

# Applying fair trade to British upland agriculture

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## Abstract

Fair trade seeks to ensure disadvantaged farmers and workers in developing countries get a better deal for their produce on the world stage. A particular feature of the scheme is the setting of a minimum price between producer and purchaser. Whilst many recognise the validity of such an approach for developing countries, the issues fair trade seeks to represent resonate strongly with the marginal farming communities of British uplands. This paper considers the validity of applying fair trade principles to the case of upland farm businesses in Cumbria. We consider the economic, environmental and social contexts of these businesses followed by a critical appraisal of fair trade principles and that of local food production. Finally we suggest possible mechanisms which could be adopted using fair trade principles to develop a more sustainable farming economy in this marginal area.

**Keywords:** Fair trade, local food, upland agriculture, sustainability.

## Introduction

The sustainability of upland farming in Britain has been a recurring theme in research and policy at least over the past 80 years (De La Warr, 1944; Curry, 2001). Since 1945, farm enterprises in these areas have been able to survive largely due to successive subsidy from UK and European sources. Despite this, upland farms have continued to face the challenge of volatile and variable consumer demand, high production costs and relatively low incomes leading to agricultural decline. A frequent response to this has been to focus on new products or adding value to existing ones by appealing to the demands of wider society. This has led, for instance, to the emergence of markets for organics and value-added products that retain a local identity (Weatherall *et al.*, 2003; Ilbery *et al.*, 2006). It is

**Comment [UoC1]:** Dealt with in footnote one L34

**Comment [UoC2]:** Took out 4 refs

**Comment [UoC3]:** Took out 2 refs

29 widely recognised also that the distinctiveness of products can also be enhanced by short linkages  
30 between production and consumption through selling at local markets (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000).  
31 The sustainability of upland farms as producers of products is dependent, in part, on the success of  
32 strategies to appeal to the demands of wider society for products that are high quality but also  
33 produced in a manner that is consistent with a range of ethical, ecological and environmental values  
34 (Kitchen and Marsden 2009). It is in this context that the potential for “fair trade principles” to be  
35 applied for the benefit of upland farming becomes of interest. In this paper we explore whether upland  
36 agriculture in Britain can derive benefits from being both “fair trade” and “locally produced”, and  
37 whether these forms of production are consistent with one another and sustainable in this context. In  
38 this paper, we provide a brief overview of the character of upland agriculture and its main issues  
39 which influence farmer strategies when developing alternative forms of enterprise. We then consider  
40 whether this form of farming can produce goods that can be both fair trade and local. Finally, we  
41 critique whether fair trade and local production can sustain the current upland agricultural system.

**Comment [UoC4]:** Addition of footnote to distinguish between ‘fair trade’ and ‘Fair Trade’

## 42 **Upland agriculture in Britain**

43 Upland agriculture in Britain operates on the fringes of viable agricultural production limited through  
44 the physical constraints of soil, climate and topography. Consequently farm businesses focus on  
45 livestock production with typically low profit margins of around £5000 per annum, well below the  
46 national United Kingdom (UK) average (Chadwick, 2003). The uplands of Cumbria in north west  
47 England are no exception.

### 48 *The farming system*

49 A system of farming has developed in Cumbria to make the best use of the environment by adapting  
50 farming practices to fit the harsh climate and rugged terrain. This farm landscape comprises three  
51 distinct land types: inbye, intake and fell (Figure 1). *Inbye* land is the best, close to the farm buildings  
52 and used historically for the production of hay and now silage for the winter, grazing land in winter  
53 months and lambing areas in spring. At the other extreme are the *fells* at the highest altitudes, usually  
54 300m or more above sea level (ASL) (Figure 2). These are areas typically of heather (*Calluna*)

55 moorland or rough unimproved grass pasture highly prized in terms of nature conservation in both the  
56 UK and Europe (English Nature, 1998). Indeed, it is the agricultural management of this land in the  
57 past that has allowed these ecological communities to develop through extensive grazing regimes and  
58 periodic burning of the heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) to re-invigorate growth (Backshall *et al.*, 2001). In  
59 between the fells and the inbye lies the *intake*, sometimes referred to as *allotment*. This is land that has  
60 been taken in from the fell and enclosed using drystone walls made of locally field cleared stone. This  
61 system of walls, enclosed fields and fell areas are what give the UK uplands their intrinsic high quality  
62 so desired by the public – known collectively as High Nature Value (HNV) landscapes (Hoogeveen *et*  
63 *al.*, 2004).

