

## AN OPEN LETTER TO SAINSBURY'S FROM FAIRTRADE PRODUCERS

### We told Sainsbury's loud and clear: "Your model will bring about disempowerment"



Fairtrade is owned 50% by the producers it represents and we, Fairtrade tea farmers, workers, producer members of Fairtrade Africa, are unanimous in our decision to reject this unequal partnership with the Sainsbury's Foundation. We believe it will strip us of rights and benefits attained over the years under the Fairtrade system.

Our position is based on the response of our representatives who heard directly about the detail of the model from Sainsbury's who recently visited Kenya and Malawi. Whilst we appreciate Sainsbury's overall aim and ambition to improve their supply chains, we are fundamentally opposed to their plans to take over the control and management of Fairtrade Premium. Sainsbury's informed us that they want to increase funding for their development programmes from

donors by using our producer-owned Fairtrade Premium. It is our understanding that the Premium would be ring-fenced and to access these funds producers must apply to an advisory board based in London made up of Sainsbury's representatives and some UK-based NGOs.

Whilst we are open to new ways of working and forging closer relationships with customers including Sainsbury's, certain aspects of Sainsbury's proposal such as the proposed ring-fencing of the Fairtrade Premium is unacceptable and we have outlined this to them as a non-negotiable. As producers we are very aware that when consumers choose Fairtrade purchases, they expect the benefits to go directly to producers. Premium is not donor money but is created through a commitment to purchase Fairtrade products by conscious consumers.

Sainsbury's is fully aware of the Fairtrade Standards governing the use of Fairtrade Premium, including the requirements for reporting on its expenditure, and the rigorous third party audits undertaken by FLO-Cert, an independent certifying body. As Fairtrade certified organisations we continuously reflect, improve and learn on more effective use of Fairtrade Premium. We have Fairtrade Premium projects which are based on community prioritised needs, and for which we are fully accountable through our governance structures especially the General Assembly. We believe that we are more credible, trustworthy and effective partners towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals than any other development agency or NGO. As producers we believe that we have the best understanding of our local context and what is needed to make our businesses and communities thrive. Our destiny must be kept in our hands.

We are particularly concerned that within the proposed model, Sainsbury's approval process means that any project requested by producers in Africa can be rejected by a few decision makers in the UK. This process will jeopardise our existing long term development strategies and further threaten premium pooled projects from our other committed Fairtrade buyers.

We told Sainsbury's loud and clear: "Your model will bring about disempowerment". We are extremely concerned about the power and control that Sainsbury's seeks to exert over us which actually feels reminiscent of colonial rule. We work for, OWN our product and OWN our premium. We see the proposed approach as an attempt to replace the autonomous role which Fairtrade brings and replace it with a model which no longer balances the power between producers and buyers.

The proposed Sainsbury's Standards add a further unwelcome layer of bureaucracy and will create additional burden for producers. The Fairtrade Standards, which are recognised by ISEAL, are developed through consultation with producers and other stakeholders. As such, Sainsbury's, as a Fairtrade licensee has the opportunity to input and improve what they perceive as gaps. The new Sainsbury's Standards were not done with producer consultation.

While, as mentioned, we reject Sainsbury's current proposal, we proposed many other ways in which we could work with them. We believe that there is strength in unity and as a valued and respected customer, we hope that Sainsbury's listen to us and decide to change their approach to ensure that the 200,000 Fairtrade tea farmers and workers that they currently buy from will not be punished as a result of our decision not to partner with Sainsbury's Foundation in their current model.

Endorsed by:  
***Fairtrade Africa tea farmers and worker***

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