

FAIR TRANSPORT:
A proposal for raising standards and
recognising good practice

December 2012

FAIR TRANSPORT



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1. Introduction

Fair trade isn't always fair for everyone involved. When producers, retailers and suppliers sign up for the right to display a badge such as the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Mark, they are under no obligation to use a decent shipping company to transport their goods.

The Fairtrade Foundation says that it never claimed that the Fairtrade Mark is a guarantee of fair treatment of all workers throughout the supply chain – only that a better deal is on offer for small developing-world producers.

Consumers see fair trade badges like this as a way of helping disadvantaged people, and would surely be shocked to learn that some so-called 'fair trade' products are transported on sub-standard, unsafe ships.

Many big, powerful brands have recently declared themselves part of the fair trade movement, and are benefiting from the consumer goodwill this generates. Perhaps they are using decent shipping companies, perhaps not – there's no way for the consumer to know.

Maritime unions Nautilus International and SEKO want to see an end to the use

of substandard shipping to transport fair trade products. Indeed, we want to see the end of all substandard shipping, whether the vessels are transporting fair trade goods, mainstream goods or indeed passengers.

The drive to improve standards is not coming only from the unions. In the business world, the principle of Corporate Social Responsibility is becoming a key factor in commercial success. Companies are increasingly recognising that Corporate Social Responsibility is not just about reputation or risk but an important driver for social innovation and long-term value creation. We believe shipping must also play its part in this new revolution.

Through the work of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), there is already a system to expose the substandard operators, and the ITF's campaign for Decent Work for all exploited seafarers has already made significant gains. We will continue to support this campaign, but we also want to highlight the good work done by responsible shipping companies and set clear standards for others to aspire to – particularly those who operate under

bona fide national shipping registers of countries such as the UK, Sweden and other EU member states.

But how can we ensure that those shipping companies who treat their employees well – those who support constant improvement in living and working conditions, and who operate to the highest safety and environmental standards – are rewarded for their commitment and investment?

We propose a new badging system: the Fair Transport Mark, based on the principles of the fair trade movement and adapted for the needs of the shipping industry. Please read on to learn more about how we came to the conclusion that this is needed – and how the best shipping companies can work with us to make the scheme a success.



Picture: Danny Cornelissen

2. What is 'fair trade'?

The basic principle of the fair trade movement is that small-scale producers in developing countries should be given a decent cut of the profits when their produce is exported and sold abroad. In the supermarkets of western Europe and the USA, it is now common to see fair trade logos (also known as badges or marks) on imported items such as bananas, tea, coffee and chocolate. These indicate that the product or its ingredients were bought from the farmer in an ethically-sound way.

Probably the best-known fair trade logo, particularly in the UK, is the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade¹ Mark (pictured right). This indicates that the buyer has paid the producer at least the minimum Fairtrade price – which must be maintained even during a slump in

the market, so that small producers are able to plan ahead and sustain their livelihoods.

The Fairtrade Foundation's scheme also requires buyers to pay a premium which producers use to invest in farm improvements, processing facilities, and education and healthcare for the community.

Producers participating in the scheme must ensure their workers are afforded basic rights according to the fundamental rights espoused by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and its core conventions, which seek to ensure Decent Work for all. The Fairtrade Foundation says: 'This means health and safety standards, freedom of association, collective bargaining, no discrimination and no bonded or illegal child labour.'



The Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Mark

¹ The use of the term 'Fairtrade' (one word) is reserved by the Fairtrade Foundation as a description of products and transactions involving products that meet international Fairtrade standards. When talking about fair trade principles more generally, two words should be used.



Substandard shipping: two men were expected to live in this tiny cabin onboard the Liberian-registered Leon, whose crew were encountered by ITF inspectors in the Port of Hull in April 2012, having gone without pay since January

3. Fair trade – positives and negatives

The Fairtrade Foundation’s scheme obviously has praiseworthy aims, and consumers have enthusiastically embraced the opportunity to combat the exploitation of developing-world farmers. According to figures from the Foundation, the market for Fairtrade-certified goods has actually continued to expand during the current recession (see table 1).

