

News Story, For immediate release:

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Further pictures and interviews available.

Students persuade retail giant Tesco to double its commitment to Fairtrade cotton school uniforms

In response to calls from school and college students across the country for an end to uniforms made under appalling conditions, the supermarket chain Tesco has agreed to double the number of Fairtrade cotton school uniforms they stock. The student campaigning group People & Planet [1] has called this a dramatic success for their new 'Wear Fair' campaign [2], which aims for all UK schools to have Fairtrade cotton uniforms by 2015.

The number of Fairtrade lines offered by Tesco 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. At a time of severe economic crisis for cotton growers in places like India and West Africa, this announcement is of great significance and shows the Fairtrade movement continuing to grow in strength.

Research commissioned by People & Planet showed that around 70% of school and college students want their uniforms to be made from Fairtrade cotton [3]. Students in the campaigning group then launched a nationwide campaign last September to make this happen. Malek Araki, a student at Ealing College says: 'I've realised how big Fairtrade is and what great things it does for farmers'.

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. Anna Heywood, a mother of two from Newcastle says: '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'.

Students from the campaigning organisation are now collecting 6000 photos of support demanding increased sales of Fairtrade cotton school uniforms. They plan to deliver them to their next target, Asda [4], a supermarket that, students claim, has failed to make any progress on Fairtrade cotton school uniforms. Their aim, they say, is for all major retailers and independent uniform stores to follow Tesco's lead in fighting the exploitation in the cotton trade.

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For more information please contact Jim Cranshaw on 07894 085 505

Notes to editors

[1] Founded as Third World First, People & Planet has 40 years' experience of supporting student activism and campaigns to end world poverty, defend human rights and protect the environment.

People & Planet aims to empower young people to make a difference in the world and works with students in schools, colleges and universities. It offers skills training, runs events and education activities, encourages and communicates to over 25,000 people.

It has a grassroots network of student groups which covers 66 universities, and 74 schools and colleges across the UK and has more than 1,500 active members.

[2] The school clothing market is worth £1 billion per year. Colleges spend tens of millions per year buying clothes for their sports teams, staff and vocational courses. People & Planet's Wear Fair campaign aims to transform this market by increasing demand for Fairtrade cotton, and so having a positive impact on the lives of thousands of cotton farmers.

[3] From a survey carried out by People & Planet in March 2009. The results are available to download at www.peopleandplanet.org/wearfair/resources.

[4] The Wear Fair campaign aims to get Fairtrade cotton uniforms sold in supermarkets where 80% of uniforms are bought. It is currently targeting Asda because, unlike their rivals, Asda do not sell any Fairtrade cotton school uniforms despite saying that they are 'passionate about Fairtrade' (<http://your.asda.com/products>). The online photo petition to Asda can be found at www.peopleandplanet.org/wearfair/shoutout.