

wh@ pays?

Campaign guide - winter 08/09

Every week 32 million of us shop in British supermarkets. But in developing countries supermarket price wars are having a devastating effect on the lives of women workers who produce the food and clothes we buy. It's the poorest people who suffer most from low wages, job insecurity and poor working conditions.

Take action! Your guide to help make sure UK supermarkets play fair overseas.



big difference

Dear Sir Terry,
 I am concerned that as food prices spiral globally, fruit pickers in your supply chain in South Africa barely earn enough to feed their families. With their pay so low, they spend 80% of their income on food. UK families spend an average of 20%.

Righting this wrong would cost pennies per worker. If Tesco paid suppliers in South Africa **just 5 pence more per kilo** of Granny Smith apples, then workers could be paid a living wage of 1,500 Rand (just under £100) per month.

And we know Tesco can afford it. Despite these tough economic times, in September you announced record half year profits of £1.45 billion.

Here's 5 pence from me. From now on it's your responsibility.

The Competition Commission has recommended an independent ombudsman to help ensure a fair deal for supermarket suppliers overseas.

As a consumer, I urge you to **publicly support this sensible recommendation.**

Yours sincerely,

 Name

 Address

Do not use my personal details for direct marketing
 Please insert the address in the envelope provided
 Printed on 100% recycled paper - ActionAid is a registered charity no. 274887

act:onaid

**small
change**

Why are we campaigning?

Our research shows that women workers around the world who pick, pack and stitch the goods we buy in UK supermarkets face long hours, poverty wages and appalling working conditions.

- In **Costa Rica**, banana price wars between UK supermarkets have meant that women working on plantations earn wages so low, they are forced to stay in the fields during aerial pesticide spraying to earn enough to live on.
- In **Bangladesh**, young women work for as little as 5 pence an hour to make clothes for Asda and Tesco while being forced to work up to 14 hours a day for weeks on end.
- In **India**, pressure from UK supermarkets to drive down prices has led to an explosion in black market cashew nut processing plants where women earn as little as 30 pence a day and suffer permanent damage to their health through squatting for long periods, and by being exposed to smoke and corrosive acids.

UK supermarkets could be a force for good in developing countries – bringing much needed trade and jobs, boosting the economy and bringing about opportunities for women. But, currently the way that UK supermarkets do business with developing countries has a devastating effect on the lives of workers in their supply chains.

It doesn't have to be this way.

What are we calling for?

Ten years of voluntary initiatives by supermarkets have failed to solve the problem – now it's time for the government to take action.

We are calling for binding rules and an independent watchdog to ensure that supermarkets play fair in the developing countries they do business in ... **and we've already made huge progress!**

We are **not calling** for a boycott of supermarkets. We need people to join our campaign and take action as a consumer and a citizen to make the government bring in new rules to ensure that supermarkets do not abuse their power. That way, we can all be sure the goods we buy don't come at the cost of workers' basic rights.

What's happened so far?

The *Who pays?* campaign launched in spring 2007. Our initial target was the Competition Commission, a government body undertaking a huge inquiry into the way supermarkets do business with their suppliers.

To demonstrate that people really do want supermarkets to play fair overseas we asked ActionAid supporters and the general public to sign a loyalty pledge – calling for regulation to tackle the problem. An astonishing **42,000** people (including comedian Bill Bailey and actress Emma Thompson) pledged their loyalty.

The Competition Commission got the message – and agreed with our demand for a new independent watchdog in April! Over the summer, ActionAid campaigners persuaded over 160 MPs to lend their support to the campaign.

Now we have reached a critical point in the campaign. Supermarkets are negotiating with the Competition Commission about the watchdog right now. We're worried they will try to stop it being set up at all.

Who are we campaigning with in developing countries?

Gertruida Baartman is a 40 year old mother of three, living near Stellenbosch in South Africa. She earns 38p per hour working as a farm labourer, sorting apples, pears and peaches that end up on the shelves of Tesco in the UK.

In 2006 and 2007, ActionAid has hosted Gertruida in the UK to attend Tesco's AGM. She told Tesco's Board and Chief Exec:

"I don't get paid enough to feed my children and I have to work with pesticides with my bare hands. I don't get the same wages as other men even if I do the same work."