Given this strong consumer demand for ethically-sourced products, supermarkets are eager to display fair trade products on their shelves – and major food brands such as Tate & Lyle, Cadbury’s and Nestlé have won positive media coverage for

their decision to use fair trade ingredients for some or all of their products.

Everybody involved, it seems, is benefiting from fair trade – except the people who bring the goods across the seas. There has been a great deal of media attention given to fair trade and its benefits to producers and consumers, but we always look in vain for references to seafarers or shipping. It’s as if the fair trade products appear on the supermarket shelves by magic.

The shipping industry needs to raise its profile and take its rightful place as the facilitator of the fair trade process.



Picture: Danny Cornelissen

Table 1: Sales of Fairtrade certified products in the UK

(from www.fairtrade.org.uk)

Estimated UK retail sales by value 2001-2011 (£ million)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Coffee	18.6	23.1	34.3	49.3	65.8	93	117	137.3	160	179.8	194.3
Tea	5.9	7.2	9.5	12.9	16.6	25.1	30	64.8	70.3	82.6	86.7
Cocoa products**	3.3*	3.9*	7.3*	9.6*	13.2*	16.4*	25.6*	25.6*	44.5*	162	217.1
Sugar products**	4.5	5.7	8.7	14.3	19.5	23.7	50.6	107.7	164.6	384	464.1
Honey products**	3.2	4.9	6.1	3.4	3.5	3.4	2.7	5.2	3.6	6.8	4.1
Bananas	14.6	17.3	24.3	30.6	47.7	65.6	150	184.6	215.5	206.6	208
Flowers	n/a	n/a	n/a	4.3	5.7	14	24	33.4	30	27.6	26.3
Wine	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.5	3.3	5.3	8.2	10	18.1	18.5	20.7
Cotton	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.2	4.5	34.8	77.9	73.2	51.7	41
Fresh Fruit	n/a	0.1	1	5.9	8.5	17.6	28	32.2	24.3	15.5	12.1
Fruit Juices	0.4	0.8	1.1	2.3	4.6	7.7	13.8	21.1	13.1	15.2	16.5
Other***	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.7	6.4	10.1	8.3	21.8	26.2	23.5	12.1
TOTAL	50.5	63	92.3	140.8	195	286.3	493	712.6	843.4*	1173.8	1319.3
Year-on-Year Growth	53%	25%	47%	53%	38%	47%	72%	45%	18%	39%	12%
Chocolate	5.4	6.2	9.2	13.7	18.4	23.2	35.8	38.3	88.6	346	413.1

**After review, the 2009 and historical cocoa figures have been reviewed and the sales values updated. The figures against these products represent the cocoa part of all products containing cocoa, the honey part of all products containing sugar.

***These figures cover all Fairtrade commodities not covered by other categories. These include vegetables, dried fruit, pulses, rice, quinoa, sesame seeds, nuts and oils, sports balls and spices.

Chocolate includes figures listed elsewhere in this table (e.g. sugar and cocoa) so are not included in the totals.

4. Fair transport campaign work by Nautilus and SEKO

Nautilus International

For many years, Nautilus has been using its widely-read journal, the Telegraph, to highlight cases where fair trade goods have been carried on sub-standard vessels. One of these articles is appended to this report as an example.

The Union has also been raising awareness of the seafarer's role in fair trade by issuing media releases and taking opportunities to comment on the issue online and in the print and broadcast media (see appendices 1).

In 2006, Nautilus (then known as NUMAST) brought a motion on fair trade to the UK Trades Union Congress (TUC). The motion called for the TUC to open dialogue with fair trade labelling organisations on the issue of fair treatment for seafarers carrying fair trade produce. The Congress adopted the motion unanimously. Similar motions have been adopted by conferences hosted by the UK Cooperative Society, the ITF and the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA) – an

example of such a motion is appended to this report. But despite all this activity, little progress has been made to date.

Nautilus also approached the Fairtrade Foundation directly in 2008, proposing that a clause on shipping should be introduced into its licensing agreement for firms applying to display the Fairtrade Mark on their products. This clause would have committed these firms to using reputable shipping companies – in other words, those who had signed agreements with the ITF or the International Bargaining Forum (IBF), or those using vessels registered in flag states that have ratified the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006². However, the union's suggestion was rejected by the Foundation, which said it needed to concentrate its limited resources on ensuring that the producers and buyers in its Fairtrade scheme were adhering to the existing terms of their contracts. Since then, though, the Fairtrade Foundation has extended its scheme to embrace the mining of gold³ – so it seems that where there is a will, there is a way.

