

**Resources for Advanced Global Citizenship Challenge: Economics**

**Theme: Food and Shelter**

* **Consider how economic decisions taken in one part of the world can and do impact on the economic survival of other countries.**
* **Examine, in particular, the economic impact of the EU decision to lift the cap on EU sugar beet production by 2017 on small-scale sugar cane farmers in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) and other Least Developed Countries (LDC).**
* **www.schumacherinstitute.org.uk/.../bristol-how-we-can-sweeten-sugar-cr..**

**Bristol, how we can sweeten the Sugar Crash? By Roger James**

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26 Mar

Published by admin

As Bristol prepares to host the 2015 International Fairtrade Conference we have a big reason to celebrate! Why? –well in the 12 months to November 2014, more than 40 percent of sugar sold in the UK’s supermarkets was Fairtrade. This is a higher proportion than Fairtrade chocolate, coffee, tea or bananas.  Fairtrade sugar comes from 62,200 smallholder sugar cane farmers in 17 countries. Bristol has a significant shared history with those growers.

Bristol Merchants were prominent in the English slave trade in the first half of the 18th century. It quickly became home to a booming sugar import trade. Sugar houses began to develop in Bristol, see [The Sweet History?  trail](http://www.sweethistory.org/about/trail-map/). As the trade in raw sugar from the Caribbean islands grew. A number of Bristol merchant families grew rich from the sugar trade and used their wealth to buy, build or extend large country houses and estates around Bristol.

Now the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of smallholder sugar farmers in the Caribbean Africa, and Pacific (ACP) and Least Developed Countries (LDC) are at risk because of proposed reform of the EU sugar market. Many of these farmers and their families have been supplying Britain with sugar for 50 years or more. Indeed, more than a quarter of the cane sugar imported into the EU from ACP and LDC countries comes to the UK. A European Union quota system capping EU beet sugar production, which enabled producers in developing countries to maintain their foothold in the European Union market, is set to end in 2017

The EU’s reforms coincide with a sharp slump in the global sugar price, which has halved in three years. Together, these two changes threaten disaster for small-scale farmers and their communities.

The Fairtrade foundation has launched its [***Sugar Crash*** report](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/~/media/fairtradeuk/what%20is%20fairtrade/documents/policy%20and%20research%20documents/policy%20reports/faitrade%20foundation%20sugar%20crash%20report.ashx), and [Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=58&v=_owjQsNRuzs) highlighting the potentially disastrous consequences of recent EU sugar reform for hundreds of thousands of small scale sugar cane farmers and their families

Fairtrade’s report examines the EU decision to abolish all sugar beet production quotas by 2017, in the context of three years of falling global sugar prices. Our report outlines that the Council of Agriculture Ministers and the Commission took the decision despite a strong vote by Members of the European Parliament to delay reform until 2020, and despite compelling evidence in a [report commissioned by the UK’s own Department for International Development](http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/TradePolicy/LMC-ODI_SugarReportPublicVersion(Final).pdf) . The DFID report, The Impact of EU Sugar Policy Reform on Developing Countries found that by 2020, abolition of the EU sugar quota could increase the number of people in poverty worldwide by 200,000.

Politics and politicians have already failed these sugar cane growers. But that doesn’t mean that we as citizens or shoppers should**. So, here’s what we can do:**

This week, go out and choose Fairtrade sugar, widely [available](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/buying-fairtrade/sugar) or if you can’t find it, ask your shop manager why they don’t stock it – make it easy by ordering our handy [‘Stock It’ postcards](http://shop.fairtrade.org.uk/stock-it-postcards) if you like.

Support the [campaign](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/current-campaigns/sugar-crash) calling on the EU (and the UK Government as a member) to convene a new initiative to support the ACP sugar producing countries and farming communities, including 62,200 Fairtrade cane growers, to adapt to the brave new world of low cost sugar. Campaigners can [contact](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/current-campaigns/sugar-crash) their European Member of Parliament to make sure that poor sugar cane farmers get the support and funds they need to protect their livelihoods.

"Sugar is the backbone of our economy and the source of our income,” says Jamaican sugar grower Alexia. “If we hadn't the sugar industry... children would not be able to go to school, shops would close; it would affect every individual." **Bristol grew rich from this trade: 2015 is a vital time to stand by the growers who now need our support. Our international Fairtrade conference can help create a new legacy.**

Roger James is a South West Fairtrade Campaigner. Follow him @scryfapen.

