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Fair Trade for a Better World

September 8, 2015

Editor
San Francisco Chronicle
901 Mission St
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Editor:

I am writing to dispute some of the information your September 8th *On mindful diners' shopping lists: humane and sustainable* and the *Guide to fair trade labels*.

The description of Fairtrade International as compared with Fair Trade USA is particularly erroneous. Though it is true Fair Trade USA is a more common label, it is not true that it is more authoritative than Fairtrade International, which is the umbrella organization of the largest and most well-respecting fair trade labeling organization globally, and of which Fair Trade USA was a member until just a few years ago. Due to this history, Fair Trade USA continues to recognize Fairtrade Internationals standards for organized smallholder production and have not developed their own. Therefore, their standards for small producers are not less strict, they are exactly the same. For the fairly limited number of producers not organized that are certified, Fair Trade USA has developed their own standards, but considering the fact that smallholders who do not employ a "significant" number of workers are exempt from standards such as freedom of association, one could hardly call these standards strict on labor.

In fact, most certifiers are less strict on labor standards for smallholders than they are for large-scale farms because the intended beneficiary of the certification is the marginalized smallholder, while on larger-scale farms the intended beneficiary is the workers. For larger-scale farms, Fairtrade International standards are significantly stronger than Fair Trade USA, requiring democratic organization and living wages where FTUSA requires only protection of the right to organize and minimum wages.

In addition your assessment of Fair for Life is vague at best. Fair for Life is a fair trade certifier that works with farm operations of all sizes and is best known for its ability to highlight the most ethical and committed brands

because it is the only fair trade certifier with a fairwashing policy to restrict brands wishing to capitalize on a niche marketing opportunity from participating.

There are many resources to understanding fair trade and eco-social labels available. A snapshot for consumers such as you attempted to provide is a needed resource and could have been a valuable tool if your own research had been more comprehensive leading to a more accurate picture of the landscape.

Sincerely,

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About Fair World Project

Fair World Project (FWP) is an advocacy organization which seeks to protect the use of the term “fair trade” in the marketplace, expand markets for authentic fair trade, educate consumers about key issues in trade and agriculture, advocate for policies leading to a just economy, and facilitate collaborative relationships to create true system change.