SEKO – Seafarers Branch

Inspired by the work of Nautilus, and with a long running commitment to achieving fair treatment for seafarers, the Seafarers Branch of SEKO set up a campaign website, 'Fair bananas on the oceans', available in Swedish and English at www.schystabananer.nu. The union has also carried out two studies to assess whether it would be desirable and feasible for the shipping industry to adopt some key principles of the fair trade movement.

SEKO study: 'The general public's view on working conditions for people transporting goods to and from Sweden'

In 2011, SEKO carried out detailed research work to explore how popular fair trade products are among Swedish consumers, and whether consumers would be prepared to pay a small premium for goods transported by seafarers with decent working conditions.

If fair trade goods were found to be popular, this would be a strong indication

2 www.ilo.org/global/standards/maritime-labour-convention/lang-en/index.html

3 www.fairtrade.org.uk/gold/



Substandard shipping: the crew of the Leon endured many weeks without fresh food in early 2012 until ITF inspectors became involved and the vessel's owner eventually sent replenishments

that many consumers want to help people less fortunate than themselves – even if it means paying more for certain products. But would these consumers consider seafarers as deserving of their money as developing-world farmers?

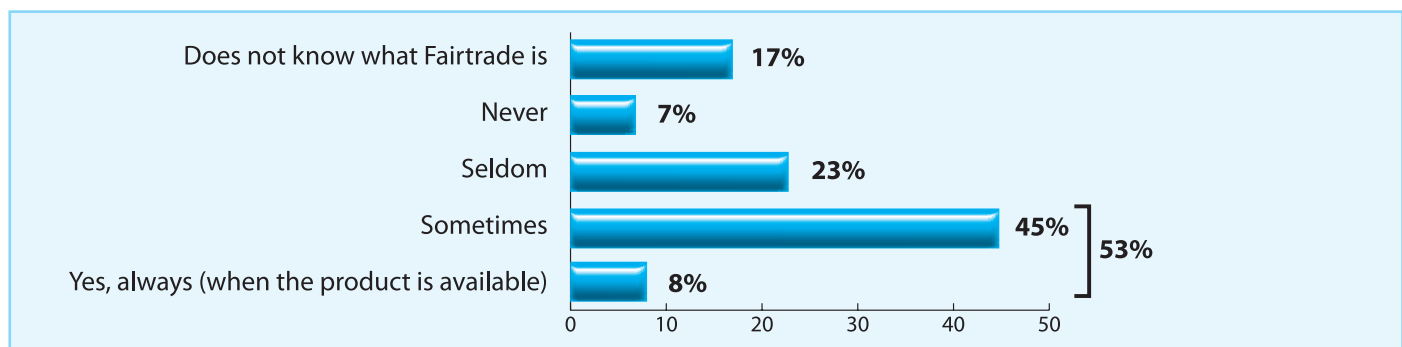
SEKO tested these ideas in 2011 on a representative sample of the Swedish public. The research found that fair trade goods were indeed popular in Sweden. 83% of respondents knew what fair trade was, and 53% of respondents said that they sometimes or always bought

fair trade products when available. This represents a major breakthrough for the fair trade movement, which has obviously succeeded in educating consumers about its principles and persuading them to pay a premium for ethically-sound goods. Full results are shown in table 2.

The big question is whether shipping could capitalise on this success. With consumers so accepting of fair trade principles, it may be that they would now need little persuasion to support

