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## **Applying Fair Trade to British Upland Agriculture**

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### **Track 5e: Sustainable Agriculture and rural development**

#### **Introduction**

The sustainability of upland farming in Britain has been a recurring theme in research and policy at least over the past 80 years (Stapledon, 1937; De La Warr, 1944; Attwood & Evans, 1961; Wathern *et al.*, 1986; 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 (Burnett and Danson 2004; Weatherall *et al.*, 2003; Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000; Ilbery *et al.*, 2006). It is widely recognised also that the distinctiveness of products can also be enhanced by short linkages between production and consumption through selling at local markets (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000).

The sustainability of upland farms as producers of products is dependent, in part, on the success of strategies to appeal to the demands of wider society for products that are high quality but also produced in a manner that is consistent with a range of ethical, ecological and environmental values (Kitchen and Marsden 2009). It is in this context that the potential for “Fair Trade principles” to be applied for the benefit of upland farming becomes of interest. In this paper we explore whether upland agriculture in Britain can derive benefits from being both “Fair Trade” and “locally produced”, and whether these forms of production are consistent with one another and sustainable in this context. We start with a brief overview of the character of upland agriculture and its main issues which influence farmer strategies when developing alternative forms of enterprise. We then move on to consider whether this form of farming can produce goods that can be Fair Trade and local simultaneously. Finally, we critique whether fair and local production can sustain the current upland agricultural system.

#### **Upland Agriculture in Britain**

Upland agriculture in Britain operates on the fringes of viable agricultural production limited through the physical constraints of soil, climate and topography. Consequently farm businesses focus on livestock production with typically low profit margins of around £5000 per annum, well below the national United Kingdom (UK)

average (Chadwick, 2003). The uplands of Cumbria in north west England are no exception.

A system of farming has developed in Cumbria to make the best use of the environment by adapting farming practices to fit the harsh climate and rugged terrain. This farm landscape comprises three distinct land types: inbye, intake and fell.

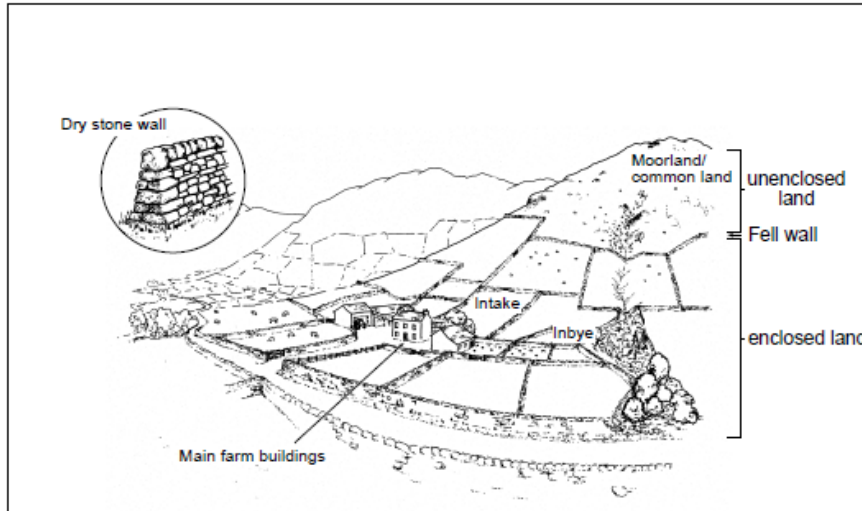


Figure 1 – A typical Upland farming landscape  
(taken from: Mansfield, 2011:7)

*Inbye* land is by far the best land, close to the farm buildings and used for the production of hay historically and now silage for the winter, grazing land in winter months and lambing areas in spring. At the other extreme are the *fells* at the highest altitudes (usually 300m ASL or more). These are areas typically of heather (*Calluna*) moorland or rough unimproved grass pasture highly prized in terms of nature conservation in the UK and Europe (Figure 2, English Nature, 1998; Thompson *et al*, 1995).