Following the AGM in 2006, Tesco decided to change the way it inspects conditions on the fruit farms that supply them throughout South Africa with a new scheme of ethical checks.

The brave and courageous campaigning by Gertruida and other workers in South Africa has made this change happen, supported by ActionAid campaigners in the UK. However, life for the majority of workers has yet to improve. If Tesco ensured that workers like Gertruida were paid just 5p more per kilo of apples their lives would be changed.

Supermarket power in action – how does it work?

Suppliers in developing countries tell us UK supermarkets demand:

- Lower prices
- Faster delivery times
- Greater flexibility

Suppliers pass down these costs and risks onto workers. Workers tell us this leads to longer hours, lower pay and a lack of basic rights in the workplace.



Reproduced with kind permission of Private Eye

What's next?

With the Competition Commission recommending that a watchdog is needed, we've had a fantastic breakthrough that could help millions of women workers get a fairer deal. But the job isn't over yet.

Supermarkets are currently negotiating with the Competition Commission about setting up the watchdog. It is absolutely crucial it gets set up as soon as possible, and it must have teeth to make a difference for workers in developing countries on the sharp end of supermarket power.

We want Tesco, as the UK's biggest supermarket, to lead the way. But they are currently refusing to sign up. In September, they announced record half year profits of £1.45 billion. We need to show them how little it costs to be ethical, and how much people like you want them to do it!

What you can do:

Get your friends, family and colleagues to take the 'Small change - Big difference' action

Getting as many people as possible to take action is a really vital way to increase the impact of the campaign and it's also a good opportunity to get more people involved with ActionAid. The more 5 pences Tesco receives, the louder our message will be. We can give you extra postcards and support to help you spread the word. Just give us a call on 01460 23 8000 or e-mail campaign@actionaid.org.

Top Tips

- People are most likely to take an action if a friend or family member asks them to, so when you're distributing the postcards try and give them to people directly.
- For more impact, arrange to hand in the postcards to your local Tesco as a group.
- If they can't come with you to hand in the postcard, offer to take the postcards to Tesco yourself.
- Take some pictures of the hand in – we always love seeing how you get on!

- Don't forget to add your hand in to our interactive map of the UK – represent your local area by visiting www.actionaid.org.uk/5p/map.htm.
- If you don't want to hand your card into a local Tesco, or you don't live near one, then put it in an envelope and post it directly to Tesco's HQ:

Sir Terry Leahy
Chief Executive
Tesco PLC
Tesco House
Delamare Road
Cheshunt
Hertfordshire
EN8 9SL

If you'd like the local paper to come along to your hand in, give us a call on 020 7561 7597 so we can help you plan.

Advice for the hand in

- Try and hand in your postcards to the manager directly. Most branches will have a customer services desk, where you can ask to see the manager.
- Remember it's important to be polite, understanding and non-confrontational.
- You don't need to be an expert! Everything we're calling for is already on the back of the card.
- In the unlikely case you encounter an unfriendly store manager or member of staff, don't get into an argument. Simply hand over the card, and ask them to send it on to the Chief Executive at Head Office.

How do I explain the campaign?

Supermarkets price wars are having a devastating effect on the lives of workers in developing countries producing the food and clothes we buy.

We're not calling for a boycott - we should be able to shop in supermarkets knowing that all workers have been treated fairly and earn a living wage. As the UK's largest supermarket, we want Tesco to publically support the

Competition Commission's recommendation for a supermarket watchdog. This will help ensure that workers around the world get a fair deal. To show how little it would take for them to be ethical, you're giving them 5 pence. This is all the extra it would cost Tesco to pay on a kilo of apples for women workers in South Africa like Gertruida Baartman to be paid a living wage. Your 5 pence is to get them started!

You can also request a free copy of our Who pays? DVD to help explain the campaign. Why not organise a showing at your trade union, church, mosque, community group, university or workplace?

If you have any other questions, please get in touch by calling 01460 23 8000 or e-mail campaign@actionaid.org.

For further campaign info visit www.actionaid.org.uk/5p.

**Thank you and
happy campaigning!**

www.actionaid.org.uk