

A visit to Eswatini Swazi Kitchen

Introduction

We are students from the Red Cross Community College in Sweden. In July we had the great opportunity to go to Swaziland, by then an unknown country for us. We wanted to learn about how Fair trade works in a small country with economical difficulties. We had two major questions.

- What can fair trade mean for Swaziland? And:
- What difference could it make to the people and the society?

Our visit in Swaziland was quite short and therefore our study is not very extensive. The only Fair trade producer we visited was Eswatini Swazi Kitchen. Because of that we have chosen to use Eswatini as an example of a Fair trade company. Our study is based on our impressions and personal observations and thoughts about the factory: What possibilities do they have being a Fair trade producer in this context?

Background

About Eswatini

Eswatini is a small-scale producer, working for Fair trade. The company produces chutneys, jams and other sauces both for the domestic market and for export. Eswatini are exporting to about 13 countries around the world, among which you'll find European countries, USA and Japan. In Sweden you can find their sauces in the World shop, but they also get more common in the bigger multiple stores in different supermarkets.

About 50 people are working in the company. Besides Eswatini is also generating more jobs because of the contact with the small farmers around the country selling their primary products, fruits and vegetables, to the factory. Eswatini also have contact with a group of women working with handicraft making baskets for the company.

Social work

Eswatini Swazi Kitchen was started in 1991 by a catholic priest and an Anglican nun to create work in Swaziland. The primary aim with the factory was to generate money for the NGO Manzini youth care, an NGO that takes care of orphans and HIV/aids affected children. The founders also wanted to create jobs for disfavoured groups who had problems with attending the labour market. They are in contact with a group of disabled adults but the mainly focus is on women. Because of this almost all the workers at Eswatini are women.

Mildred Henwood, the managing director, told us about the importance of wellbeing among the workers. Not only is the economic growth of importance but also the wellbeing of the workers. Because of that, the company has several privileges that they offer their workers. They offer for example free medical care, maternity leave and because of the situation with the presence of HIV/Aids Eswatini give good conditions for the affected ones, where they also take into consideration the mental strain the disease causes when it comes to medical care and absence due to illness. The company also informs a lot about the disease, how you may avoid it and how you reduce the consequences when infected.

Other Projects

Eswatini wants to help people develop. The focus has been on women but also children. Today the company supports four homes for orphans and street kids. And they also support a newly started hospital for people with HIV/Aids.

Eswatini also have contact with a women's group, north of Manzini. About 200 women are making baskets from grass, which they sell to the factory. These women also make handicrafts for Gone rural, another company in the Fair trade branch. The handicraft is a chance for the women to get an income, which is important to create independence and development.

Discussion

Possibilities:

What can Fair trade, and as an example Eswatini, mean to Swaziland and the local society?

We think fair trade is of importance. Fair trade has the capacity to help small, struggling companies, giving their workers fair conditions, to get access to markets and to get an income. Eswatini is an example of this. In our study we have seen that Eswatini has got lots of possibilities to contribute and help developing the society. Though working in a small scale we think they state a good example of Fair trade.

Security

Eswatini is entering a very small market where the people in the north buy things because of the special conditions that is offered between the business partners. Because of the long term relationship the factory are sure about their income and do not only have to think about the economic income and turnover. Because of the secure income they have the possibility to keep up the social work that Eswatini is characterized by. This secure income created by the special Fair trade market also makes it easier for the company to continue with the same producers of raw material.

The whole chain of production

Fair trade also makes it possible for the producers to export not only the raw material but also fully made products. Eswatini has the possibility to include the whole production chain in what they exports: from raw material to the package. They are also able to develop new recipes etc. Because of this it's possible to create more jobs, which is of great importance in a country with an economical situation like Swaziland.

To face problems and inform

Eswatini works with disfavoured and exposed people. Our impression is that the management on the factory really do not ignore the problems around these groups and the problem with HIV/Aids, but are eager to face it and inform about it.

Transparency

According to our impressions, the organisation of Eswatini seemed to be quite open and transparent. The workers seemed to be well informed, as well in the production as the visions of the company. We think this is very good example of transparency that is of importance in this special context.

Conclusion

An eye opener to us has been to understand the importance of Fair trade. The Fair trade system renders empowerment and you get a tool to create your own future. Instead of being a passive receiver you get encouraged to use your own capacity.