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MEDIA RELEASE

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Fairtrade Working for Producers and Consumers

“The Fairtrade Label represents a powerful and growing partnership between consumers, businesses and small producers in developing countries to achieve a more just and sustainable world”, says Cameron Neil, Certification & Labelling Manager for Fairtrade Labelling Australia and New Zealand.

Neil was responding to cliched criticisms aired again today by the Institute of Public Affairs that fair trade entrenches poverty and does not serve the interests of the poor, and that free trade is the only solution to global poverty.

“Whatever the IPA may say about free trade, small holder farmers in producing countries – along with concerned consumers and an increasing number of those in industry – know that the free market leaves many producers in poverty and fails to take responsibility for ensuring human rights and dignity and the protection of the environment in the production of the goods we consume. To mislead the public that free trade offers an answer where fair trade fails is to put faith in the ideology of the market over the actual experiences of farmers” counters Neil.

Globally, the sales of Fairtrade Certified products grew by 47% in 2007 to over 2.3 billion euros, benefiting over 1.5 million producers in 58 of the world’s poorest countries. Sales grew by 60% in Australia and New Zealand on the back of increased trade of Fairtrade Certified coffee, tea, and chocolate from Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Such sustained growth of Fairtrade reflects the robust support it continues to receive from governments, international development organisations, industry groups and commercial companies, and producers themselves.

Says Neil “The ownership and participation of producers in Fairtrade – from the fields to the boardroom – means that the poor are active participants in their own development. Far from Fairtrade not serving their interests or entrenching farmers in poverty, as the IPA inaccurately claims, small holder farmers are at the heart of Fairtrade. Australian consumers can buy Fairtrade Certified and Labelled products with confidence, knowing they are contributing to an expanding global movement the believes the rights of farmers are at least as important as corporate profits.”

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