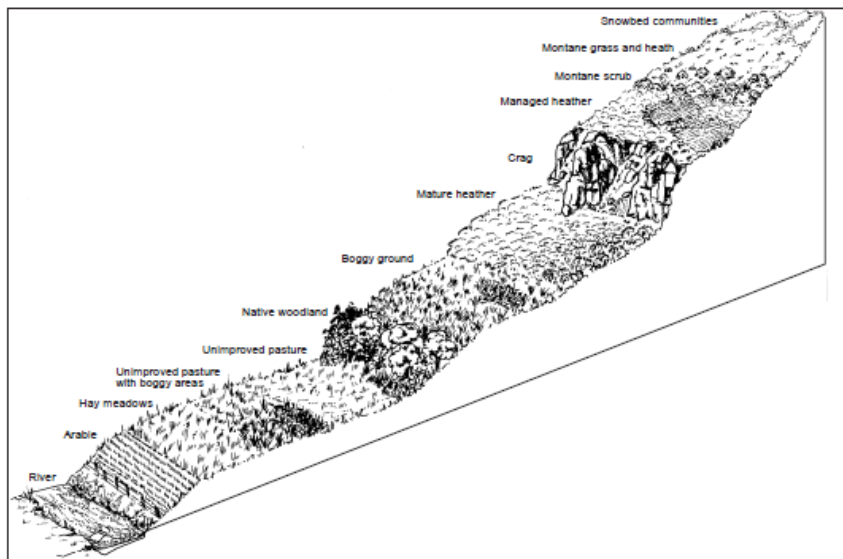


Figure 2 – Continuum of Habitats within Upland Farming Landscapes  
(taken from Mansfield, 2011:130)

Indeed, it is the agricultural management of the land in the past that has allowed these ecological communities to develop through extensive grazing regimes and periodic burning of the heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) to re-invigorate growth (Backshall *et al.*, 2001). In between the fells and the inbye lies the *intake*, sometimes referred to as *allotment*. This is land that has been literally taken in from the fell and enclosed commonly using drystone walls made of locally field cleared stone. The system of walls, enclosed fields and fell areas are then what give the UK uplands their intrinsic high quality so desired by the public – known collectively as High Nature Value (HNV) landscapes (Ratcliffe, 2002; Hoogeveen *et al.*, 2004).

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

From the farmers point of view the landscape they have developed has a number of functions. Walls keep livestock from straying, they keep rams away from ewes at the wrong time of year and they allow stock to be grazed in winter on a rotational basis to ensure sustainable grassland management. The fell areas are summer pasturage, when the enclosed land's productivity has been exhausted or allocated for the production of grass and hay crops for winter feed. In order to support the same number of sheep on the fell as in the inbye, the lower productive land needs a substantially larger area over which the sheep disperse. This grazing area has developed over many generations of farmers, who originally shepherded the sheep keeping them to land that the farm had common rights<sup>1</sup> over. Over time the sheep get to know the land that they can graze on and gradually the intensive shepherding can be withdrawn so that the flock manage themselves geographically. This instinct of the sheep to keep to a certain land area is known as '*hefting*' or '*heafing*', the operation of which can vary from upland to upland (Hart, 2004). The ewes pass the knowledge of the area (heft) on to their lambs, who in turn pass it on in turn to their lambs. In this way it is important that the farmer maintains a multi-generational flock.

Typically an upland common in Cumbria can be many thousands of hectares of land and thus can contain enumerable of hefts (Figure 3) isolated from the main farm unit. Gradually the *virtual* boundaries between hefts have developed keeping stock from straying into another heft, thus developing a self policing of grazing pressure. Stock are gathered intermittently and brought down to the farm for shearing, worming, winter grazing, sales and lambing. Because hefts are geographically extensive, over difficult terrain, the labour requirements for gathering are high (as many as 25 people for a single gather). This is exacerbated by precipitous landscapes that do not lend themselves to modern All-Terrain Vehicles, thus pedestrian access is often the only means reaching the spread out stock;

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<sup>1</sup> Common rights - 'A person may take some part of the produce of, or property in, the soil owned by another' (Aitchison & Gadsden, 1992, p168).