* [**http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/21/jamaican-farmers-bleak-future-eu-sugar-beet-production-cap**](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/21/jamaican-farmers-bleak-future-eu-sugar-beet-production-cap)

**Jamaican farmers face bleak future as EU axes cap on sugar beet production**

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http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/21/jamaican-farmers-bleak-future-eu-sugar-beet-production-cap

Europe will soon allow its states to grow more sugar beet, which will devastate economies in the Caribbean, and a trade that underpinned the British empire



Donkeys bought with Fairtrade Premium at Worthy Park in Jamaica. Photograph: O’Brien Brown/Fairtrade Foundation.

Further up into the hills, we watch some of that association-bought fertiliser (discounted because of bulk rates, and the currency certainty of the premium paid in US dollars) being distributed from the back of a container.

The farmers queue under an awning in the hot sun awaiting their allocation. They are kept in line – in every sense – by Alexia Ludford, the stepdaughter of Fitzroy Douglas and an eloquent advocate of the Fairtrade model.

A farmer herself, she says: “I do this work for free because I see how far the impacts have gone into the community. For the first time the farmers feel that they have a stake in future.”

It was Ludford who organised the shift from paraquat weedkiller to less toxic pesticides. She unearthed research, she says, that showed [paraquat could cause impotence](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1699233/" \o "). Overnight she achieved what might have taken a government awareness campaign years.

Andrew Wright is Fairtrade’s Jamaican liaison manager. His father was a cane farmer. “Before he died he dragged me into it,” he says, with a laugh.

“He had 144 acres but I used to complain to him that he never made any money. He said: you do it; make a difference. So he would have been proud seeing some of this, I think.”

Wright is full of schemes and strategy papers to mitigate the challenges ahead. He doesn’t underestimate the crisis but he has faith that at least some of the changes – of empowerment, and adaptability – can be lasting.

While we talk he introduces me to Adolphus Ward, a cane farmer waiting for his fertiliser. Ward is 78. He has worked all his life in the same fields.

“I love the cane,” he says. “I tell you something: we need to step up production. We can pay cutters only 2,000 Jamaican dollars a day [about £12] during harvest. They have to find food and a place to live the year round.”

One of his lifelong problems has been getting his cut cane to the factory in the 72 hours before it spoils.

“All my life I have only one donkey and it is not enough,” he says. “Last year I applied for another donkey [from the Fairtrade premium]. I received two!” His best harvest saw him produce 39 tonnes of cane. This year he hopes for 50 tonnes. “I’m expanding,” he says.

There is a resilience about the farmers that they share with their crop. That rootedness in place could not be better illustrated than in a one-room village store in the parish of Trelawny in the north-west of the island, a couple of hours’ bumpy drive up from the all-inclusive resorts of Montego Bay but in another world entirely.

The store is run by Wellesley Bolt, lifetime cane farmer – he still owns some acres – and father of the fastest man who ever lived.

Last Saturday, like every day, Bolt was serving his few regular customers from behind his counter. In front of him was that morning’s paper which featured news of Usain’s ambition to retire in two years. Wellesley Bolt has no such plans. “I’ll die up here, no doubt,” he tells me, with a laugh.

When Bolt began raising his three children he was also farming cane, as his father had before him. In harvest season, his two sons might help in the fields before school.

“It is hard, rough work. I reaped 200 tonnes one year and I never got a dollar to cover the expense,” he recalls. “The juice was no good, they said.”

It was around then that Bolt decided to open his grocery store, which is stocked with a few baskets of yams and plantains and some household essentials. He talks with quiet amusement about how things have turned out.

He used to run at school, “but in those days we had no timing system so I don’t know how quick, but sure not as quick as my son”.

In another life, he suggests, without those extra hundredths of seconds, Usain might conceivably have gone into the farming, or followed him into the shop. As it is, his son’s fame has helped Bolt senior towards a new 4x4 and a small extension on the back of his house. Has he thought of moving away?



Wellesley Bolt outside his shop. Photograph: Nicola Frame/Fairtrade Foundation

Usain has tried to persuade him a few times. “But it doesn’t make sense for me to leave all the ground work here and start business somewhere else,” he says. “This is home.”

Also visiting Bolt’s shop is Paulette Richards, secretary of the Trelawny cane farmers’ association. She grew up carrying cane on her head over the river from her father’s farm.