Comment [UoC5]: 1 ref removed

Comment [UoC6]: 1 ref removed

64 Cumbrian farmers run mainly two enterprises in the core of the uplands, either sheep and/or beef; on  
65 the valley bottoms and upland margins some environments are sheltered enough to run dairy herds.  
66 Occasionally, farms may have a dairy herd and fell sheep flock, although this is labour intensive.  
67 Upland farms, themselves, are divided into two types; true *upland farms* containing inbye, intake and  
68 fell and the *hill farm*, which contains intake and fell with little or no inbye. This tends to restrict hill  
69 farms to traditionally running just sheep, where as the true upland farms have historically run sheep  
70 flocks and cattle herds in combination.

### 71 *Fell management*

72 From the farmers point of view the landscape they have developed has a number of functions. Walls  
73 keep livestock from straying, they keep rams away from ewes at the wrong time of year and they  
74 allow stock to be grazed in winter on a rotational basis to ensure sustainable grassland management.  
75 The fell areas are summer pasturage, when the enclosed land's productivity has been exhausted or  
76 allocated for the production of grass and hay crops for winter feed. In order to support the same  
77 number of sheep on the fell as in the inbye, the lower productive land needs a substantially larger area  
78 over which the sheep graze. This area has developed over many generations of farmers, who originally  
79 shepherded the sheep keeping them to land that the farm had common rights<sup>ii</sup>. Over time the sheep get  
80 to know the land that they can graze on and gradually the intensive shepherding can be withdrawn so  
81 that the flock manage themselves geographically. This instinct of the sheep to keep to a certain land

82 area is known as ‘hefting’ or ‘heafing’, an operation which can vary from upland to upland (Hart,  
83 2004). The ewes pass the knowledge of the area (heft) on to their lambs, who in turn pass it on in turn  
84 to their offspring. In this way it is important that the farmer maintains a multi-generational flock.

85 Typically, these upland commons in Cumbria can be many thousands of hectares and contain  
86 enumerable hefts isolated from the main farm unit (Figure 3). Gradually, virtual boundaries between  
87 hefts have developed keeping stock from straying into another heft, thus developing a self policing of  
88 grazing pressure. Stock are gathered intermittently and brought down to the farm for shearing,  
89 worming, winter grazing, sales and lambing. Because hefts are geographically extensive, over difficult  
90 terrain, labour requirements for gathering are high (as many as 25 people for a single gather). This is  
91 exacerbated by precipitous landscapes that do not lend themselves to modern all terrain vehicles  
92 (ATVs), thus foot access is often the only means of reaching the stock (Burton *et al.*, 2005).

Comment [UoC7]: Quotation removed

### 93 *Farming system viability*

94 The marginality of their location has meant that such UK farming businesses have benefited from  
95 successive subsidy support from national government (1946 to 1972) and Europe (1972 to 1992).  
96 Unfortunately, whilst aiming to solve economic marginality, many of these initiatives have led to  
97 over-production on these low carrying capacity landscapes, resulting in less desirable environmental  
98 damage (e.g. Drewitt and Manley, 1997). Agri-environment grants, decoupling and modulation have  
99 partially addressed these environmental concerns through destocking, but the consequence for farmers  
100 has been destabilisation of their farm management systems especially on hefts and declining profit  
101 margins (Mansfield, 2011). With limited enterprise choice, lack of mechanisation and few options to  
102 reduce production costs, Cumbrian upland farmers struggle to transcend the cost-price squeeze. As  
103 profits have gradually declined, farmers have had to make tough decisions regarding farm viability.  
104 Three main re-structuring options exist:

- 105 1) reduce costs of production where possible and continue with ever decreasing profits;
- 106 2) withdraw from farming altogether, or;
- 107 3) diversify production.