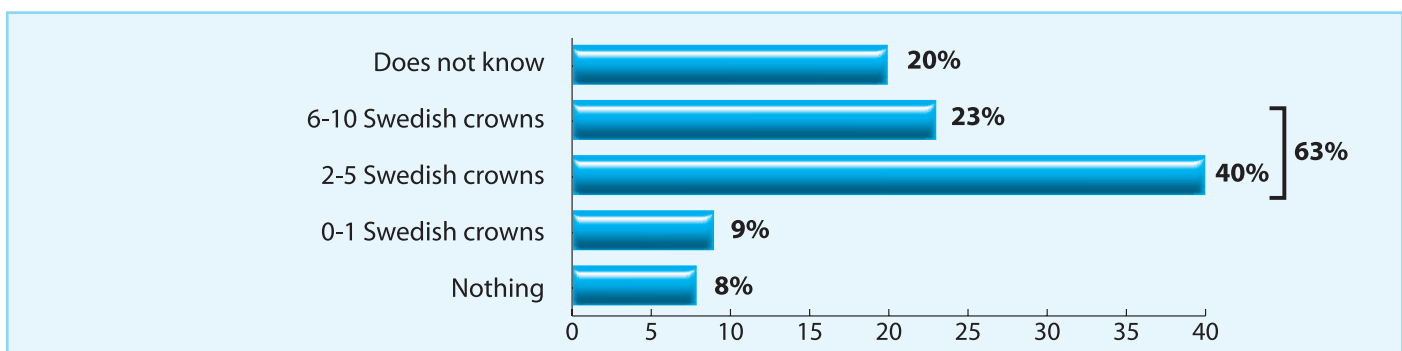
seafarers as well as producers. The SEKO study therefore asked its survey participants if they would be prepared to pay a little more for a particular product – in this case, a kilo of bananas – if they knew the product had been transported by seafarers with decent working conditions. The response was positive: nearly two out of three consumers said that they would be prepared to pay 2-10 SKr more. Full results are shown in table 3.

Table 2: Do you usually buy Fairtrade products?



From the SEKO report *The general public's view on working conditions for people transporting goods to and from Sweden* – 13 October 2011

Table 3: How much more would you be willing to pay for one kilo of bananas if you knew that people transporting the bananas to Sweden had decent working conditions?



From the SEKO report *The general public's view on working conditions for people transporting goods to and from Sweden* – 13 October 2011

SEKO study: 'Crew costs in the consumer line'

In another piece of research carried out in 2011, SEKO studied whether it would be realistic for all shipping companies to pay their seafarers a wage above the industry minimum. The research set out to establish what proportion of sea transport costs are spent on crewing, and it found that the percentage is very low, even where crews are drawn from Britain or Sweden (countries with a reputation for 'expensive' seafarers). The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is that paying seafarers a decent wage is a negligible cost for shipowners, compared with the overall costs of shipping a product. Table 4 shows the findings in detail.

Table 4: Crew costs as a percentage of overall shipping costs

	Minimum cost	Maximum cost	All Swedish
House oil	0.0087%	0.0201%	0.0220%
Laptop computer	0.0006%	0.0017%	0.0020%
Bookcase	0.0231%	0.0646%	0.0749%
Ladies' top	0.0059%	0.0160%	0.0188%
Bananas	0.0841%	0.2324%	0.2707%

From the SEKO report *Crew costs in the consumer line* – 10 October 2011

SEKO's Fair Freight Badge

Having established the desire of consumers to support decent working conditions among seafarers, as well as the feasibility for shipping firms to pay slightly higher wages, SEKO proposed that a new 'Fair Freight Badge' should be established. The idea was for the badge to be awarded to firms meeting the following conditions:

- none of the vessels managed by the shipping company sail under a flag which has received a complaint from the ILO
- all the shipping company's vessels have national collective agreements, or for flag of convenience vessels, ITF-approved agreements

- none of the shipping company's vessels have been kept in detention by Port State Control or other national authority control due to poor sanitary or humanitarian standards
- the shipping company has policies and plans of action to guarantee that the working conditions onboard all their vessels continue to comply with signed agreements and current international conventions

These conditions are essentially the same as the clauses that Nautilus was proposing to introduce into the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Mark licensing agreement. In fact, Nautilus and SEKO have been working increasingly closely together to achieve their shared aim of fair treatment for seafarers in the fair trade supply chain. And now, in 2012, the two unions are taking the project further, with a new, more wide-ranging proposal for a Fair Transport Mark.

5. The Fair Transport Mark

SEKO and Nautilus International are proposing to establish a Fair Transport Mark which would signify a shipping company's commitment to Decent Work and fair treatment for all its seafarers. Our aim is to recognise best practice, and to highlight decent conditions and continuous improvement – a requirement now enshrined in the MLC, 2006. We believe this is consistent with the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility and will help build a more sustainable basis for competition in the global shipping industry.