‘These fells have been shepherded. They’re shepherded the way now as they were 200 years ago with a dog and a stick. You know, there’s no flying around on motorbikes or whatever on the high fells so they’ve got to be managed as they were years ago.’  
 (Farmer 5, Burton *et al.*, 2005)

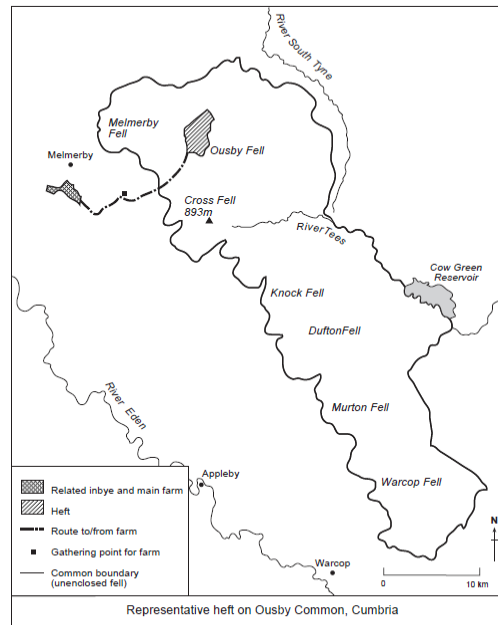


Figure 3 – A Heft within a Cumbrian Common  
 (taken from Mansfield, 2011:23)

Traditionally, farmers, their families, staff and sheep dogs work together over an entire common (several hefts) to gather several flocks in one day. In this way a large number of people work co-operatively to clear all sheep from the common in an efficient manner (Burton *et al.*, 2005). Upland commons can be extensive, the common shown in Figure 3 is around 8,850 hectares (Aitchison *et al.*, 2000) with the heft indicated being about 150ha and thus co-operation between people is essential if all sheep are to be brought down safely.

### The Issues

The marginality of their location has meant that businesses have benefited from successive subsidy support first from national government (1946 to 1972) and then Europe (1972 to 1992). Unfortunately, whilst aiming to solve economic marginality, many of these initiatives have led to over production on these low carrying capacity landscapes, resulting in less desirable environmental damage (eg Drewitt & Manley, 1997). Agri-environment grants, decoupling and modulation have gone some way to addressing these environmental concerns, but the consequence has for farmers been the destabilisation of their farm management systems especially on hefts and declining profit margins (Mansfield, 2011).

Limited enterprise choice, lack of mechanisation and few options to reduce costs of production, Cumbrian upland farmers struggle to transcend the cost-price squeeze. As profits have declined, farmers have had to make some tough decisions as to how they can continue to operate. Upland farmers have three main re-structuring options:

- 1) tighten one's belt and continue with ever decreasing profits
- 2) withdraw from farming altogether
- 3) diversify (and here, as we shall see, local food becomes important)

If the farmer chooses to continue to farm in a similar way, they must seek mechanisms to reduce costs. Typically the easiest way to do this has been to reduce the paid labour force on the farm. Many Cumbrian farms now rely solely on the farmer and the partner for labour, with older children helping out when they can. For some hill farmers, they cannot cut the wage bill as they are not married, do not have children or their partner already works off-farm. Whilst cutting labour saves money in the short term, in the long run it can cause problems for certain aspects of the farm management. One particular issue is the lack of people at gathering times to control the behaviour of flocks as they come off the fell. Reductions 80% are not uncommon (Burton *et al.*, 2005); another being the limitations it places on farm diversification.

At the other extreme, the farmer can opt to withdraw from farming altogether. A number of farmers have done this, spurred on by the effects of Foot and Mouth in 2001 (Franks *et al.*, 2003). Some have sold up altogether, others sold off the land only. Either situation has multiplier effects for the wider landscape and community. Those that have sold up altogether have often split the house from the land. This has happened in south Cumbria in around the Howgills where 45% (17 out of 36) of the farm units were no longer farming (pers. comm., H Wilson). The effect is two fold, first is that the household becomes disenfranchised from the farming community and second the land can be abandoned. If the latter happens on the heft, the associated de-stocking affects surrounding hefts, whose sheep move into the new unclaimed territory. On large fells like the one shown in Figure 3, the ripple effect of heft abandonment can affect tens of farms and their management of the flocks, particularly at gathering times. The abandonment of the hefts also leads to problems for the semi-natural vegetation maintenance. Because pressure for grazing has lessened, sheep graze more selectively, eating out the sweeter and more nutritious species at the expense of the less desirable. Plants such as gorse (*Ulex europaea*), bracken (*Pteridium agustifolium*) and mat grass (*Nardus stricta*) have increased, leading to a deterioration in the semi-natural vegetation on open fells (Backshall, 1999). Thus abandonment not only has social consequences it has environmental ones as well.