Comment [UoC8]: Replaced colloquialism

108 If a farmer chooses to continue in a similar way, they must seek mechanisms to reduce costs.

109 Typically the easiest has been to reduce paid labour on the farm. Many Cumbrian farms now rely

110 solely on the farmer and partner for labour, with older children helping out. For some hill farmers,

111 they cannot cut the wage bill as they are not married, do not have children or their partner works off-

112 farm. Whilst cutting labour saves money in the short term, in the long run it can cause problems for

113 certain aspects of farm management. One particular issue is the lack of staff at gathering times to

114 control flocks as they come off the fell (Burton *et al.*, 2005); it also limits farm diversification.

115 At the other extreme, the farmer can opt to withdraw from farming altogether. A number of farmers

116 have done this, mainly as a consequence of the effects of Foot and Mouth in 2001 (Franks *et al.*,

117 2003). Some have either sold up altogether, or sold just the land. Both responses have had multiplier

118 effects for the wider landscape and community. Those that sold up altogether have often split the

119 house from the land. The effect is twofold; firstly, the household becomes disenfranchised from the

120 farming community and secondly the land can be abandoned. If the latter happens on the heft, the

121 associated de-stocking affects surrounding hefts, whose sheep move into the new unclaimed territory,

122 exacerbating gathering costs. Heft abandonment also leads to problems of under grazing, an

123 environmental challenge (Backshall, 1999). The third option for the farmer is to diversify their

124 enterprise. Whether to diversify or not is a difficult decision for many uplands farmers. Firstly, the

125 need for additional labour to run new enterprises is essential; but for many this has been the first

126 element to go to save production costs. Secondly, the lack of capital and reticence to take on additional

127 loans or debt play a major role. Whilst there are many grant schemes to support diversification

128 (Mansfield, 2011) most require matched funding, creating barriers for many of the most economically

129 marginal businesses. However, the gradual decoupling of support from production and modulation

130 towards rural development and environmental management has forced many upland farmers to

131 develop diverse income streams in order to simply remain within farming. It is here that the concepts

132 of fair trade and local produce offer scope for diversification.

133 *Fair trade in the global south*

Comment [UoC9]: Added 'global'

134 Fair trade is described as ‘a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seeks  
135 better trading conditions for, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers, especially  
136 in the south’ (European Fair Trade Association, 2001). The concept has developed over the last 30  
137 years through the parallel evolution of south<sup>iii</sup> producers seeking a fairer deal for their produce on the  
138 world stage and that of a north consumer movement to support a more ethical and socially acceptable  
139 living for south farmers, often referred to as ‘trade not aid’. Fair Trade producers and buyers have to  
140 adhere to common principles (FairTrade, 2012). Producers must be small scale who then band together  
141 to form democratic organisations who seek a fair price for their products. Workers can belong to  
142 unions, have the right to decent wages, housing and health and safety. There will be no forced or child  
143 labour and production methods need to be as environmentally sustainable as possible. Typically,  
144 producers form co-operatives, giving them greater control over sales, longer term relationships with  
145 exporters which can then lead to pre-financing. However, as Renard (2005) notes, the last co-  
146 operatives to join the fair trade movement of a product often have the greatest problems selling their  
147 crop as the market becomes saturated.

148 In return buyers have to direct purchase, pay a price above the cost of production with a social  
149 premium built in, make advance payments for products to avoid producer debt and provide contracts  
150 which allow long term planning and sustainable production practices. The key feature of the system is  
151 payment of a fair trade minimum price and/or social premium by a buyer to a producer. Products that  
152 comply with the principles and minimum price can use the FairTrade certification mark. The criteria  
153 for this are negotiated by the FLO (Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International) for each product.  
154 Such a system promotes a *quality economy* (Renard, 2005); whereby a range of values are applied to a  
155 product covering the physical, nutritional, hygiene, cultural, ethical and environmental aspects.

156 *Fair trade in the global north*

Comment [UoC10]: Added ‘global’

157 Fair trade products are typically tropical or sub-tropical in origin (e.g. coffee, bananas, tea, chocolate  
158 derivatives) and it is here in the south that until very recently the Fair Trade certification process has  
159 remained. A number of EU states now produce fair trade milk including Austria, Germany and France.  
160 With respect to upland producers in Britain, a number of the standard fair trade principles do not apply

Comment [UoC11]: Removed sentence with examples in.

