

East Dunbartonshire Council: A Recipe for Success

THE RICE PROJECT, IN A NUTSHELL

Through a unique partnership combining demand and the means to supply, East Dunbartonshire Council and Just Trading Scotland brought Kilombero Rice to our country and opened the doors for what is becoming a UK-wide market returning significant benefits to the rice producers in Malawi. Scottish councils, church groups and others have joined East Dunbartonshire Council to buy a total of 11,500 kg rice so far – enough to send 127 children to school for a year. By supporting a fledgling enterprise and bringing learning to life in schools, the project has also delivered economic and social benefits at a local level.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

The stage was set in 2004 with the arrival of the East Dunbartonshire Steering Group, bringing together people within and outwith the Council with a common interest in Fairtrade. This group introduced the Council's Commercial Manager for Facilities Management to the locally-based Director of Just Trading Scotland (a joint venture between Balmore Coach House in East Dunbartonshire and Rainbow Turtle in Renfrewshire), and an idea was born.

The National Association of Smallholding Farmers of Malawi (NASFAM) is one of Just Trading Scotland's key producer groups, and a market for their Kilombero Rice was identified in East Dunbartonshire's schools, where Fairtrade is a growing interest.

Introducing the rice to Scotland presented challenges. Logistical problems arose from the country being landlocked; the relatively high Malawi rice prices, and costs of cleaning rice in the UK, also created difficulties. However, these were overcome. East Dunbartonshire Council and Renfrewshire Council provided warehouse facilities, allowing cost savings. Grant aid was also won: a Scottish Government grant provided support for initial transport costs and rice cleaning, a grant from the Lorna Young Foundation enabled upgrading of the Karonga mill and Renfrewshire Council provided funding for fitting out and purchasing equipment.

The rice was therefore able to be priced competitively, allowing the Council to justify it financially – Kilombero rice was thus brought to Scotland via an initial order for 500kg. The added value of feeding back into the local economy, along with the educational merits of the story, made the rice project a viable proposal complementary to existing Council contracts.

The rice was initially used in a week-long Fairtrade Fortnight promotion at HQ's canteen, then taken to local schools; by July, a rice-based Fairtrade week had been held in every East Dunbartonshire school. The Council supported production of posters, pop-up banners and leaflets; educational packs were also developed for follow-on learning. The rice has now replaced previous supplies and will continue to be used regularly in all Council outlets.



Kilombero Rice on its way to East Dunbartonshire

Photo courtesy of Just Trading Scotland



John Riches with Councillor Geekie, Leader of East Dunbartonshire Council, at Fairtrade Week 2009, EDC HQ

Photo courtesy of East Dunbartonshire Council

CURRENT AND FUTURE DESTINATIONS

Through this project, East Dunbartonshire Council is giving a fair deal to the producers who help it to run its day-to-day business, and delivering benefits locally to schools, the business community and East Dunbartonshire's status as a Fairtrade Zone.

The project's success has led to its spread within and beyond East Dunbartonshire. Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire Councils have started buying the rice with promotion through schools, and the opportunity has been opened to the public via the 90kg Rice Challenge which has won the hearts and minds of UK churches, employers and other groups as far afield as Cornwall.

Learning has not been confined to schools - the project team has evaluated its approach along the way, identifying improvement opportunities. One lesson has been to give teachers more notice of Fair Trade Weeks, to allow planning of classroom activities.

East Dunbartonshire Council and Just Trading Scotland plan to extend Fair Trade Weeks in schools by running a competition, updating the school packs and creating other educational material for Religious Education and Modern Studies, through the new Curriculum for Excellence.

East Dunbartonshire Council and Just Trading Scotland would encourage other Councils to follow their lead, with the following messages:

- *Come through the doors we have opened, and enjoy Kilombero Rice with us*
- *You, too, can be a pioneer and open doors for other new sustainable products!*

WHERE TO FIND OUT MORE

John Riches, Director, Just Trading Scotland: 0141 887 1881 or 01360 620 254 john@justtradingscotland.co.uk

Anne Miller, Facilities Officer, East Dunbartonshire Council: 0141 574 5731 anne.miller@eastdunbarton.gov.uk

www.justtradingscotland.co.uk
www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk – look under F for Fairtrade