The third option is for the farmer to diversify their enterprise base. Whether to diversify or not is a difficult decision for many uplands farmers primarily due to two main factors. First, the need for additional labour to run the new enterprise is essential; but for many this has been the first thing to go to save on cost of production. Second, lack of capital and the reticence to take on loans or debt play a large role. Whilst there are many useful grant schemes to help with diversification eg ESA, ESS, LEADER RDPE; most have been or are matched funding exercises, which create barriers for many of the most economically marginal businesses. However, the gradual decoupling of support from production and modulation towards rural development and environmental management has forced many upland farmers to develop diverse income streams in order to simply remain farming. It is here that the concepts of fair trade and local produce have much to offer upland farming businesses and it at this point that in 2010 the local Cumbrian Fair Trade network began to explore the possibility of developing Fair Trade for Cumbrian upland farming businesses.

## **Fair Trade**

Fair Trade is described as 'a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect that seeks better trading conditions for, and securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers, especially in the South' (European Fair Trade Association, 2001). The concept has developed over the last 30 years through the parallel evolution of South<sup>2</sup> producers seeking a fairer deal for their produce on the world stage and that of a North consumer movement to support a more ethically and socially acceptable living for South farmers. In summary, 'Trade not Aid'.

Fair Trade producers and buyers have to adhere to common principles (Fair Trade website, Accessed: 01/02/12). Producers must be small scale who then band together to form democratic organisations who seek a fair price for their products. Workers can belong to unions, have the right to decent wages, housing and health & safety. There will be no forced or child labour and production methods need to be as environmentally sustainable as possible. Typically, producers band together to form co-operatives, which gives them greater control over sales, longer term relationships with exporters and can lead to pre financing upfront. However, as Renard (2005) notes, the last co-operatives to join the fair trade movement of a product often have the greatest problems selling their crop as the market becomes saturated.

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

Fair Trade products are typically tropical and sub tropical in origin (eg. coffee, bananas, tea, chocolate derivatives) and it is here produced in the South that until very recently the Fair Trade certification process has remained. A number of EU states now produce fair trade milk – Austria, Germany and France. The first processed product is chocolate milk '*De faire melk*' from the Netherlands, followed by *Ginger Pale Ale*, an organic ale brewed in Yorkshire.

With respect to upland producers in Britain, a number of the standard fair trade principles do not apply as the concepts are already legally available to them (ie housing and health & safety). The issue of decent wages is more interesting as most upland farms generate less than £5000 a year in net margins in a poor year, the equivalent of take home pay for everyone else, arguably 25% of the national average income. It is this that is often used as the key factor to describe these businesses as economically marginal in comparison to other forms of farming. It is the lure of the premium pricing that therefore has interested a collective of Dairy farmers in

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<sup>2</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."

Cumbria. However, the regional supermarket they wish to do business with only has enough annual sales to take on four dairy farms in the first instance.

A bigger issue, perhaps, in upland agriculture is the use of child labour. Strictly speaking, there is no comparable child labour on UK farms to those in the developing world. Occasional cases do occur like that recently in Worcestershire where Romanian migrant child workers were found harvesting cabbages. However, on upland farms there are few secondary school age children who are not drafted in to help with pinch points in the farming calendar. Shearing, dipping, gathering, sales days and lambing typically see every able body on the farm participating. Within dairy farming it is not unknown for older school age children to help twice a day with the milking, particularly if there is no waged labour on the farm. How this rests with the principles of fair trade is yet to be resolved.

A final matter with respect to Fair Trade certification with respect to upland agricultural production is the contractual relationship with buyers. Increasingly upland farmers are signing up to contracts with supermarkets to guarantee sales. However, apocryphal tales relayed from farmers during other conversations show that it is not unknown for supermarkets to turn down deliveries at the last moment through quality control issues or stalled through flows within outlets. Most meat contracts in this country are agreed on a farm by farm basis since the demise of the Meat Marketing Board, and thus, this puts the farmers at a distinct disadvantage. After the Foot and Mouth outbreak, the Curry (2001) report, amongst other recommendations, suggested that farmers needed to look more carefully at forming co-operatives to increase their bargaining power. This is interesting, because in many other parts of Britain farmers have banded together to form input purchasing co-operatives as well as output selling ones (eg Anglia Farmers). The only real co-operative movement in upland areas tends to be related to the dairy industry, probably resulting from the daily need to collect milk for bottling. The distinct lack of drive amongst upland farmers to form co-operatives is on the face of it, quite odd, given the level of co-operation required to operate the hefting system. Of course, it could be this level of forced co-operation that has put so many off being formally co-operative for sales due to 'falling out with the neighbour' over stock issues, particularly disease control and animal welfare (Mansfield, 2011).

