**John:** It's quite clear in coffee that if people don't pay the appropriate and fair prices for coffee, coffee will be very hard to grow.

**Cathryn:** There are some really great examples of things that our members have been passionate about that have then driven our policy and approach as a business, Fairtrade being a prime example.

**Bob:** You know, I can see kind of sustainability reporting as being mandatory at some point in the future.

**John:** Welcome everybody to this special edition of the Building Better Business podcast. I say special because we're here today, because it is 30 years since Fairtrade began in the UK, and we're here to celebrate those 30 years, but also to look forward to the next 30 years, and to do that, we've got three very special guests. Firstly, I'd like to introduce Cathryn Higgs, the Head of Food Policy from the Co-op. Welcome Cathryn. Thank you for joining us.

**Cathryn:** Thank you for inviting me today.

**John:** Our pleasure. Like to welcome Bob Doherty, Dean of the School for Business and Society at the University of York. Welcome Bob.

**Bob:** Thanks John. Hi.

**John:** And thirdly, I'd like to welcome Silvia Herrera, one of our Mexican coffee cooperatives, Ejidos San Fernando. Welcome Silvia. As I said, there's a special episode because of the 30-year anniversary of Fairtrade, and really an episode to consider how our food and drink is changing. And I think I'm right in saying Cathryn that 30 years ago, not only was Fairtrade found, but the Co-op did a ground-breaking report on Responsible Retailing.

**Cathryn:** Hi John, yes, you're absolutely right. 30 years ago, Co-op launched its Responsible Retailing Campaign. Sitting behind that campaign was an enormous piece of insight into the ethics of the food system, where we asked over 30,000 shoppers what they [00:02:00] felt about the food system, what they felt around the ethics particularly of that system, and the results were absolutely inspirational in terms of driving Co-op's policy in Responsible Retailing for the next 30 years, which is why I'm here today.

**John:** Well, fantastic. We look forward to hearing some of those insights and observations from the report, and from everything that you've seen since.

**Cathryn:** Absolutely. I mean, the report really, really is actually the reason why I joined the Co-op, didn't quite join 30 years ago, but not too far from that, I wanted to join an ethical business, and the Co-op was one of those businesses that really kind of stood out at the time. And I think one of the things that really came through in the report 30 years ago was that people just wanted to be told the truth about food, to understand more about how their food is sourced, how it's marketed and how it's sold, to mark that anniversary, we have repeated that piece of research, and the results are really interesting. I could talk about those more later, but basically the insight is that people still want to know more about where their food comes from, who produces it, and how it's sought and marketed.

**John:** Fantastic. And for me, I mean, Cafédirect has a unique business model as the Co-op does, and for me, I always feel that with food and drink, it's so important to have a producer in the room. And I've, over the years, I've sometimes found myself in organizations where producers are not present, and it's so important to have all the leaders of the food and drink supply chain with us today. So it's so important to have Silvia here as well. Bob, you've also been involved with Co-op in the Responsible Retailing Report as well.

**Bob:** Yeah. I mean, Cathryn asked me recently to do a piece of research which looked at, [00:04:00] what would a typical dinner plate look like in 2050. I worked together with a set of experts on looking at – now this is a UK dinner plate – what would it look like. And so we were forecasting into the future, and came up with some really, really interesting findings, which got picked up by lots of different media outlets, because it is quite interesting, YOU know, when you do that futures work. It was great to work on that, because it makes everybody think about the pressures on the food system, but also some of the changes that will take place.

**John:** Overall, from your report and from your experience, it feels clear that consumers are expecting more from brand owners and from retailers. What are the two or three things that they're really looking for, Cathryn?

