



**This information sheet accompanies Patrick’s Virtual Visit and explains a little more about tea, the FAIRTRADE Mark and co-operatives, introducing terms such as sustainability and consumer power.**

## Tea

After water, tea is the world’s most popular drink - 70,000 cups are drunk each second! Around the world, as many as 50 million people are involved in the tea industry. Many of these are in developing countries. Tea can be grown on large plantations or small-scale farms.

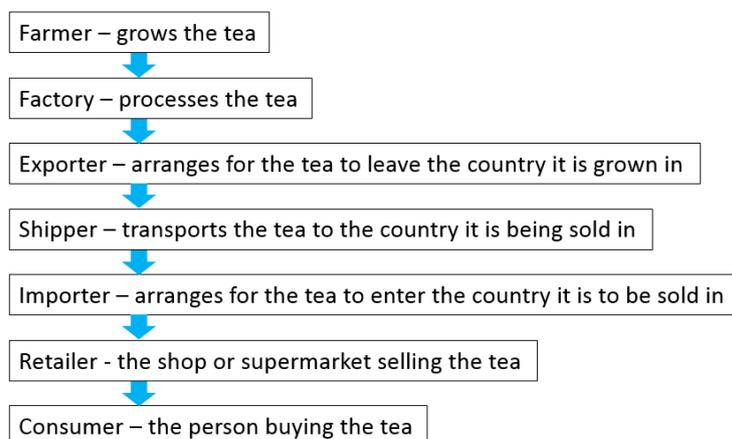
Patrick lives in Kenya which is the third biggest tea producer in the world – three million people there rely on the tea industry. A lot of the country’s tea is grown by small-scale tea farmers. The average small-scale tea farm in Africa is less than half the size of a football pitch.

### How does it grow?

There are many types of tea and they may be grown and picked slightly differently depending on the type of tea or the country it is grown in. On Patrick’s farm the tea bushes grow for five years before they are picked. Then the top two leaves and the bud are picked every week or two. This way, the tea bush can keep producing leaves for decades. The freshly plucked ‘green leaf tea’ is processed in factories into the black tea you will find in most teabags.

Being a tea farmer can be difficult. The price of the green leaf tea can go up and down. In the tea [supply chain](#) large companies hold a lot of the power in deciding the price of tea and small-scale tea farmers do not. The [supply chain](#) refers to all of the people involved in the creation of a product, such as tea, from start to finish.

A (very simplified) tea supply chain might be:





## Climate change

Tea grows best at high altitudes with regular rain but the weather in some of the places that tea grows is changing.

In parts of Kenya, the rain, winds and temperature are becoming harder to predict and this is affecting the tea and making life difficult for the farmers. Higher temperatures, less rain and more hail, droughts and frosts are affecting the amount of tea produced which impacts how much farmers can earn from selling their crop.

## Sustainability

**Sustainability** means living and working in a way that allows us to meet our needs now but without making it very difficult for future generations to do the same. For example, if you use chemicals to make your crops grow faster so that you have more to sell now BUT the chemicals you use damage the soil so that you can't grow much at all in future years – this is **unsustainable**. This does not just apply to farming. A lot of the energy we use in everyday life (eg. for lighting our homes and cooking our food) comes from oil, coal and natural gas but there is a limited supply of these sources (known as 'fossil fuels'). They are unsustainable – we can't use them once they have run out. More **sustainable** sources of energy are solar power, wind power and tidal power.

## What is a co-operative?

A **co-operative** is when a group of people work together, all working towards the same goal. You could describe a football team as a co-operative – all of the players work together to win their games. For farmers, it means joining up and working together as a group, a **co-operative**, so that they can take decisions together and share costs, profits and benefits.

There are several advantages to working in this way, especially if you and your neighbouring farmers have small farms. It means you can pay for things like fertilisers together and share the cost. It also means that when you sell your crops you can sell together in larger amounts. When bigger businesses want to buy your crops it means you have more power to negotiate for a better price.

*[here you could play 'The Negotiating Game']*

## Consumer Power

The consumer is the person buying the end product. We are all consumers. From the moment we brush our teeth and have our breakfast to our evening meal, we are using things that have been



made all over the world. [See Activity sheet: Fairtrade Breakfast Discussion Ideas which explores this theme]

From the **supply chain** above we can see that the consumer is at one end of the chain and the farmer, or the person who made the product, is at the other end. They are separated by lots of different people and processes and, as a consumer, it is very easy to lose touch with how our products get to us. However we play a big part in this chain.

One way that shops and supermarkets may try to get more customers is to keep their prices low. This can mean that further down the supply chain there is very little money. In particular this can affect the farmers who do hard physical work but are offered little money for their product. In fact, half of the world's hungriest people are small-scale farmers.

It can be hard to see how we can have an influence on the rest of the supply chain but as consumers we hold a lot of **consumer power**! Supermarkets and shops need us to buy their products so will only sell what people will buy. As a consumer you have a lot of choice. There are many places that you could choose to spend your money and many products to choose from in each place. Next time you visit your local supermarket, try counting how many different teas (or coffees or chocolate bars) they sell. There will be a lot! Now imagine that every time you buy something is like having a vote. For example if you have the choice between a dark chocolate bar and a milk chocolate bar you might prefer milk chocolate and always buy that one. If lots of other people feel the same and always buy the milk chocolate bar then the supermarket will look at its sales and start stocking more milk chocolate and less dark chocolate as they know that the milk chocolate will sell faster.

In the same way, you may choose based on how that product has been made. One way to do this would be to look for the FAIRTRADE Mark which means that the farmers who have grown the ingredients in your product have got a fair deal for their hard work.

Just through your shopping choices you can get farmers a better deal. That means they can make their own decisions, control their futures and lead the dignified life everyone deserves.

*[here you could do the 'Consumer Power Activity' to demonstrate how customer preferences influence what shops and supermarkets stock]*

### **What is the Fairtrade Premium?**

When we choose products with the FAIRTRADE Mark we are making sure that the farmers who grew that product receive a fair price for their hard work, plus a little extra, to spend on projects of their choice. This extra money is called the **Fairtrade Premium** and the **co-operative** decide together how it is spent. It might be on a school or a hospital for the local community or it might be used to help farms be more productive. It depends on the needs of the community and is a joint decision.

At Patrick's co-operative in Michimikuru, some of the farmers used to plant Eucalyptus trees. These trees grow really quickly and can be cut down and sold for firewood. This meant that the farmers

## INFORMATION



could make a bit of extra money. However, Eucalyptus takes a lot of water from the soil to grow and this dried up the rivers and made it difficult to grow other crops. It also meant that when the rains came the soil washed away more easily. Is this [sustainable](#) or [unsustainable](#)? Why?

One of the ways that Patrick's [co-operative](#) has used the [Fairtrade Premium](#) is to invest in training Rangers. They are specially trained to work with the farmers to help them to grow different plants instead of Eucalyptus that will make the soil healthier rather than damaging it. This means that they can grow their crops better. Is this [sustainable](#) or [unsustainable](#)? Why?