161 as the concepts are already legally present (i.e. housing and health and safety). The issue of decent  
162 wages is more relevant as most upland farms generate less than £5000 a year in net margins **most**  
163 **years**, the equivalent of take home pay for everyone else, arguably 25% of the national average  
164 income. It is this that is often used as the key factor to describe these businesses as economically  
165 marginal in comparison to other forms of farming.

**Comment [UoC12]:** Changed and clarified emphasis

166 A bigger issue, perhaps, in upland agriculture is the use of child labour. Strictly speaking, there is no  
167 comparable child labour on UK farms to those in the developing world. Occasional cases do occur  
168 such as in Worcestershire where Romanian migrant child workers were found harvesting cabbages  
169 **(Dolan, 2010)**. However, on upland farms there are few secondary school age children who are not  
170 drafted in to help with pinch points in the farming calendar. Shearing, dipping, gathering, sales days  
171 and lambing typically see every able body on the farm participating. How this rests with the principles  
172 of fair trade is yet to be resolved.

**Comment [UoC13]:** Reference added

173 A final matter with respect to fair trade certification with respect to upland agricultural production is  
174 the contractual relationship with buyers. Increasingly upland farmers are signing up to contracts with  
175 supermarkets to guarantee sales. However, apocryphal tales relayed from farmers during other  
176 conversations show that it is not unknown for supermarkets to turn down deliveries at the last moment  
177 through quality control issues or stalled through flows within outlets. Most meat contracts in this  
178 country are agreed on a farm by farm basis since the demise of the Meat Marketing Board, and thus,  
179 this puts the farmers at a distinct disadvantage. After the Foot and Mouth outbreak, the Curry (2001)  
180 report, amongst other recommendations, suggested that farmers needed to look more carefully at  
181 forming co-operatives to increase their bargaining power. This is interesting, because in many other  
182 parts of Britain farmers have banded together to form input purchasing co-operatives as well as output  
183 selling ones (e.g. Anglia Farmers). The only real co-operative movement in upland areas tends to be  
184 related to the dairy industry, probably resulting from the daily need to collect milk for bottling. The  
185 distinct lack of drive amongst upland farmers to form co-operatives is on the face of it, quite odd,  
186 given the level of co-operation required to operate the hefting system. Of course, it could be this level

187 of forced co-operation that has put many off formal co-operatives for sales due to ‘falling out with the  
188 neighbour’ over stock issues, particularly disease control and animal welfare (Mansfield, 2011).

#### 189 *Local produce*

190 Local produce is a term that refers to the production, sale and consumption of a good within a local  
191 area. The number of enterprises available to create local produce on an upland farm is by far the most  
192 limited of any farm type in mid-latitude areas, being derived solely from meat, milk or wool.  
193 However, there are surprisingly a large range of possibilities, such as felt, knitting wool, insulation,  
194 cheese, yogurt, ice cream, organic food, rare breed or premium meat, and all types of processed  
195 products (such as sausages, pies and burgers), to name but a few. A particular feature of local food  
196 production is minimalisation of the number of stages between producer and consumer, so that goods  
197 pass through only one or two ‘pairs of hands’ before the consumer eats them. The produce is sold  
198 unadulterated but semi-processed, as with meat or milk, or else it is processed to add value, as in  
199 cheese, butter or pies. These goods are sold through three recognisable Short Food Supply Chains  
200 (SFSCs) (Ilbery and Maye, 2006):

- 201 • face-to-face, in farmers’ markets and on-farm shops;
- 202 • spatial proximate, where producers sell to local retailers in the region;
- 203 • spatial extended, where producers sell to consumers outside the region.

204 SFSCs are regarded as excellent opportunities for the lagging rural regions (LRRs) of Europe to  
205 improve their economic and social structure. Upland areas are classic LRRs with remoteness, poor  
206 infrastructure, low population density, limited employment opportunities and poor development  
207 capacity (Ilbery *et al.* 2004). On the other hand, consumers often make inaccurate inferences about the  
208 quality, localness, social embeddedness (connections or associations between product and place) and  
209 sustainability of these types of products. Studies have shown that quality can vary as it is not a  
210 requirement for local produce (Ilbery and Maye 2006), social embeddedness may be stretched (Ilbery  
211 and Kneafsey 1998) and ‘localness’ and sustainability are all a matter of perception (Ilbery and Maye  
212 2005).



