European Parliament responds to the new EU trade policy agenda: “We support coordinated policies for Fair Trade”

27 September (Strasbourg). The European Parliament has today, adopted a Resolution ‘on a New Trade Policy for Europe under the Europe 2020 Strategy’ in response to the European Commission proposal on new EU trade policy. Within this resolution, the European Parliament has clearly called for the ‘European Commission to ensure coordinated policies in support of Fair Trade’.

The European Parliament has been very clear and consistent in its repeated calls for the European Commission to ensure coordinated policies to support Fair Trade including in the European Parliament Resolution on Fair Trade and development.

The European Parliament echoes the clear support by European Union citizens for ethical considerations in trade. During the EC public consultation for the new trade agenda, there was a widespread call to recognise and support Fair Trade, a civil society-led initiative, as a tool and best practice in building more just and responsible production and trade. The summary contained many references to Fair Trade including that, “Fair Trade is a different way of doing trade, it is not about aid, and it is not fundamentally about consumer-assurance issues”.

A recent Eurobarometer study shows that “Almost 40% are willing to pay more for products if they were produced under certain social and environmental standards or to support a developing country”. It concludes on this point “there is a strong social conscience among EU consumers. Many of them, although they are active consumers of products made from outside the European Union, are at the same time aware of the drawbacks of international trade and are not prepared to buy a product just because of its price. (…) Europeans cannot be considered passive consumers: social and ethical concerns are among their criteria when buying a product or a service. This may need to be factored into decision-making relating to future trade policy priorities”.

Currently, the new EU trade agenda is merely “business as usual” and continues to focus almost exclusively on opening markets for European companies; including measures to ensure European companies have undeterred access to raw materials and public procurement markets from third countries. While it mentions sustainable development, it focuses on its environmental pillar, ignoring that sustainable development is based on economic, environmental and social pillars.

The Fair Trade movement calls on the European Commission to listen to the repeated calls by the elected representatives of the European citizens, the European Parliament, to ensure coordinated Fair Trade policies. “We call on the European Commission to translate the EU citizens’ support to ethical considerations in trade into specific follow-up measures to introduce greater equity in International trade”, said Sergi Corbalán.

The Fair Trade Advocacy Office speaks out for Fair Trade and trade justice with the aim to improve trading conditions for the benefit of small and marginalised producers and poor workers in developing countries. Based in Brussels, the office coordinates the advocacy activities of the main Fair Trade Networks: Fairtrade International (FLO), World Fair Trade Organization-Europe (WFTO-Europe), and European Fair Trade Association (EFTA). These three networks bring together over 2 million Fair Trade producers from more than 60 countries, 20 labelling initiatives, hundreds of specialized Fair Trade importers, 3000 Worldshops and more than 100,000 volunteers.

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1 (2010/2152(INI)) Rapporteur: Mr Daniel Caspary.
3 European Parliament Resolution on Fair Trade and Development (A6-0207/2006)