

Persuade Your University to Source Fair Trade Rice: Sample Petition Letter to Dining Services

When convincing your dining services to source Fair Trade rice, it is helpful to show demand and support from a wide range of student and faculty groups. Adapt the letter below to fit your circumstances and get student clubs, departments, administrative offices, students, teachers, etc. to sign-on. Make sure your demand is clear and precise. Who do you want them to purchase the rice from? How much? By when? Present this to your dining services, preferably with product and price information. If they are continually resistant to the idea send the petition to the President and Board of Trustees.

Dear Director of Dining Services,

Universities have always been institutions of change. Here at [University Name] we learn that our world is increasingly interconnected and that our lives, politics, and economies are increasingly interdependent. We also learn that in order to make knowledge gained in the classroom useful, it must be applied in daily practices. **Keeping with this lesson, [University Name] should start serving Fair Trade rice this year in the dining halls and catering services.**

Part of [University Name]'s commitment to building a responsible citizenry should be to ensure that students are given the option to purchase products that do not degrade people, animals, or the environment. By serving Fair Trade rice, [University Name] has the opportunity to make a responsible and sustainable choice that applies our egalitarian institutional ideals and improves the livelihoods of millions of people.

Fair Trade works to correct unjust trade imbalances by guaranteeing a price that covers the cost of production, provides an income, and maintains long-term contracts. This arrangement allows rice farmers to be freed from a cycle of debt and poverty. Currently, conventional rice farmers in the Northeast of Thailand hold a debt that is three times their annual income of \$600, earnings that already keep them well below the poverty line. The Fair Trade price allows farmers to feed their families, repay debts, and switch to organic production. One farmer described Fair Trade as being “the difference between two meals a day and three” for his family.

In the United States, perhaps the single greatest influence each of us has, for better or worse, is our unparalleled “purchasing power.” By requesting Fair Trade, [University] will be sending a message that this community is aware of the power of our dollar and that we want to be accountable for what it supports. Therefore, it is essential that [University Name] brings Fair Trade products such as coffee, chocolate, and rice onto this campus.

Additionally, taking definitive, solid efforts at supporting Fair Trade on our campus will reflect positively on the university and the students by setting an example in the community and furthering education about responsible consumer choices.

By choosing Fair Trade, we guarantee better opportunities and more secure futures for millions of people around the globe—a responsibility, if not an obligation, that this university should embrace as it considers what kind of world it wants to build and eventually leave behind.

Thank you for considering the ways in which we can be a more responsible, thoughtful community, supporting the lives of those whose work supports ours.

Your name(s) here