She chats with Bolt about the two years from 2010 when the local sugar mill closed and the effect it had on people – a case study of what might come. Things fell apart.

“Sugar is the backbone of this place,” she says. “The whole parish was affected and it was like a ghost town. People planted short crops, peas, potato for themselves.”

Farmers took out loans, which they couldn’t pay; many moved away from the fields to she doesn’t know where. “You don’t have money for children in school. If I used to purchase three pounds of yellow yams now I could only purchase a pound. We are totally depending on the sugar.”

That dependence makes the coming shock more alarming. There are some seed projects exploring a shift to coffee or cocoa and to expand the potential for ethanol production from cane, but those markets take time and resources to access, neither of which the smallholders possess.

Jon Walker, the sugar manager for Fairtrade, has lately represented hope for the farmers. He is now in the uneasy position of counselling about alternatives in a bleaker future. How does that feel?

“It feels sad,” he says. “It feels unjust. It feels that we need to make it known that these communities are facing probably terminal decline, very soon.”

Where does he direct those efforts?

“The UK consumer has a big role,” he says. “They need to stick by businesses who stick by these people, who need the Fairtrade premium more than ever.”

And beyond that?

“Those in power have a responsibility to pay attention to people who don’t have votes for them.” Walker says. Currently, 25% of Jamaican sugar comes to Britain. It has been an enduring and one-sided trading relationship. “The problem is these farmers are out of sight and out of mind. And the worst thing is, they always have been.”

**FAIRTRADE AND SUGAR**

■ The global sugar export trade is worth $47bn.

■ Production is dominated by Brazil, India, the EU, China, Thailand and the US, which produce around 65% of the world’s sugar.

■ Sugar cane is a tall, bamboo-like grass that grows to a height of up to 6 metres (20ft) in mostly tropical countries. It is normally cut by hand and taken to sugar mills. Here the stems are crushed and ground and cane juice is extracted and used to make raw sugar.

■ Fairtrade focuses on sugar cane farmers in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, including some of the world’s least developed countries.

■ There are just over 37,000 sugar farmers organised into 69 Fairtrade small producer organisations.

■ Half of the €7.4m in Fairtrade Premium funds that Fairtrade sugar farmers earned in 2011 was invested by the producers in business and organisational development or production and processing.

■ Most global sugar production is from sugar cane. About 20% of the world’s sugar comes from sugar beet, which is produced in temperate areas including the EU.

*Source: Fairtrade International*

* [**www.fairtrade.org.uk**](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk) **23 February, 2015**

**STAND BY SUGAR CANE FARMERS FAILED BY EU, URGES FAIRTRADE**

**www.fairtrade.org.uk**

**23 February, 2015**

STAND BY SUGAR CANE FARMERS FAILED BY EU, URGES FAIRTRADE



Fairtrade calls for a new approach that puts farmers first

World leaders will publically commit to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals later this year, in a bid to reduce global poverty. Yet [**Sugar Crash**](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/~/media/fairtradeuk/what%20is%20fairtrade/documents/policy%20and%20research%20documents/policy%20reports/faitrade%20foundation%20sugar%20crash%20report.ashx), a new report published by the Fairtrade Foundation today (23 February), says that a reform of the EU sugar market, supported by the UK government, is putting the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of farmers in developing countries at risk and could push 200,000 people into poverty over the next five years[[1]](file:///Y:\\Policy%20and%20Public%20Affairs\\Press%20Office\\Press%20Releases\\2015\\FINAL\\Stand%20by%20sugar%20farmers%20FINAL.docx" \l "_ftn1).  
  
Following an EU decision to lift the cap on EU sugar beet production by 2017, small-scale sugar cane farmers in African, Caribbean and Pacific (APC) and Least Developed Countries (LDC) - including former British colonies such as Jamaica, and some of the world's poorest countries such as Malawi - will struggle to compete with European sugar beet farmers, who receive subsidies from the EU[[2]](file:///Y:\\Policy%20and%20Public%20Affairs\\Press%20Office\\Press%20Releases\\2015\\FINAL\\Stand%20by%20sugar%20farmers%20FINAL.docx" \l "_ftn2). Many of these countries have supplied Britain with sugar for generations, and have few other options for earning a living.   
  