As well as being a means for European shipping businesses to show their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility, the scheme would help to raise the profile of shipping and highlight the crucial role of shipping in world trade.

To administer the scheme and award the Fair Transport Mark, we envisage joining with other European maritime trade unions and interested stakeholders including European shipping companies to set up a separate independent body – in much the same way as a consortium of charities established the Fairtrade Foundation in the UK.

Although inspired by fair trade badging schemes such as the Fairtrade Mark, the Fair Transport Mark need not be restricted to firms carrying fair trade goods. We would like to see fair treatment for all seafarers, whether they are transporting fair trade goods, mainstream goods, or indeed passengers. Another option could be to extend the Fair Transport Mark to air, road and rail transport firms as well as shipping and inland navigation companies.

The standards we would set for those applying to join the scheme would be based on those established by the Fairtrade Foundation, suitably adapted

for our industry. Initially, the standards would relate to goods carried on the sea and inland waterways, but could obviously be broadened if the scheme were expanded to encompass other transport modes.

Regarding the usage of the Fair Transport Mark, there are different possibilities under consideration. The Mark could be awarded to businesses to display on their websites, letterheads and corporate publications. Alternatively – or in addition – it may be possible to go down the route of ethical trading schemes such as those of the Fairtrade Foundation, the Rainforest Alliance and the Soil Association, and license the Fair Transport Mark for display on individual products that have been shipped on vessels operated by Fair Transport Companies.

However it is displayed, the Fair Transport Mark will become a widely-recognised indicator of high quality and good practice in the shipping industry – something which is becoming increasingly important to shippers, charterers, insurers, P&I Clubs, ship financiers and other financial institutions. The people who invest in shipping, who insure shipping assets and cargoes, want to know that their funds are safe and their risk exposure is mitigated by dealing with reputable and decent shipping companies with well-treated and highly competent crews. After all, who would want to entrust poorly-paid, dissatisfied seafarers with their precious investment?

Many of the larger shippers, charterers and ship financiers are already carrying out their own vetting procedures before committing their funds to particular shipping companies, and with money still so tight and the appetite for risk reduced, the trend for close scrutiny is likely to intensify. In this climate, a shipping firm

displaying the Fair Transport Mark should be more attractive than its downmarket rivals operating in the shady world of substandard ship registers and unreliable crews.



**FAIR
TRANSPORT**

How the new Fair Transport Mark could look. This will eventually be decided in consultation with stakeholders

6. An indicator of Corporate Social Responsibility

In October 2011, the European Commission (EC) put forward a new definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as ‘the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society’. Respect for applicable legislation, and for collective agreements between social partners, is a prerequisite for meeting that responsibility, stressed the Commission.

It added: ‘To fully meet their corporate social responsibility, enterprises should have in place a process to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders.’⁴

The Fair Transport scheme would be just the kind of process the EC expects European companies to adopt. And the Fair Transport Mark would be a highly visible indicator that a company was meeting its CSR obligations.

There may remain some doubters who see CSR as a ‘fluffy’ concept, not relevant to the hard realities of the international shipping industry. However, this view was certainly not shared by senior industry figures at the London CSR conference in November 2012.

For example, Clay Maitland, managing partner of International Registries, said CSR was ‘an excellent way of doing good things in the public interest, and is therefore a good way of improving not just the image of the company but of the shipping industry as a whole.’

Reputational risk is very real for shipping companies, he pointed out, with accidents like the Costa Concordia having a huge impact. ‘The idea of CSR is therefore of great value to the industry, and the businesses that will survive and prosper will be those that embrace its principles,’ he added.

The ‘spate’ of environmental regulations has resulted in CSR principles being

enshrined in maritime law and has turned the concept into a mainstream issue, Mr Maitland argued. ‘Companies are being made to adopt the CSR programme, and the process of legislating CSR has turned all of us in the shipping industry into practitioners.’

A company’s employees must not be forgotten in the CSR process, he continued. ‘It is easy to say that we are talking about safer ships and cleaner seas, but it is also about how we treat the people who work for us.’