**Cathryn:** Absolutely, consumers, shoppers, Co-op members, you know, society feels possibly quite powerless in the food system. So those businesses that they transact, with like retailers, there is an expectation that we will make it easy for them to make better choices in terms of the foods that they buy. Today, the things that shoppers and members and customers are kind of really interested in, it's really difficult to nail it down to one thing, because everybody has a different kind of set of values and thinks about different things, but the consistent things that come through, as you'd expect, are environmental impact of products, but really, really important and pertinent for today. People want to know that the people that are producing their food, the people that are growing the coffee or the tea, the cocoa that they are choosing to spend their money on, are treated in a, well, way that is fair, respectful, and that they get a decent income out of that. So that is coming through really loud and strong in that insight.

**John:** That's really, I mean, Silvia, that must be very good to hear that, because I know we met recently when you came and spoke at the Fairtrade 30th event in London, and spoke very powerfully about being in [00:06:00] business as a smallholder farmer. But from what you can hear today, and what you saw when you came to London a few weeks ago, you know, the consumers are really interested to know that the supply chain has balance and has equality. How does it feel to be part of that supply chain as a smallholder farmer?

**Silvia:** Yeah, I have to say that when I came back to back home, I got this emotion to talk about my experience in the UK, because here you cannot find that kind of consumers, we are like behind on that, we don't really understand the impact of the supply chain being more sustainable, because, of course, we have, like, we find the production or these raw materials really close. So we kind of don't realise how important it is to – the chain to be sustainable. So when we look at the market, like, being at the market, or your countries will realise how important it is, and as we are in this industry, it make us like happy, because we know that we are in the right path, like, we are trying to push the things to be different, not just doing it right here in our countries or in our lands, but also we know that this might be the right way to do things, not doing it just because of money, but because of the importance of being like sustainable for a long period of time. Because it seems like, since we human beings are here in our planet, we are doing not – anything, but destroying it. So we [00:08:00] are now trying to do things different, not just exploiting things or our planet or people, but now we are focused on the planet and the people that – and not just people, but all the living things that are in our planet. So I came back really happy because we had the chance to talk about this – about the importance of sustainability.

**John:** Yeah, no, I think it's very wonderful to hear the way you feel about what matters, which I think must resonate with the findings of the Co-op and their report in terms of kind of the humanity and the integrity with which we all want to live our lives. It's not quite as straightforward as that, of course, but that's certainly coming through loud and clear from yourself and from the many thousands of people who contributed to the Co-op's insight as Cathryn mentioned. How does Fairtrade fit into all of this then, Bob?

**Bob:** Fairtrade is a, you know, third party certification system that guarantees consumers, and as we've heard from Cathryn and Silvia, increasing the amounts of consumers that are interested in transparency, interested in authenticity, interested in knowing where they're, you know, what kind of – how do we treat producers in that supply chain, and also they want to know that their purchasers are actually contributing to the sustainability of producer groups in developing countries where they're under the enormous pressures of climate change, for example, and other areas of environmental degradation. And Fairtrade really delivers in terms of all those things that I mentioned, all those concerns that consumers have got. It's an independent third party guarantee system that is robust, [00:10:00] that adds resilience to producer groups, and people know when they look at the logo that is part of a system that's monitored, evaluated, and has been in existence for 30 years. And so there's been lots of learnings, lots of improvements, and lots of progress towards innovation and sustainability, and it's really the most trusted third party certification globally, and most trusted by consumers. And I think that is something to be proud of that's been built over that 30-year period, and there's a number of pioneers like Cafédirect who've been involved in doing that, but it's that relationship, isn't it, between the companies themselves, but also the people growing the produce, that's really, really important. And Fairtrade is a great example, and Cafédirect and the Co-op another example of how you're very close to those communities and origin, you go and visit them, you talk to them about the challenges, and you create solutions that are co-created between farmers and the businesses, and that's so fundamental to the way that business should work, you know, it should be the norm really.

**John:** Listening to that, and then, listening to Cathryn's comments earlier about how consumers really want to know where their food and drink comes from, it feels like the role that Fairtrade has played and must continue to play is really, you say, fundamental to helping consumers to get that kind of that reassurance in the system.