According to the Department for International Development’s (DFID’s) own research, the end of the beet sugar quota could push 200,000 people in developing countries into poverty by 2020. To make matters worse, the EU reform coincides with a sharp slump in the global sugar price, which has halved in three years[[3]](file:///Y:\\Policy%20and%20Public%20Affairs\\Press%20Office\\Press%20Releases\\2015\\FINAL\\Stand%20by%20sugar%20farmers%20FINAL.docx" \l "_ftn3). As a result, sugar cane farmers who are already being priced out of the EU market are also being priced out of alternative markets and risk losing their livelihoods much sooner than anticipated.  
  
"Sugar is the backbone of our economy and the source of our income,” said Paulette Richards, a sugar cane farmer and secretary of the Trelawney & St James Cane Growers Association in Jamaica, where about 8 per cent of the population earn their living directly or indirectly from sugar cane[[4]](file:///Y:\\Policy%20and%20Public%20Affairs\\Press%20Office\\Press%20Releases\\2015\\FINAL\\Stand%20by%20sugar%20farmers%20FINAL.docx" \l "_ftn4). “If we hadn't the sugar industry... children would not be able to go to school effectively, shops would close, bakery would close, it would affect every individual."   
  
Threatened too is the future of Fairtrade sugar, which has changed the lives of more than 62,000 small-scale sugar cane farmers in developing countries by enabling them to increase their productivity, improve their businesses, and invest in a wide range of community projects such as educational grants, health clinics, and access to safe drinking water. “Fairtrade goes beyond extra payments, it’s about creating new opportunities,” said Alexia Ludford, a 32 year-old sugar cane farmer from Jamaica, who is in the UK to launch Fairtrade’s report. “The farmers benefit, the community benefits, kids benefits, everyone benefits.”  
  
Although the EU has provided funding to support sugar cane farmers through the transition, it has not always been directed effectively and according to the UK’s Department for Food and Rural Affairs, in many cases its benefit will not be felt in time[[5]](file:///Y:\\Policy%20and%20Public%20Affairs\\Press%20Office\\Press%20Releases\\2015\\FINAL\\Stand%20by%20sugar%20farmers%20FINAL.docx" \l "_ftn5)**.**

Michael Gidney, Chief Executive at the Fairtrade Foundation, said: “We cannot stand by and watch as thousands of sugar cane farmers in developing countries, who have supplied the UK for generations - and in some cases, been encouraged with EU funds to grow more sugar – lose their livelihoods. This is not a levelling of the playing field, because European beet sugar farmers get a subsidy from the EU.

“We need a new approach that puts farmers first. We’re calling on the EU to bring together government, business and civil society, to find and fund solutions that will support sugar cane farmers to stay in the game, find new markets or diversify. Crucially, they must involve sugar farmers in the process – and as a quarter of the EU’s sugar imports from these countries comes to the UK, DFID must play a lead role.  
  
“British shoppers can also play their part. We’re asking them to stand by the sugar cane farmers that have been failed by politics, by choosing Fairtrade sugar or asking their supermarket to stock it. There are people’s lives in our shopping baskets, and we don’t believe people would want to buy sugar that costs a penny or two less per bag, if they knew that the cost was hundreds of thousands of people being pushed into poverty.”

The Fairtrade Foundation’s [Sugar Crash](http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/~/media/fairtradeuk/what%20is%20fairtrade/documents/policy%20and%20research%20documents/policy%20reports/faitrade%20foundation%20sugar%20crash%20report.ashx) report marks the launch of Fairtrade Fortnight 2015. First held in 1995, this year’s Fairtrade Fortnight campaign turns the spotlight on the producers who grow some of our favourite everyday foods – including cocoa, sugar and tea – to show the difference that Fairtrade makes to their lives and why Fairtrade is urgently needed. Consumers are being urged to “choose products that change lives” and retailers and other businesses asked to “stock products that change lives”.

**– ENDS –**

* [**www.tralac.org**](http://www.tralac.org)

**The end of the EU sugar quota and the implication for African producers**

www.tralac.org

Discussions

**The end of the EU sugar quota and the implication for African producers**



08 May 2014

**Willemien Viljoen, tralac Researcher, discusses the implications of the European Union’s new sugar import regime for African countries**

The European Union (EU) is the world’s largest producer of beet sugar and the main importer of cane sugar for refining. Approximately 50 percent of the world’s beet sugar is produced in the EU under a quota system where the total production quota of 13.3 million tons is divided among the EU sugar producing member states. A minimum price for beet sugar (only for in-quota quantities) and a reference price for white sugar and raw sugar all form part of the complex EU sugar regime that is set to change in 2017.