At the same conference, Karianne Tieleman of the ABN Amro bank said the global economic crisis is having a radical impact on ship financing. Banks – which currently provide more than 50% of the finance for the world fleet – are now increasingly reluctant to lend money, and have also become more fussy about who they lend to. Consequently, they are asking many more questions about the ships they are funding and are using assessment schemes to examine the quality and performance of operators seeking loans.

‘In this climate, CSR has a financial advantage,’ she stressed. ‘Capital is scarce for ship finance, and shipping companies really need to sell their projects to banks and clearly indicate that CSR is an important factor in that process.’



Substandard shipping: when ITF inspectors boarded the Most Sky in Birkenhead in November 2010, they found a kebab maker being used as a heater in one of the cabins

7. An opportunity to improve our image

There is rarely any good news about shipping in the national and international media. Much of the time the industry is simply ignored, and when a shipping story does appear, we tend to be portrayed as dirty or dangerous – with reports focussing on oil spills, emissions, passengership disasters and piracy.

Perhaps surprisingly, this negative reporting has traditionally overlooked the question of crew living and working conditions, but this could now be changing. For example, in October 2012, a UK Channel 4 Dispatches documentary drew attention to low wages and harsh working conditions among some crew members in the cruiseship sector.

We all know that bad practice exists in the industry, but we also know that this is only a small part of the picture. There are many decent shipping companies committed to Corporate Social Responsibility, and they should be praised for their efforts and rewarded for their support for Decent Work for their employees. In future, whenever reporters uncover bad practice, we should be encouraging them to contrast this with the actions of good shipping companies – companies associated with the Fair Transport Mark.

A Fair Transport Mark could also help deliver the agenda for growth and jobs as set out in the 2012 Limassol Declaration, which sets out the aspirations of European ministers responsible for the Integrated Maritime Policy of the European Commission.⁵

Imagine if the Fair Transport Mark could achieve the same level of public recognition and understanding as the Fairtrade Foundation's Fairtrade Mark. It would finally bring shipping to the forefront of public consciousness, and show consumers that the majority of the industry is committed to Decent Work, is environmentally friendly and operates to the highest safety standards. And it should provide shipping companies with a market reward for a premium product.



Substandard shipping: a toilet on the notoriously grim Most Sky, November 2010

⁵ www.cy2012.eu/en/news/press-release-limassol-declaration-giving-the-europe-2020-strategy-a-strong-maritime-dimension

8. Over to you

We are now looking to all interested stakeholders in the European maritime industry, including trade unions, insurers, classification societies, charterers and shipping companies to register their interest in the proposed Fair Transport Mark, and to work with us in determining the eventual scope and application of the scheme.

We are hoping to generate a debate about fair transport in the shipping industry and beyond. To start a public debate and generate media coverage, with your views playing an important part. Please let us know what you think of our proposals and how the Fair Transport Mark could fit in with existing Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and generate a return for those who support Decent Work for all seafarers.



A second idea for how the new Fair Transport Mark could look. This will eventually be decided in consultation with stakeholders

9. What next?

We can foresee the need to bring the interested parties together to see if these ideas can work and if so, in what kind of structure. Nothing is set in stone. Work with us to make this happen, because we as an industry cannot continue on our current path.

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Fair trade — but not for seafarers

Ship detentions highlight the need for improved certification, says Union

➔ Nautilus International has renewed its call for the fairtrade movement to guarantee the fair treatment of seafarers, following the discovery of a second substandard ship carrying a Tate & Lyle cargo.

Sugar manufacturer Tate & Lyle has been a strong advocate of the movement in recent years, announcing in February 2008 that it would convert 100% of its retail branded sugar to fair-trade — thereby winning the right to display the coveted Fair-trade Mark on the fairtrade sugar packets.

But while the Fairtrade Mark shows consumers that the growers of a crop are working under decent pay and conditions, it does not guarantee that those transporting the produce across the seas are equally well treated.

Since Tate & Lyle made its fair-trade pledge — generating lucrative positive publicity and goodwill among consumers — two substandard ships have been detained by UK port state control at the firm's Silvertown berth.

