

GREENER

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### Think

Behind every product is the story of a real person – perhaps even a child. According to UNICEF, 168 million children are engaged in [child labor](#) around the world, with 60% working in agriculture and more often than not, under slave conditions. The fair trade movement seeks to reveal the impact of our purchases and choices on one another. Here's a chance for you to get connected with the people who grow and produce your products.

### Challenge

“When you see an icon of a farmer, odds are that it depicts a man. But women are at the heart of our food and farming systems. Seed saving, tending family plots, picking, processing and preparing – women touch every aspect of our food,” says Dana Geffner, Executive Director of Fair World Project.

- Browse through the [Fair World Project magazine “For a Better World”](#) to learn more about the connection between the Fair Trade movement and women.
- **What article from this publication resonated with you most and why?**

I felt the most attached to the article *Fair Trade for Women's Health*. It initially attracted my attention above all the other articles because of all the research I've been doing lately for other challenges about the hidden harms of chemicals and ingredients in the most innocent-seeming of products and foods. I've recently become more hyper-aware of the hidden dangers of agriculture and how women are most at-risk because they make up such a large portion of labourers, relatively. Luckily, fair trade production poses little dangers for toxic chemical exposure for its workers because of their commitment to ecosystem and worker health. However, women are already so marginalised because of all the other social injustices slated against them. Illiteracy, lack of education, need for feminine hygiene education, and female genital mutilation that the scales of injustice are completely tilted out of women's favour. Once I read through this article, I realised that fair trade organisations in developing regions of the world are *just a start*. The plantations are often little bubbles of empowerment, opportunity, and ethical labour in a large area of labour violations and disenfranchisement of its workers. The ratio must be switched to favour fair trade (or at least fair trade-like) working conditions and business plans.

Next, watch [“Journey to Serendipol”](#), which documents the development of Dr. Bronner’s fair trade sister company, Serendipol, in Sri Lanka.

- **Now that you have learned more about the impacts fair trade has on the lives of individuals, choose one person to focus on and share a profile of their story. This can be from the video or magazine above, or from your own research! What do they produce? How have Fair Trade practices affected their lives? What about their story really resonated with you? (300 word minimum).**

From the video, *Journey to Serendipol*, I was very impressed and humbled by Suneethra Gethani. Suneethra is a cleaner at Serendipol, cleaning away the discarded coconut husks from the fair trade coconut oil sister company of Dr. Bronner’s in Sri Lanka. Suneethra works this back-breaking job in order to support her children. As a single mother since she was widowed 15 years ago, she has been the sole income to support her children and give them any opportunities for education she can.

Of the entire video, I was most interested by Suneethra’s perspective of fair trade work and projects at the production level of fair trade goods. She finds strength and support in her work because she works in an environment whose mission is to seek to give its workers the best benefits and opportunities for self-improvement and actualisation as possible. In the absence of a husband for support and the stability of a second income, Suneethra struggled to provide a home and education for her children, as do many widowed single mothers even here in North America. In spite of the struggles and heartbreaks she has faced in her life, Suneethra, it seems, has found a community of support and strength in her work and life at Serendipol.

Because the coconut plantation where she works is certified fair trade, its practices are based around community development and empowerment of its workers. Not only is their working environment safe, but it’s also healthy. Were it not for an organisation and community like Serendipol, many of its employees would likely be working in far worse working conditions, for more hours and less pay, and wouldn’t have the emotional and humanitarian support as fair trade organisations do.

Working for a fair trade company has empowered the workers in as many facets of labourer care as possible: healthcare, education (books and school supplies provided to students and children of workers), environmental improvement and safe agricultural chemicals used, bi-annual housing development grants, and community development are just some such examples. Physiologically, the workers on fair trade farms are looked after and not exploited. More abstractly,

they are empowered and given opportunities which may have been denied them throughout their lives previously.

Fair trade cannot simply be about the output of food after growing it – healthy produce comes from healthy and happy workers. The result of this organisational endeavour can be seen in beautiful stories like those of Suneethra.

- Upload a photo or video of the individual/community to a social platform of your choice and caption it with their story. Tag [@TurningGreenOrg](#), [@FTCampaigns](#) and [@FairWorldPrj](#), and



hashtag #PGC2018 and #FairTrade

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environment\_em 🌱 PGC DAY 18: Fair Trade. ❤️ "Fair trade cannot simply be about the output of food after growing it – healthy produce comes from healthy and happy workers." ❤️

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Fair trade cannot simply be about the output of food after growing it – healthy produce comes from healthy and happy workers. The result of this organisational endeavour can be seen in this beautiful story from Suneethra. #PGC2018 #FairTrade