Developing and least developed countries from the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP), including Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Swaziland have benefited from the export of raw sugar to the EU market. Currently the EU imports approximately 60 percent of their demand for cane sugar from the ACP countries under the duty-free quota-free access sugar from these countries have to the EU market. Between 1999 and 2013 EU imports of cane and beet sugar (HS 1701) increased by 7 percent. In 2013 the EU mainly imported solid raw cane sugar from Brazil, which has been the EU’s main sugar trading partner since approximately 2008. Brazil has been benefitting from a sugar import quota system that allows for about 1 million tons of sugar to be imported into the EU at a reduced or zero rate of duty. Five African countries are among the top 10 sugar exporters to the EU in 2013; these were Mauritius, Swaziland, Mozambique, Algeria and Zambia. While the EU mainly imported refined sucrose from Mauritius and Algeria, the main exporting product for the majority of other African nations, including Swaziland, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia is raw solid cane sugar to be further processed within the EU.

Since the 2006 reforms of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), including a new sugar regime that will see the end of the EU production quota and reference price for EU beet sugar, which is likely to see the EU move from being a net importer of sugar to a net sugar exporter. According to the EU the sugar reform will contribute to the simplification of the sugar regime (both production and trade) and greater market orientation of the EU sugar policy. The reforms were introduced through an initial reduction of the EU reference price and minimum price for sugar and strengthened by the decision to eliminate sugar quotas as of 2017.

Recent work by the European Commission (EC) shows that the reform of the EU sugar regime could lead to a 4.2 percent increase EU production of beet sugar, while imports of sugar are estimated to decline by 42.6 percent, mainly due to the replacement of imports from high-cost third countries, like the ACP countries, by domestic production. The research also shows the possibility that the current demand for sugar from ACP countries could decline significantly when the sugar reforms enter into force, due to sugar from competitive sugar producing countries, like Brazil, displacing ACP sugar in the EU market.

Due to the potential negative effect that the sugar reform might have on ACP producers, the world sugar market and the price of sugar, African countries (especially COMESA member states) have called upon the EU to extend the quota system to 2020 to enable them to modernize their domestic sugar industries to become competitive within the world market. African sugar exporting countries have also indicated that they will have to change their focus from the EU market to increasing their stake in regional markets to compensate for the decline in the EU demand that is likely to take place when sugar quotas are abolished. However, as one of the sensitive product sectors in Africa, domestic sugar industries are often protected by high import tariffs and numerous non-tariff barriers that apply to sugar trade in the region. As a result many countries are importing sugar from countries further afield like Brazil, China, India and Thailand, with South Africa being the dominant African supplier of sugar to the rest of the region. To mitigate the predicted decline of sugar industries in the region countries will have to address tariff and non-tariff barriers to sugar trade prevalent in the region, become more competitive through the modernization of sugar production (e.g. through the cultivation of disease-resistant varieties and the impact of improved infrastructure) to be able to compete in existing markets with competitors like Brazil and consider the diversification of products produced from sugar cane that can be more lucrative products, including green products like cellulose and lignin from polymers in the sugar cane, bio-plastic and bio-fertilizers.

* [**http://www.ifpri.org/pressrelease/reforming-global-sugar-trade-what-do-changes-sugar-policy-mean-future?print**](http://www.ifpri.org/pressrelease/reforming-global-sugar-trade-what-do-changes-sugar-policy-mean-future?print)

**Reforming Global Sugar Trade: What Do Changes in Sugar Policy Mean for the Future?**

[](http://www.ifpri.org/)

**Reforming Global Sugar Trade: What Do Changes in Sugar Policy Mean for the Future?**

Created by **ANONYMOUS**

Updated at 1244060793

*By David Orden, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute*

Major changes are on the horizon for sugar, one of the world’s most highly protected agricultural commodities. A recent shift in European Union (EU) policy, which could significantly reshape sugar markets in both industrialized and developing countries, is receiving scant attention in the U.S. Current protectionist measures greatly restrict access to sugar markets worldwide, distort global competition, and lower prices and revenues for many competitive, low-cost producers and exporters.