**Bob:** Yeah.

**John:** Earlier on, Bob, you mentioned that you'd also started to look into the next 30 years. I remember meeting a lady recently who had, I think she'd cultivated 5 million eggs without a single chicken being involved. So I think they were lab grown eggs, and she was proud to be an egg farmer without a chicken. What have you seen as being kind of the future of food for all of us in the UK on our plates, as you so put it? [00:12:00]

**Bob:** I mean, look, John, the UK food system is under a lot of pressure, you know, there's quite a few negative consequences of our current food system, you know, environmental degradation, climate change, soil compaction and degradation, but also on human health as well, in terms of increasing dietary ill health, and really something that we eat three times or four times a day shouldn't really be delivering those kind of negative consequences, should be a positive outcome. And so there will be changes, there has to be changes, there's no data about it, so we did this forecasting report, we looked at literature, but we also asked experts as well. I think we'll see more diversity of proteins, not only, as you said that – when I say diversity of proteins, I mean, diversity of plant, animal, but also other alternative proteins as well. I think we'll see a move to a more balanced diet, so that will then inevitably need more balance between fibre and protein and more nutrients, and also will – I think will head towards more of a seasonal diet. As you look at the kind of pressures on other growing regions in the world, in terms of droughts and climate stress, you'll see more of a focus, I think in the UK on seasonal produce and the Co-op, a certain leading in that area, announcing that they're sourcing most of their meat from British farmers, most, you know, they're also looking at other soft fruits as well.

So I think we'll see a move towards seasonal, I think we'll see less processed food, I think we have to, I think we have to get that – you know, costs on the National Health Service from dietary ill health are not sustainable, we need to get less people who are sick and going to hospitals, that's really important. And we'll see, because of climate, we'll see an impact on, [00:14:00] you know, there'll be crops that we don't currently grow in the UK that we're able to grow in the UK. So we're already seeing that with some produce at the moment, but also in terms of international qualities like coffee and tea and cocoa, the pressures on producer groups from climate change are really significant. I can only see the work that Fairtrade does and it's having a really positive impact in helping farmer groups and farmer communities actually adapt and mitigate and transform the way they do things in the face of climate change and the investment that Fairtrade provides from the Fairtrade premium that produce the social premium and other things like the gold standard that Cafédirect has where you're investing profit in initiatives like tree nurseries and things like this, so fundamental to helping make sure we continue to have good quality coffee, and good quality coffee [inaudible 00:15:00] mentioned in terms of input.

**John:** You touched on climate change there, which we'd like kind of to get your perspective, Silvia, on the impact of climate change on farming in Mexico. Certainly, the farmers that we're involved in, and one of our farmer directors, Michelle from [inaudible 00:15:18] in Peru, sees climate change as a very, very, you know, the most significant impact on farm. How do you see it, Silvia?

**Silvia:** Yeah, we cannot do enough, but we are trying our best, and, of course, social premium is helping us to be a little bit more resilient to this climate change, for example, I have to talk about my own experience this year. During the last year, it didn't rain at the time it was supposed to be raining. So our crop got delayed, really delayed, as any other year, so we had this variety that is really good, [00:16:00] and we have been in constant, maybe on constant with this variety, and this was the most affected. And at the end of the day, we couldn't crop – not enough, we collect just half of our production because of this change of patterns in terms of raining, so we couldn't crop – collect all the coffee we got in the – because otherwise we could affect the next crop, and we got to make decisions, and we decided to, if this crop was already affected, we have to take care for the next one. And this is something that we have been working on, and now, for the last maybe six years, we have been working on quality varieties, we have our own nursery because of the social premium. And now we are trying to get some resilient varieties, because otherwise this could be the – this is the best example of what are we facing now.