### **Local Produce**

Local produce is a term that refers to the production, sale and consumption of a good within a local area. The number of enterprises available to create local produce on an upland farm is by far the most limited of any farm type in mid-latitude areas, being derived solely from meat, milk or wool. However, there are surprisingly a large range of possibilities, such as felt, knitting wool, insulation, cheese, yogurt, ice cream, organic food, rare breed or premium meat, and all types of processed products (such as sausages, pies and burgers), to name but a few.

A particular feature of local food production is the minimalisation the number of stages between producer and consumer, so that goods pass through only one or two 'pairs of hands' before the consumer eats them. The produce are sold unadulterated but semi-processed, as with meat or milk, or else it is processed to add value, as in



cheese, butter or pies. These goods are sold through Short Food Supply Chains (SFSCs), of which there are three recognisable types (Ilbery & Maye, 2006):

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

SFSCs are regarded as excellent opportunities for the lagging rural regions (LRRs) of Europe to improve their economic and social structure. Upland areas are classic LRRs with remoteness, poor infrastructure, low population density, limited employment opportunities and poor development capacity (Ilbery *et al.* 2004). On the other hand, consumers often make inaccurate inferences about the quality, localness, social embeddedness (connections or associations between product and place) and sustainability of these types of products. Studies have shown that quality can vary as it is not a requirement for local produce (Ilbery and Maye 2006), social embeddedness may be stretched (Ilbery and Kneafsey 1998, 2000) and 'localness' and sustainability are all a matter of perception (Ilbery and Maye 2005).

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

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

One significant aspect of the debate concerning local trading concerns the conflicts that arise between some purchasers' preference to use local suppliers and regulations relating to unfair competition at a national and European scale. In this context, a decision by a public sector organisation to give preference to local suppliers simply because they are "local" is deemed to be "unfair" on competitors located elsewhere (Morgan 2008, McCrudden 2004, Bennett 2006). The European Union is committed to "fair trading" on a European-wide scale where there is open and transparent competition for the supply of goods and services to the public sector. This perspective conflicts, however with the principle that public bodies also have a duty of care for the communities within which they operate that could include, for instance, the purchase of local farm products and use of catering providers that give preference to local sources. A particularly pertinent case recently occurred in Sweden, whose government planned to launch a buy local campaign as a strand of its Climate Smart Food project. Almost immediately the European Commission lodged a complaint requiring Sweden to come into line with free movement principles (Agra Europe, 2009 cited in Barclay, 2012).

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

As regards the private sector, the scope for local procurement may be restricted in many cases by a mismatch in scale of production, quality systems, management capacity and logistical requirements. Large multiple retailers, however, are increasingly adopting corporate social responsibility policies that arguably represent attempts to legitimise their activities in the eyes of key stakeholders and to offset criticisms of self-interest. Shareholders and customers, for instance, can demand more 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?**

The question at this point is whether food produced can be Fair Trade and local at the same time? In summary, most differences lie within the certification process (Figure 6). 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 (ie 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 & 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 such as Richardson & 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 'material' considerations above all else. Where food miles do count is in relation to environmental impact, the carbon footprint of some Fair Trade products is colossal and trying to reduce this is, to all intents and purposes, impossible. An attempt was made recently by the local Cumbrian Fair Trade Network to make a cake for as few food miles as possible. Food miles via conventional supermarket goods and Cumbrian produced goods were compared; the former coming out 27,133 miles (43,413 km) and the latter at 325 miles (520 km). Surprisingly whilst food mile reduced by 98.8% food miles, the cost only doubled (Figure 4, pers. comm. *CumbriaFoodDirect*, 24/5/12).



Figure 4 – Cumbrian Fair Trade & Local Cake (courtesy of A Banford)

The measurement of miles travelled by the ingredients of a product has however, been critically challenged by many as an oversimplification. Chi *et al* (2009) demonstrated that transportation represents only a small percentage of the sustainability of a products life. Other features of the agricultural process and food supply chain can cause disproportionate environmental damage, and thus perhaps a life cycle analysis approach would be closer to the full picture.