The substantial EU sugar reforms, initiated in 2006, focus on cutting subsidies to farmers and closing obsolete sugar mills. Over time, these policy changes could cause sugar production in the European Union to fall by one-third, shifting the EUfrom a net exporter to a net importer of sugar. Reducing EU protectionism will also have a ripple effect across the globe, increasing world sugar prices and providing new opportunities to low-cost producers, such as Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, South Africa, and Thailand. Conversely, countries that currently have preferential access to sugar markets would experience economic losses.

The full impact of these reforms is uncertain, including how the EU will cope with future challenges, such as the full liberalization of sugar imports from the least developed countries in 2009. Nevertheless, the changes are significant and could influence U.S. sugar policies.

Currently, U.S. policy protects sugar producers and processors from competition by limiting imports and excluding lower-cost producers from open access to the market. This keeps domestic sugar prices artificially high. However, 40 countries have been given preferential access to U.S. markets, including certain high-cost producers, such as a number of Caribbean countries.

As EU reforms proceed, and as U.S. corn sweetener and sugar markets become more integrated with Mexico under NAFTA, the U.S. could come under pressure to change its sugar price support program. Potentially, the U.S. could end sugar subsidies and institute a buyout, as it has for peanut quotas and tobacco price supports. Restrictions on imports and domestic production could be relaxed and tariffs lowered. Although these changes would bring sugar prices down, their impact on developing countries would vary.

More open global trade in sugar would benefit some poor African countries that are low-cost producers of sugar, including Malawi and Zimbabwe. Other countries, such as Mauritius and Swaziland, would be hurt economically due to loss of preferential market access.

In order to be competitive in global sugar markets, developing countries would have to produce sugar efficiently and massively, meaning they would have to engage in large-scale, high-tech production, calling into question the opportunities for smallholder farmers. Nevertheless, it may be possible for small-scale sugar producers to organize themselves in cooperatives that could successfully compete.

Among developing countries, Brazil is by far the key player in global sugar markets. Being both the world’s largest producer of ethanol (all produced from sugarcane) and greatest exporter of low-cost sugar, Brazil’s sugar policies have a major impact on world markets. If Brazil decided to primarily produce ethanol from its sugarcane, for example, the price of sugar would increase worldwide. On the other hand, if Brazil focused on sugar production, prices on the global sugar market would fall.

The potential impact of policy changes on farmers in both developed and developing countries is huge, but more open global trade in sugar would result in more winners than losers. Taking a cue from the EU, the U.S. should seek to reform its sugar policy, to provide better market access. This would benefit both low-cost sugar producers in developing countries, as well as consumers in the U.S.

**#**

*The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, an alliance of 64 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations*

* [**http://www.claremoodymep.com/support\_for\_sugar\_cane\_farmers**](http://www.claremoodymep.com/support_for_sugar_cane_farmers)

Support for Sugar Cane farmers

**Posted by DAN BREMBER 15pc on April 07, 2015**



In recent weeks, Clare has received a large amount of correspondence on the important issue of sugar cane farmers in developing countries and the role of the EU in supporting them.

Clare and her Labour colleagues agree that these sugar cane farmers, many of whom are Fairtrade, need targeted and effective support to ensure their livelihoods in the years to come.

As strong supporters of Fairtrade, Labour MEPs have been active on this issue for many years. Reforms were made in the sugar sector back in 2006, and Labour MEPs pushed for the establishment of a specific fund to help sugar cane farmers in developing countries adapt to these reforms. This was established by the EU and known as the Accompanying Measures for Sugar Protocol. It had a budget of €1.2 billion as part of the Development Cooperation Programme of the EU.

Now that the cap on sugar production within the EU is soon to be lifted, it is vital that the farmers affected continue to be supported effectively. In the last 18 months Labour MEPs have raised the issue with former Commissioner Piebalgs and the EU Delegations in the relevant countries and asked for clarity on how the current support programmes are being implemented.

At the same time, Labour has opposed the granting of extra subsidies by some European countries to their sugar beet industries, known as Voluntary Coupled Support, and will continue to do so. As you rightly point out, this is not a level playing field between EU producers and sugar cane farmers from the developing world.

More recently, Labour MEPs have been working with the Fairtrade Foundation to raise this issue with current Commissioner for Development Neven Mimica, and will request a meeting with him in the coming weeks to clarify how the existing funding can be used more effectively and how the overall development budget can help ensure sugar cane farmers can continue their livelihoods. Additionally we should ensure that the farmers have a seat at the table in the decisions that affect them.