Cooperatives and Fair Trade promote people-centred businesses together

Cooperatives Europe and Fair Trade Advocacy Office join forces to underline the role that people-centred businesses should have in the EU development strategy. To this end they organized the high level conference ‘People-centred businesses: making supply chains work for small producers’, hosted by MEP Gay Mitchell.

While the EU has expressed the wish to work more closely with the local private sector to achieve EU development objectives, Cooperatives and Fair Trade underline the need to enhance an enterprise model putting people and not profit at the heart of business.

Cooperatives and Fair Trade have been important development actors of the private sector for many years. They have contributed to promote a more inclusive people-based enterprise model to the economic system and proving that it is viable and successful.

Harriet Lamb, CEO of Fair Trade International, said: “Businesses alone are not enough to tackle poverty; the EU should foster people-centred businesses. Cooperatives and Fair Trade have shown that they put high standards and strict rules on businesses, that they put people first, and still they are successful.”

Dirk J. Lehnhoff, President of Cooperatives Europe, said: “Cooperatives and Fair Trade are established development actors with long-term oriented business models. By putting people’s needs first, we have proven to be able to respond to sustainable, economic and social needs. We support the Commission initiative announced in the Agenda for Change to work with local private actors and we believe that member-owned businesses, which benefit local communities, should be key partners”.

Notes to the editors

Cooperatives Europe is the European cross-sectoral organization representing cooperative enterprises. On behalf of its 90 member organizations from 34 European countries across all business sectors it promotes the cooperative business model in
Europe. Its members represent 123 million individual member cooperators owning 160,000 cooperative enterprises and providing jobs to 5.4 million European citizens.

A cooperative enterprise is a group of people acting together to meet the common needs and aspirations of its members, sharing ownership and making decisions democratically.

The Fair Trade Advocacy Office (FTAO) speaks out on behalf of the Fair Trade movement for Fair Trade and Trade Justice with the aim to improve the livelihoods of marginalised producers and workers in the South. The FTAO is a joint initiative of Fair Trade International, the European Fair Trade Association and the World Fair Trade Organization Europe. Through these three networks the FTAO represents an estimate of 2.5 million Fair Trade producers and workers from 70 countries, 24 labelling initiatives, over 500 specialised Fair Trade importers, 4,000 World Shops and more than 100,000 volunteers.

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