



May 2012

Dear Larry Blanford & Friends
at Green Mountain Coffee,

At our recent meeting we learned that we have starkly different perceptions about the impact of recent splits and divisions that threaten the real gains Fair Trade has achieved for small-scale farmers and U.S. consumers over the last twenty years.

Green Mountain Coffee is a leader in the specialty coffee industry,

the largest buyer of Fair Trade certified beans in the United States, and as a company, has long demonstrated genuine concern for coffee farmers. We at Equal Exchange wish to congratulate you for your past deeds—

but now urgently request that you withdraw your support for the certification agency Fair Trade USA (aka Transfair)

in light of its unilateral decision to change the rules of Fair Trade.

Fair Trade was established over 25 years ago by organized groups of small-scale coffee farmers in conjunction with reform-minded Alternative Trade Organizations. Their objective was to remove the exploitation from international trade and build a new system to ensure fairness and market access for small-scale farmers. These early visionaries recognized the role co-operatives serve in representing the interest of small-scale farmers as they are best positioned to challenge local power structures that keep small farmers marginalized and perpetuate systemic poverty.

Coffee purchased in this system has exceeded all expectations for success.

More small farmers have market access, improved living standards, and have achieved greater economic control and political power.

Fair Trade, a product of years of sweat, sacrifice and risk, belongs to the farmers.

But Fair Trade USA has abandoned the legitimate international system, not paid its dues, and changed the rules to allow large-scale plantations and private estates into the coffee system. With this move, they threaten to reverse decades of hard-won gains while potentially putting at risk the very survival of the farmer cooperatives. Your continued support for and affiliation with Fair Trade USA undercuts your great fair trade contributions to this point.

We ask you to open your eyes and fully engage in the controversy raging around you. We ask you to leave Fair Trade USA and rejoin the international certifier in which small farmers have a true seat at the table and governance power.

Sincerely,

Rob Everts
Co-President

Rink Dickinson
Co-President

Rob Everts *Rink Dickinson*



www.equalexchange.coop

This is a paid advertisement from Equal Exchange, Coffee Roaster, Employee Owned Co-op.