213 *Geographical branding*

214 To overcome the quality issue, location can be used to brand upland farm goods, by linking product  
215 and producer to the area's landscape, culture and heritage, which in turn can allow both farmers and  
216 retailers to ask premium prices for produce (Kuznesof *et al.* 1997). Quality therefore becomes central,  
217 as any decline in it will result in loss in sales. Particular emphasis has been placed on securing  
218 European level designation through EU Regulation 2081/92 'on the protection of geographical  
219 indications and designations of origin for agricultural products and foodstuffs' and Council Regulation  
220 (EC) No.510/2006 'on the protection of geographical indications and designations of origin for  
221 agricultural products and foodstuffs'. PDOs (Protected Designation of Origin); PGIs (Protected  
222 Geographical Indication) and TSGs (Traditional Speciality Guaranteed) are used increasingly by  
223 groups of upland farmers to increase financial value and sales (Ilbery and Kneafsey, 1998). For  
224 example, in British upland areas, seven cheeses (e.g. Swaledale Cheese PDO) and eight meat food  
225 names (e.g. Herdwick Lamb and Traditional Cumberland Sausage PDOs) are protected in this way.  
226 Although this all sounds positive for upland farmers, there are particular problems with slaughtering  
227 arrangements in many geographical areas. Under PDO criteria livestock must be slaughtered within  
228 the designated area, but many abattoirs have closed down as a result of uneconomic legislative  
229 demands and those which remain are at full capacity. For the Rough Fell lamb group in south-west  
230 Cumbria this has stymied achieving PDO status for the foreseeable future (Mansfield, 2008).

231 If the quality issue can be addressed, there are many positive multipliers (Bullock, 2000).  
232 Economically, more revenue goes back to the producer rather than the middle man; money is retained  
233 in the local economy and local foods can promote tourism. Social benefits include redevelopment of  
234 links between consumers and their food and new modes of sale, such as farmers markets, which  
235 reduce social isolation and improve community cohesion. This latter phenomenon has been  
236 particularly beneficial in upland areas where many other forms of social capital are in decline as the  
237 farming system changes (Burton *et al.*, 2005). Environmental benefits often cited include the reduction  
238 of food miles, although some argue that local production does not mean a reduction in intensification  
239 of production. Health benefits may also be accrued through fresher goods.

240 *Unfair competition*

241 One significant aspect of the debate concerning local trading concerns the conflicts that arise between  
242 some purchasers' preference to use local suppliers and regulations relating to unfair competition at a  
243 national and European scale. In this context, a decision by a public sector organisation to give  
244 preference to local suppliers simply because they are "local" is deemed to be "unfair" on competitors  
245 located elsewhere (McCrudden 2004, Bennett 2006). The European Union is committed to "fair  
246 trading" where there is open and transparent competition for the supply of goods and services to the  
247 public sector. This perspective conflicts, however with the principle that public bodies also have a  
248 duty of care for the communities within which they operate that could include, for instance, the  
249 purchase of local farm products and use of catering providers that give preference to local sources. A  
250 pertinent case recently occurred in Sweden whose government planned to launch a buy local campaign  
251 as a strand of its Climate Smart Food project. Almost immediately, the European Commission lodged  
252 a complaint requiring Sweden to come into line with free movement principles (Agra Europe, 2009  
253 cited in Barclay, 2012).

Comment [UoC14]: 1 ref removed

254 Whilst EU procurement rules place barriers in the way of preferential local trading, the principles of  
255 "sustainable procurement" call for purchasers in the public sector to consider the environmental, social  
256 and economic consequences of purchasing decisions including those that affect the supply chain.  
257 There may be circumstances, therefore, where a justification can be made for using local suppliers by  
258 considering impacts of the environment (food miles, for example) or by restricting supply to  
259 businesses that have been independently verified as sustainable sources of particular goods and  
260 services.

