

8 June 2006

Letters to the Editor
Sydney Morning Herald
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Dear Editor,

Fairtrade means real benefits for producers

Ross Gittens' (7/6/06) claim that it is retailers that benefit from the sometimes higher price of Fairtrade coffee ignores the real benefits received by farmers in the scheme. Unlike the conventional international coffee market, where price instability and a lack of transparency commonly hit mostly poor, small-scale farmers badly, Fairtrade producers are guaranteed a fair minimum price.

They also benefit from a Fairtrade premium which is spent on community projects such as health and education, and from being part owners of a democratic producer cooperative. This transparency and share of income cuts profiteering 'middlemen' out of the process.

Gittens also ignores the fact that there are additional costs of certification incurred to ensure accountability and that benefits are delivered to producers. Like conventional coffee, Fairtrade products vary in price and quality, but as it has risen in popularity, consumers now have the option to choose a Fairtrade coffee that best meets their needs.

Andrew Hewett

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