



We at Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) commend the International Labour Rights Forum (ILRF) for their recent investigations into the conditions of workers manufacturing sports balls in Pakistan, India, China and Thailand. We hope that on the eve of the World Cup, the ILRF's findings will draw attention to the prevalent poverty and labour violations that these workers experience every day, despite pledges by business and government to improve the situation.

Among its findings, the ILRF's report cites poor working conditions and alleged labour violations at Fairtrade certified sports ball manufacturers in Pakistan. We take these allegations very seriously and have launched our own investigations to verify the findings. As an ISO-65 accredited certifier for Fairtrade Standards, FLO-CERT investigates all allegations following a documented procedure. If FLO-CERT finds that certified companies fail to meet Fairtrade Standards it takes action ranging from timelines for the company to demonstrate improvements to suspension or decertification.

In addition to these immediate steps, FLO has stepped up its actions to support workers and defend their rights at Fairtrade certified producer organizations. We have been in close dialogue with the ILRF since we became aware of their concerns and the report. Likewise Fairtrade plans long term collaborator with IRLF on worker rights issues in general. We are seeking insight on ways to improve our work to protect workers rights and better their situation through setting up an Advisory Committee on Workers' Rights with key trade unions, labour rights organizations and other stakeholders to make recommendations at the highest level on the range of issues concerning workers.

FLO will also roll out a program to strengthen cooperation with local unions and other organizations to make it easier for Fairtrade workers to be aware of their rights and to be able to unionize. This year in Latin America FLO and FLO-CERT will meet with unions in a series of meetings in countries or sub-regions to look at potential collaboration. FLO-CERT is also exploring running a pilot for pre-certification orientation meetings between unions and workers in plantations applying for Fairtrade certification.

FLO will review the Fairtrade Standard for Sports Balls starting in late 2010 and consult with stakeholders to determine any changes needed to strengthen clauses on rights for workers and workers' empowerment. However, we understand that compliance and monitoring alone cannot improve labour rights in sports ball manufacturing. FLO and its partner must continue to assist producer organizations via technical assistance, education on Fairtrade Standards and training for worker representatives.

Ultimately, investment by sports ball companies, retailers and consumers through Fairtrade purchases is essential to achieve the developmental objectives we share. The challenge Fairtrade sports ball companies face is that they sell only a small percentage of their overall production on Fairtrade terms, on average less than 8%. This means less income and Fairtrade Premium money to invest in bettering the situation for workers. Our challenge remains to increase the market share of Fairtrade certified sports balls so that producer organizations can get the fair prices and economic investment they need to be able to address poverty and meet progress goals on social and environmental compliance. We encourage companies, retailers and consumers to continue to purchase Fairtrade certified sports balls.

We are confident that Fairtrade certification of sports balls can assist and has assisted workers to improve their lives and that it provides a framework for achieving better working conditions in sports ball manufacturing. There are nevertheless many challenges to overcome, including the long history of "business as usual" which has perpetuated poor working conditions and poverty across the sports ball manufacturing industry.

For more information please contact:

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