261 As regards the private sector, the scope for local procurement may be restricted in many cases by a  
262 mismatch in scale of production, quality systems, management capacity and logistical requirements.  
263 Large multiple retailers, however, are increasingly adopting corporate social responsibility policies  
264 that arguably represent attempts to legitimise their activities in the eyes of key stakeholders and to  
265 offset criticisms of self-interest. Shareholders and customers, for instance, can demand more  
266 responsible corporate behaviour prompted by individual moral and ethical concerns in the economy. It

is possible that these kinds of ethical pressures can generate commercial imperatives and induce corporate buyers to invest in local supply chains.

### **Can upland produce be fair trade and local simultaneously?**

#### *Contrasting features*

Most differences lie within the certification process. Of the two, the Fair Trade system is the most stringent, for without the meeting of certain criteria a product cannot be given *certification*. In contrast, local produce do not require certification, instead producers have become self-selecting about this opting to use PGO, PGI or TSG if it provides sales advantage. At a deeper level, the character of certification is substantially different, as Fair Trade labelling contains a number of *social criteria* already covered by law and/or employment rights in Britain and the EU (i.e. HSE, union membership and housing). Local produce certification differs as the focus is on *quality* through European legislation. With respect to product *sales and prices*, an embedded principle within Fair Trade is the agreed minimum price and *social premium*. This does not exist within local produce sales; instead financial premium is accrued by the individual producer- seller only, through the reduced number of supply chain steps or by adding value in some way. The corollary of both forms of premiums does, nevertheless, result in payment for goods *over and above the cost of production*. Another divergent issue is the matter of *child labour*. Whilst it is banned under Fair Trade certification, child labour continues to be a feature of some upland farming businesses.

The challenge of *food miles* can be perceived either as a dissimilarity or, as some argue, an irrelevance. In the strictest geographical sense local food and fair trade cannot compete with each other for food miles. Current fair trade produce cannot be grown in the EU and milk is a bulk good whose transportation does not warrant long distance haulage. However, how we define local can subsume this concept because as Ilbery and Maye (2006) stated local is merely as perception. A good example here is Scottish Beef, which is local to the UK replacing sales of an Argentinian equivalent. The localness here is more a function of selling power and availability.

Some commentators (Richardson and Whatmore, 2009), in contrast, see actual distance travelled as an irrelevance as this is not central to the concept of Fair Trade; the latter which seeks ethical and

294 'material' considerations above all else. Where food miles do count is in relation to environmental  
295 impact, the carbon footprint of some Fair Trade products is colossal and trying to reduce this is, to all  
296 intents and purposes, impossible. An attempt was made recently by the local Cumbrian Fair Trade  
297 Network to make a cake for as few food miles as possible. The measurement of miles travelled by the  
298 ingredients of a product has, however, been challenged by many as an oversimplification. Chi *et al*  
299 (2009) demonstrated that transportation represents only a small percentage of the sustainability of a  
300 product's life. Other features of the agricultural process and food supply chain can cause  
301 disproportionate environmental damage, and thus perhaps a life cycle analysis (LCA) approach would  
302 be closer to the full picture.

Comment [UoC15]: Sentence removed

### 303 *Comparable features*

304 One comparable feature of Fair Trade and local production is the ethical dimension. Ethical  
305 production is core to Fair Trade principles – it is why many people will buy these types of products in  
306 the first place (Renard, 2003). This ethical consideration is directed at both the producer and the mode  
307 of production. For local food consumers ethical issues sit high up the agenda as well, as Weatherall *et*  
308 *al.* (2003) found, although they tended to be more concerned about the process of production rather  
309 than directed to those that actually produced the food. The consumer response in their survey was  
310 complicated further with respect to respondents being urban or rural based, pricing and the type of  
311 outlet the goods were available from. As with the food miles debate we can challenge this ethical  
312 concern further as does not preclude a local producer producing food in an environmentally-unfriendly  
313 manner through overuse of veterinary drugs, artificial fertiliser application on grassland and silaging.  
314 Such limitations can only come through the adoption of certification processes banning any excesses.  
315 It would seem from this brief critical overview that whilst on face value there are some overall  
316 similarities between Fair Trade and local produce; closer inspection demonstrates the issue is more  
317 complex, suggesting that it is almost impossible to have products that are both Fair Trade and local.  
318 Perhaps it is more a case of *fairly traded and locally produced*, in that upland farmers are paid a fair  
319 price in order to continue to farm and consumers can buy locally produced goods knowing that their  
320 money is being used to support local businesses.

