford, Fairtrade Campaigner, People & Planet

**Visit** [peopleandplanet.org/wearfair](http://peopleandplanet.org/wearfair) and [peopleandplanet.org/wearfair/shoutout](http://peopleandplanet.org/wearfair/shoutout)

[1] <http://your.asda.com/2009/7/27/fairtrade-at-asda>

[2] <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org/FreeBuyersGuides/clothing/schooluniforms.aspx>

[3] <http://www.waronwant.org/attachments/Fashion%20Victims%2011.pdf>

[4] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2007/jul/16/supermarkets.retail2>

[5] <http://www.retail-week.com/retail-sectors/fashion/george-claims-top-spot-in-clothing-market-share/5006976.article>