The Antigua & Barbuda-flagged bulk carrier *Christine O*, detained in October 2009, was judged to have a major non-conformity in the maintenance of ship and equipment. The star-



The bulk carrier Porto Leone under detention at Tate & Lyle's Silvertown berth on the river Thames

board lifeboat was inoperative; the ballast, fuel and other tanks had inoperative valves, there were a number of toilets that did not

flush and the emergency lighting, batteries and switches were inoperative.

And in late January this year,

the Maritime & Coastguard Agency detained the Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier *Porto Leone* for nine days, also because of a major non-conformity in the maintenance of ship and equipment.

The emergency generator was faulty, paint was stored in the engine room, the captain's records of rest were inaccurate and sanitary facilities were found dirty.

In addition, the boiler inspection doors were leaking, the flame failure device was inoperative and the wiring was exposed. One bank of emergency generator batteries were inoperative, chart corrections were not up to date, publications were missing, unauthorised changes had been made to the bilge pumping system and the magnetic compass was not readable at the steering position.

'It is amazing that Tate & Lyle has the nerve to bask in the rosy glow of the fairtrade movement when its ships are putting lives at risk and its seafarers are forced to live and work in such squalid conditions,' said Nautilus general secretary Mark Dickinson.


'We want to see the Fairtrade Mark withheld from companies like this until they agree to treat their seafarers with the same respect as their farmers.'

An example of the articles Nautilus has been publishing to highlight the fact that the fair trade movement does not guarantee fair treatment for seafarers

Appendices

http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-developme... Talk Point: Your vie... x

Are you worried about how the market is scaling up, as **RodneyMarsh** describes?

 **NautilusInt**
2 February 2012 10:11AM

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Report
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The common understanding of the Fair Trade campaign refers to the prevention of exploiting people who export their goods to other countries. However, despite more than 90% of Britain's imports arriving by ship, seafarers remain excluded from the Fair Trade equation.

Nautilus International, the trade union representing seafarers believes that seafarers' working conditions and shipboard social standards should be taken into account when products are assessed as being ethically sound. At present, consumers do not get to see the conditions of employment and abuse that many seafarers are subject to at sea.

Approximately 10% of ships in the world fleet are classed as substandard. Together with weak national regulatory mechanisms and a general reluctance to enforce international labour standards, these factors are fuelling the decline in seafarers' working conditions.

If countries including the UK signed up to the Maritime Labour Convention this will help to ensure the protection of seafarers and could eliminate most of the abuse and exploitation they suffer.

However, the union has repeatedly called on the Fairtrade Foundation to ensure that seafarers working conditions are assessed alongside those of farmers and these calls have fallen on deaf ears.

As the Foundation looks towards the next 25 years could they work to ensure that all those in the supply chain are covered by the protection of the Fairtrade mark?

For more information visit:
<http://www.nautilusint.org/Campaigns/pages/Fair%20Trade.aspx>
<http://www.nautilusint.org/News-and-Events/Pages/article.aspx?newsid=185>
<http://www.ifsma.org/tempannounce/aga33/Fairtrade.pdf>

Nautilus has been taking the opportunity to raise the issue of fair treatment of seafarers in online forums such as this Guardian website debate on fair trade

FAIR TRADE FOR SEAFARERS (TUC 2006)

Congress welcomes the agreement earlier this year on an international 'Bill of Rights' for the world's seafarers. Congress recognises the intense levels of exploitation and "social dumping" within the shipping industry and urges the TUC to maintain pressure upon the UK government to ratify, implement and enforce the provisions of the maritime labour convention as soon as possible.

Congress particularly welcomes the concept of a maritime labour certificate to demonstrate compliance with convention standards. Congress is concerned that seafarers' working conditions are not presently addressed within the criteria for Fair Trade products and services, even though more than 90% of world trade is moved by ships. Congress also notes with concern the fact that considerable proportions of aid and relief cargoes are carried by ships registered in flag of convenience countries, which regularly infringe minimum international safety and employment standards. Congress therefore urges the TUC to campaign for UN agencies, charities and relief organisations to use ships that are not registered with FoC states and that meet international safety and labour standards. Congress also calls for dialogue between the TUC and Fair Trade groups to ensure that seafarers' working conditions and shipboard social standards form part of the assessment process for Fair Trade status.

This motion to the UK Trades Union Congress was adopted by the TUC national conference in 2006