## Fair trade, local food and sustainable agriculture in Cumbria

Comment [UoC16]: Shortened by 6 words and now statement not question

Robinson (2004) suggests that sustainable agriculture is an approach to food production that ‘balances agronomic, environmental, economic and social optima’. He cites Benbrook (1990) who believes the following conditions need to be met: soil and water resources are managed in such away as to not degrade them; that biological and ecological systems are maintained through appropriate plant and animal husbandry; whilst at the same time the system is economically viable, farmers make an acceptable profit and social expectations and cultural norms of the public are satisfied. Fair Trade certification goes a long way to meeting these requirements, whereas local production is a ‘hit-and-miss’ affair because certification is self-selecting. Whether fairly traded locally produced goods from upland farming businesses are a form of sustainable agriculture is less clear.

From an economic sustainability point of view, any form of activity on an upland farm that increases net income can only be perceived as a good thing. Operating on the physical and economic margins of cultivation in an increasingly market-led global economy has demonstrated that few upland farms can survive on livestock production alone, without seeking some form of diversification. Fair trade, fair trading and/or locally produced goods are all possible forms to improve income and make these farm businesses more sustainable. In turn, the continued operation of upland farm businesses allows for the social sustainability of upland communities and the service multipliers a retained population brings in remote areas.

Finally, there is the issue of the environmental sustainability of upland agriculture. Whilst this agricultural system has been responsible for the making of much of the British upland landscape, it has also been its undoing as we noted. If anything, upland agricultural systems are generally the main type of conventional farming system which comes closest to environmental sustainability. This is acknowledged by the very small grants available for upland farmers to convert to organic production in comparison to their lowland equivalents; £5 per ha per annum compared to £90 per ha per annum for cereals (Elliott *et al.*, 2003). Whilst Fair Trade certification does have environmental criteria, only another form of certification related to local production would create a set of environmentally sustainable practices for farmers to adhere to with regards to local produce.

Comment [UoC17]: Removed reference to table and removed table – couldn’t see how to not put in a lot of extra words affecting overall word count. Flow seems OK to me.

## Summary

What is evident from this brief analysis is that simply trying to brand upland farming produce Fair Trade creates more questions than answers. On one hand, there are issues related to the nature of production systems. Few farmers and farmer-buyer relationships would meet the strict Fair Trade certification. Fair trading of locally produced goods is a possibility which might help to sustain agriculture in this marginalised sector. On the other hand, there are issues surrounding the branding of products and the extent to which consumers can make sense of the “fair trade” label added to existing perceptions of the psychic value attached to a “local product” which in itself is not a single construct, but combines many associations such as reducing food miles, rural nostalgia and product uniqueness. Evolving local and fair debate amongst suppliers, procurers and distributors in Cumbria suggests that greater benefits are yet to be made from sustainable agriculture, that of sustainable rural development for the wider economy and society. For an agricultural sector often perceived as an anachronism in light of contemporary industrial capitalist systems, sustainable upland farming through concepts such as ‘Local and Fair’ may yet have lessons to offer wider society.