One comparable features of Fair Trade and local production is the ethical dimension. Ethical production is core to Fair Trade principles – it is why many people will buy these types of products in the first place (Renard, 2003). This ethical consideration is directed at both the producer and the mode of production. For local food consumers ethical issues sit high up the agenda as well, as Weatherall *et al.* (2003) found, although they tended to be more concerned about the process of production rather than directed to those that actually produced the food. The consumer response in their survey was complicated further with respect to respondents being urban or rural based, pricing and the type of outlet the goods were available from. As with the food miles debate we can challenge this ethical concern further as does not preclude a local producer producing food in an environmentally- unfriendly manner through overuse of veterinary drugs, artificial fertiliser application on grassland and silaging. Such limitations can only come through the adoption of certification processes banning any excesses.

It would seem from this brief critical overview that whilst on face value there are some overall similarities between Fair Trade and local produce; closer inspection demonstrates the issue is more complex, suggesting that it is almost impossible to have products that are both Fair trade and local. Perhaps It is more a case of *fairly traded and locally produced*, in that upland farmers are paid a fair price in order to continue to farm and consumers can buy locally produced goods knowing that their money is being used to support local businesses.

### **Is fairly traded, locally produced food a form of sustainable agriculture for Cumbrian upland farmers?**

Robinson (2004:230) suggests that sustainable agriculture is an approach to food production that ‘balances agronomic, environmental, economic and social optima’. He goes on to cite the work of Benbrook (1990) who believes the following conditions need to be met as a result: 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. We can see that the case of Fair Trade certification goes along 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.

This then leaves us to consider 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 the 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/ha./annum compared to £90/ha./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. It is on this matter where the local Fair Trade Network started to work with Cumbria farmers to consider this possibility in November 2011.

A number of topics were tackled at this event such as branding, distribution, adding value to wool, co-operation and public procurement. A ‘Cumbria mark’ was discussed which goes some way to addressing Benbrook’s (1990) views of sustainable agriculture. A form of certification, five criteria were suggested (Welbank, 2011):

- Produced in Cumbria
- Fair Price for producers reflecting real costs of production
- Animal Welfare – link to existing e.g. Farm Assured British Beef and Lamb
- Environmental – link to existing e.g. Upland Entry Level Stewardship
- Has to be delivered through a formalised ‘Fairtrade Group’

Of course, each of these criterion have since then raised more issues; for example, what can be considered produced in Cumbria if it is slaughtered or off wintered elsewhere? There was also much discussion about avoiding re-inventing the wheel and adopting as many criteria from other ‘mark’ criteria as possible. Suffice to say the project is a work in progress for the meat producers, with only some of the Cumbrian dairy farmers further forward as a result of past and current cooperation.

## **Conclusions**

What is evident from the analysis here and the emerging Local and Fair discussions in Cumbria is that simply trying to brand upland farming produce Fair Trade opens up more questions than answers. On the 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 as they stand. 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 these 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.

The evolving Local and Fair debate amongst suppliers, procurers and distributors in Cumbria suggests that a greater benefits are yet to made from sustainable agriculture, that of sustainable rural development for the wider economy and society. Already the characteristic signs are emerging (Table 1).

<b>Characteristics (as suggested by Marsden, 2009)</b>	<b>Cumbrian Evidence</b>
Active structural and behavioural change which leads to better competitiveness (price and terms of trade) and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Emergence of Local &amp; Fair brand</li> <li>· National Park badged as first Fair Trade park</li> </ul>
Creation of new local and regional structures to service supply and demand management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Local &amp; Fair project driven by local Fairtrade Network (consumer)</li> </ul>
Development of different economic values from the same resource through co-production, cooperation and co-evolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Local &amp; fair project driven by local Fairtrade Network (consumer)</li> </ul>
Improved quality, skills and trust between local resources and wider economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Evolving co-ordination between suppliers (farmers), procurers, retailers and distributors</li> <li>· Cumbria Local and Fair Event in 2011</li> </ul>
Elevation of the number and density of interactions between farming and wider economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Farmers Markets</li> <li>· Cumbria Mark discussions</li> <li>· Large centralised events such as CountryFest</li> </ul>
Increased local producer and marketing power with the wider economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Dairy farmers negotiating with regional supermarket</li> </ul>

Table 1 – Evidence of Sustainable Rural Development in Cumbria

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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