



The textile and fashion industry has become a global phenomenon and textile products are made all over the world under increasingly competitive and unethical conditions.

Fair trade is a social and economic movement which promotes international standards of ethical production, labour and environmental policies in the trading of goods or commodities such as cotton. It includes principles such as payment at a fair price and gender equality.

Where fair trade is a way of doing business, ethical production refers to the production of a textile product and encompasses the whole life cycle of the product from the raw materials, through the finishing processes, to the construction.

For example, you may have a garment that is made from cotton which was purchased in a fair trade way, but that does not mean the construction of the garment was produced in an ethical way.

1. Facts

For making a \$100 pair of trainers, the factory worker will receive just 50 cents (www.cleanclothes.org)

The minimum wage for a garment worker in Bangladesh has stood since 1994 at just £7 per month. Garment workers went on strike and the national minimum wage board has now proposed raising the minimum to £12 per month, only half the most basic living wage estimate. (Report - *Fashion Victims: The true cost of cheap clothes at Primark, Asda, and Tesco.* <http://www.cleanupfashion.co.uk/>)

The materials used in a pair of Lee Cooper cotton jeans on sale for £19.95 in the UK have made a journey of 40,000 miles clocking up CO2 emissions and allowing almost no accountability. The cotton was grown in West Africa and Pakistan, dyed in Italy and sewn in Tunisia. Brass metal for the buttons and rivets was made in Germany from zinc and copper from Australia and Namibia. The zip teeth and thread were from Japan. (The Guardian, London UK. Abrams F. Astill J. *Story of the Blues.* 29 May 2001)

Total UK sales of Fairtrade products are running at £300m a year, a rise of almost 50 per cent in the past year. (The Independent – *Fair trade clothing is new battleground for retailers.* 13 March 2007)

2. Key Organizations

- Labour Behind the Label - <http://www.labourbehindthelabel.org/>
“A campaign that supports garment workers’ efforts worldwide to improve their working conditions. We educate consumers, lobby companies and government, raise awareness, and encourage international solidarity with workers. Our members include trade unions and their local branches, consumer organisations, campaign groups, and charities”. They are the UK platform of the international [Clean Clothes Campaign](#).
- Fashioning an Ethical Industry - <http://fashioninganethicalindustry.org>
A Labour behind the Label project which works with tutors from fashion/textile courses to integrate ethical issues into their teaching. Has several good fact sheets on the issues to download.
- The Clean Clothes Campaign - <http://www.cleanclothes.org/>
The Clean Clothes Campaign aims to improve working conditions and to empower workers in the global garment industry.
- The Ethical Trading Initiative - <http://www.ethicaltrade.org>
“The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is an alliance of companies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and trade union organisations. We exist to promote and improve the implementation of corporate codes of practice which cover supply chain working conditions”.
- Oxfam - <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/>
An independent British organisation, registered as a charity, that works with others to overcome poverty and suffering. It works internationally as part of a world-wide movement to build a just and safer world. The website includes several good download files on the key issues.
- Fairtrade Foundation - <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/>
“The Fairtrade Foundation was established in 1992 by [CAFOD](#), [Christian Aid](#), [New Consumer](#), [Oxfam](#), [Traidcraft](#) and the [World Development Movement](#). These founding organisations were later joined by Britain’s largest women’s organisation, the [Women’s Institute](#).”

3. Reading Materials

- Ethical Consumer magazine, <http://www.ethicalconsumer.org>
- New Consumer magazine - <http://www.newconsumer.org>
- Pietro, R. (2005) *The Travels of a T-shirt in the Global Economy: an economist examines the markets, power and politics of world trade*. John Wiley & Sons: USA

4. A selection of Companies and Designers working within the field

- American Apparel - <http://www.americanapparel.net/>
US high street retailer who guarantee no sweatshop involvement with their range of jerseywear basics, along with a separate organic line. Clothes available for men, women, children and babies.
- Blackspot Sneaker Corporation - www.blackspotsneaker.org
Made with a hemp upper and an anti-corporate spot in place of a logo, these sneakers are non-sweatshop (produced in Portugal) and use vegetarian leather. Linked with the Adbusters magazine, each pair of shoes comes with a share in their corporation, entitling you to attend their AGM and have a say in the running of the business you are part of.
- Edun - <http://www.edun.ie/>
Label set up by Ali Hewson and Bono to provide sustainable employment for producers, and using ethical fabrics.
- Equa Clothing - <http://www.equaclothing.com>
One of the first boutiques in London to specialise in the sale of solely organic and fair trade garments, featuring Enamore, Eternal Creation, Sari, Beyond Skin and more.
- howies - <http://www.howies.co.uk/>
Quality, functional casual wear with educational slogans and advice for their customers, on environmental issues. Mens and womenswear including organic denim.
- Keep and Share - <http://www.keepandshare.co.uk>
Beautiful, unconventional unisex and unisize hand knits designed by Amy Twigger.
- Made-By - www.made-by.org
A network of environmentally and socially conscious fashion designers working with fair trade principles and organic cotton.
- Marks and Spencer - <http://www.marksandspencer.com/>
Their new Look Behind The Label range will focus on totally cleansing the effluent from their factories before releasing them, and banning 56 chemicals from use. Also being brought in will be a fairly traded range of cotton t-shirts and socks, and improving living and working conditions for their suppliers.
- Stella McCartney - <http://www.stellamccartney.com>
Vegetarian option for clothing and shoes at the top end of the market, with support for Peta.
- Natural Collection - <http://www.naturalcollection.com/>
Eco, organic, fair trade and sustainable trade products for the home and garden, along with clothing for men, women and children and some cosmetic and beauty products too (large selection).
- People Tree - <http://www.peopletree.co.uk/>
Fair trade and ecologically sound clothing for men, women and children along with accessories and home-wares. This includes organics and T-shirts, shirts, leisurewear and underwear.

Fair trade and Ethical Production

- Romp - <http://www.romp.uk.com/>
Ethical, traceable fur garments for men and women. Elegant and classic items are intended to improve and protect the values of good animal husbandry, environmental respect and civilised labour law.
- Saf - www.saftag.com
Organic clothing producers who produce wholesale blank, printed or organic t-shirts, with custom garments available on request.
- TerraPlana - <http://www.terra-plana.co.uk/>
Ethically, ecologically produced shoes. Vegetable, and chrome free tanned leathers, recycled quilts, sustainably produced wood, leather scraps from the car industry, recycled rubber soles or 90% natural latex soles and stitch based construction minimise the harmful material content usually used in shoe production. To add to this they also ship by boat where possible to minimise air shipping.
- THTC - The Hemp Trading Company - <http://www.thtc.co.uk/>
Awaiting full organic certification they produce an extensive range of hemp T-shirts and hoodies ethically with quirky or street themed prints. Also involved in some cross branding projects and with live the hip-hop scene.
- Traidcraft - <http://www.traidcraft.co.uk>
Shopping from the UK's leading organisation fighting poverty through trade, featuring clothing and nightwear for men and women.
- Vegetarian Shoes - <http://www.vegetarian-shoes.co.uk/>
Men's and women's vegetarian shoes online.