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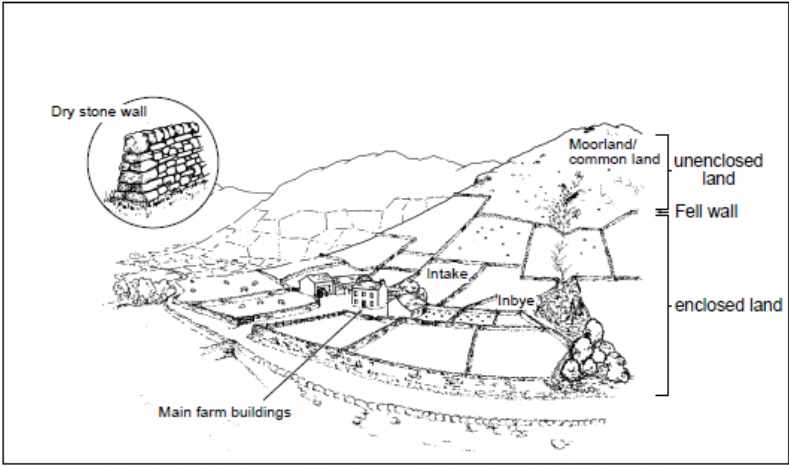
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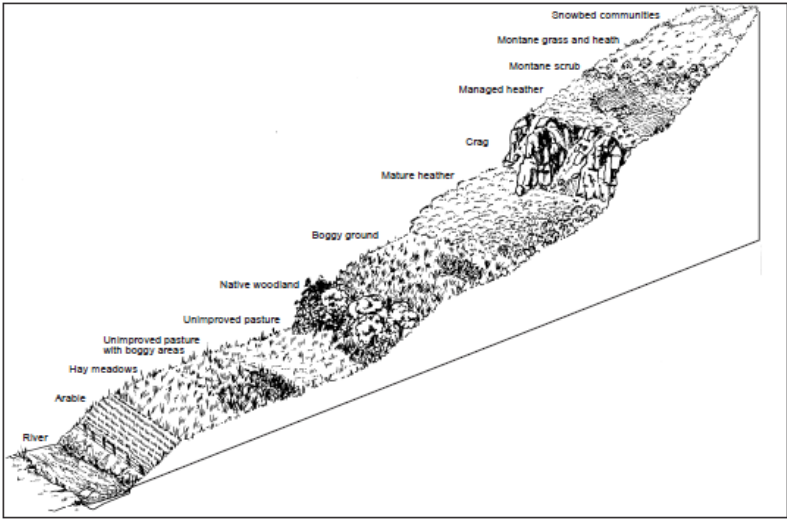


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445 **Figure 1** A typical upland farming landscape (taken from Mansfield, 2011).

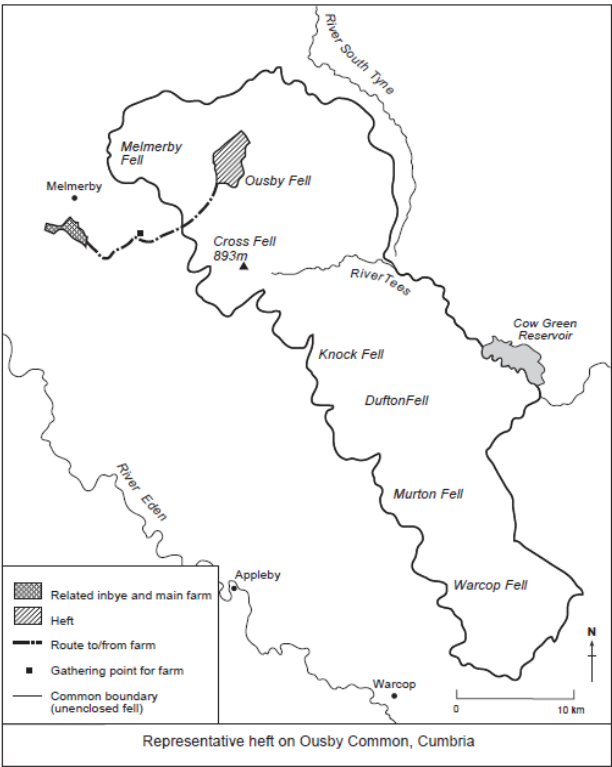


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449 **Figure 2** Continuum of habitats within upland farming landscapes (taken from Mansfield, 2011).



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455 **Figure 3** A Heft within a Cumbrian Common (taken from Mansfield, 2011).



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<sup>i</sup> ‘fair trade’ – a set of principles designed to help producers in developing countries achieve better trading conditions and promote sustainability through the payment of a higher price to exporters as well as higher social and environmental standards; as opposed to ‘Fair Trade’ which is an internationally recognised certification process.

<sup>ii</sup> Common rights ‘A person may take some part of the produce of, or property in, the soil owned by another’ (Aitchison & Gadsden, 1992).

<sup>iii</sup> The socio-economic and political division that exists between the wealthy developed countries, known collectively as “the North”, and the poorer developing countries (least developed countries), or “the South.”