

The success of organic mangos from Burkina Faso and Mali

Since May 2005, organic and fair trade mangos have been available on the shelves of supermarkets including Albert Heijn, the largest supermarket chain in the Netherlands. This is a major – and by no means simple – achievement.

Collaboration began when Ahold, Albert Heijn's parent company, expressed interest in supporting sustainable production in Ghana. Together, ICCO and an Ahold representative paid a visit to West Africa to learn more about the local situation. ICCO challenged Ahold to not just donate to a few charitable organisations, but to do what the company is good at: buy and sell – but this time under fair trade conditions.

The visit eventually led to Ahold's decision to import mangos and other products from the region. ICCO put the company in contact with Fruiteq, a Burkina Faso-based company which exports mangos from Burkina Faso and Mali on behalf of small farmers belonging to various farmers' organisations. The export of Fruiteq mangos is managed by the Dutch company, AgroFair. Via this company's development branch (AgroFair Assistance and Development), ICCO supports many producers' organisations, enabling them to sell their produce on the international market. Partly thanks to ICCO, AgroFair is now able to provide thousands of small farmers with a sustainable livelihood.



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Will you join us?

ICCO offers knowledge, expertise and financial support to initiatives which strengthen the position of small producers and labourers.

Would you like to know what ICCO can do for your organisation? Get in touch with us as soon as possible.

ICCO is the inter-church organisation for development cooperation. We give financial support and advice to local organisations and networks across the globe that are committed to providing access to basic

social services, bringing about sustainable equitable economic development and promoting peace and democracy. We also bring enterprising people in the Netherlands and in developing countries in contact with each other. We collaborate intensively with a range of socially-minded organisations, including development organisations, educational institutions and businesses. Our aim is to help people in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe live in dignity and work towards economic self-sufficiency. ICCO has 250 employees and, in recent years, an annual budget of 130 million euros.



The time is ripe for fair fruit

Improving the position of small fruit producers and fruit labourers in developing countries





Improving the position of small fruit producers and fruit labourers in developing countries: this is the mission of ICCO and its partners. The time is ripe for fruit that benefits everyone, from the producers and labourers all the way up to the wholesalers and consumers.

Although many families in developing countries have fruit trees on their land, selling the fruit on the local market is not always very lucrative. Joint marketing and even exporting could provide a solution, but this is no small task for small producers.

Tropical fruit is a highly sensitive product that needs to be cooled as quickly as possible. This requires an expensive infrastructure, which is only cost-effective for a well-organised business with a sizable turnover. And even then, it is hard to compete with big players like Chiquita, who have their own plantations and can therefore sell at prices that small producers cannot easily compete with.

It is also more difficult for small farmers in developing countries to stay abreast of and meet the standards for quality and quantity, demanded by international fruit markets. They are therefore often forced to sell to intermediaries, who can easily abuse their bargaining power. Small farmers can therefore seldom negotiate favourable conditions, such as a guaranteed quantity or price that exceeds production costs.

And yet, because of the ever-increasing demand for tropical fruit over recent years, there are plenty of market opportunities for small fruit farmers. Moreover, Western consumers are increasingly demanding 'fair' and organic products. In 2004, global demand for fair trade fruit rose to 5000 million dollars – 50% more than the previous year. The turnover in organic fruit is also increasing steadily at an average rate of 10% per year.

What needs to be done?

Support small fruit farmers

Small producers who sell their fruit to intermediaries often have to wait and see what price they'll get. By joining forces, they can improve their negotiating position. Support is also needed to help them cope with the high quality and quantity requirements of national and international markets.

Direct trade

If small farmers can avoid intermediaries altogether by marketing and if possible processing their fruit themselves, they can increase their incomes considerably.

Transparency

Fruit farmers need to know what price they can get for their products, and under what conditions they can sell it.

Support labourers

Western companies are increasing their efforts to satisfy the demand for fair fruit. Cooperating with small producers is one way of doing this. Taking responsibility for labour conditions on plantations is another.

Stimulate demand

Demand for organic and fair trade fruit should be further stimulated and the products should become more visible for consumers. Certification enables consumers to differentiate between 'fair' and 'normal' fruit. However, it is important that small farmers remain visible in the jungle of fair trade labels. We must also ensure that such certifications do not become an obstacle to participation in the market.

What is ICCO doing?

ICCO has been working for many years to improve the position of small fruit farmers and labourers in developing countries. In collaboration with a number of partners ICCO:

- brings together producers and buyers of fair fruit;
- helps small fruit farmers and labourers organise themselves;
- supports producers in meeting international standards;
- works with companies that want to buy produce from small growers;
- works with companies that support fair and sustainable trade;
- helps create sustainable workplaces for plantation labourers.

Who does ICCO work with?

Small producers and labourers in developing countries:

Since 2000, ICCO has helped 34 producers' organisations find a Western market for their fair trade fruit. Most of these organisations are in West Africa (Senegal, Ghana, Mali, Burkina Faso) and South America (Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Haiti, Surinam, Nicaragua). ICCO also maintains contact with producers in Eastern Europe and the Pacific.

Import companies and fair trade organisations seeking to promote sustainable trade in tropical fruit:

- Fruiteq buys mangos from farmers in Burkina Faso and Mali, thus enabling them to get a fair price for their fruit. Thanks to Fruiteq, hundreds of small farmers and their families have gained an important source of regular income, part of which is spent on development projects in their communities. Fruiteq also helps the farmers improve their cultivation techniques, with organic methods, and thereby increase their harvests.
- In countries such as Ghana, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Morocco and Burkina Faso, AgroFair guarantees farmers a basic price for their tropical fruit that covers the cost of production. If the market price rises above this basic level, then the farmers get the market price. They also receive an extra premium to carry out development projects in their communities. In its first years, AgroFair only imported bananas, but since then pineapples, mangos and citrus have been added to its product range. AgroFair distributes its

fair trade and organic fruit throughout Western Europe under the brand names Oké and Eko-Oké, respectively. Together with AgroFair Assistance and Development, ICCO helps the AgroFair linked famers meet the international standards, as well as supports certification and organisation building processes.

- In 2005, the Max Havelaar Foundation and ICCO launched a joint campaign to draw the Dutch public's attention to six new fair trade fruits on the market, and to encourage supermarkets to supply fair trade products. It is partly thanks to this campaign that more and more supermarkets in the Netherlands are prepared to stock fair trade fruit.
- Fairtrade Original used to deliver its goods almost exclusively to Fair Trade shops. Nowadays, a number of its products are also available through mainstream supermarkets. ICCO supports five producers' organisations that produce fruit juice and tinned fruit, helping them to meet the increasing demand and quality requirements.
- Nature & More is a unique 'trace & tell' system for organic vegetables and fruit, through which growers can show consumers what they are doing for people and for the environment. Each product has a sticker containing a product code that enables consumers to find out where and how the product was grown (via www.natureandmore.com). Consumers can also pay a virtual visit to the producer of the fruit. ICCO supports Nature & More financially.