**John:** Well, you bring it to life, Silvia. You make the – you dramatise it so brilliantly, because I think to anybody who will be listening, to think about half of your income, half your livelihood, being taken away from climate change, and then, working out how to adapt, and the time it takes to create more resilient coffee bushes, it takes time. So it's a real impact that you have to respond to that has a real impact there and then, but also you have to react to and it takes time to rebuild from that. So no, I think it's so important for us all to recognise that, because sometimes we don't feel climate change in the way that it really is buffering communities across the world. Thank you for [00:18:00] that.

One of the things about the Co-op that strikes me Cathryn, is you were pioneering, even thinking of Responsible Retailing 30 years ago, and through your unique model where you have member owners and you can really engage with the communities and really get genuine dialogue and decision making, you can really kind of lead the way business can be responsible in the UK, and potentially beyond. I mean, Cafédirect, in our own small way, we try and do the same in a different business model to being a cooperative, but very much working with cooperatives such as Silvia’s and making sure that we are totally committed to Fairtrade and totally committed to a direct, transparent relationship throughout the supply chain. The whole world isn't built this way. Bob, how do you see the benefit of organisations like the Co-op and Cafédirect in terms of challenging the way business is done and trying to shine a light on things that matter?

**Bob:** Yeah, I think it's a really good question. I mean, business isn't separate from environment or society. That's the most important, you know, it should be integrated. I think that we've got into this trap of just thinking of performance in businesses is economic. In fact, businesses should be performing economically, socially, and environmentally, should be integrated. Businesses for too long have externalised their costs, and we've seen that negative impact on the food system now. So this notion of a wider view of performance, economic, social, and environment is exactly what the global economy needs right now, and I think organisations, social enterprises, Co-ops, have really pioneered, the fact that you can do that, that you can report, you can be transparent about not only your economic performance, but also your social and environmental performance, and also the governance is really important, how you encourage [00:20:00] participation of farmers, of members, of suppliers, if you look at the Co-op, you know, they've got 4 million consumer members; Cafédirect, some of your shareholders are farmers, and they have seats on the board, and therefore, you get to learn about the challenges of different parts of the system in the supply chain. It's really fundamental to good business, and I think this is where business needs to go to, it can't externalise its cost. It's got to be, you know, I can see kind of sustainability reporting as being mandatory at some point in the future, and I think you've led the way. So all that learning, you can pass on to other people.

**John:** Cathryn, how does it feel being part of a pioneering organisation that really is, I think, behaving differently to others and connecting more deeply with different parts of your business, how does it feel? Certainly it feels like that sort of attracted you to the organisation all those years ago. How does it feel today?

**Cathryn:** I mean, you're absolutely right. It is what attracted me to the organisation many years ago, and it is why I'm still the Co-op, and still really proud to work for the Co-op. I think Bob has talked about what it means to be a Co-op. We are a Consumer Co-op. We have over 5 million members actually, and plans to kind of increase that to at least 8 million by 2030, so really great plans to kind of grow that number. I think that's really, really important, it's really at the heart of who we are and what we are. We're not a, you know, a – we're not a business that is run by shareholders. We're not expected to return to the markets in the same way. We are owned by all of those millions of individual members, and that makes a real difference in terms of how your business thinks, and how your [00:22:00] business operates. And for us, our members are everything; without our members, we're not here – we're here to serve our members. But our members really keep us on our toes. I have regular meetings with our council, and they are very clear about their expectations of us as a business and how we operate, and we have some very, kind of, sometimes quite challenging conversations in terms of what that means we can do. But actually, that relationship with our members, the relationship with our council is really, really core, and is why sometimes the Co-op does things that other businesses won't do.

And if I go back to activity that happened quite a number of years ago, but some of the things that I am really proud that our business has done is we will stand sometimes apart from the rest of the industry, and do things that other businesses will look at and kind of go, gosh, why have you done that, that's very brave. And one of those things that we did was to effectively mainstream Fairtrade many, many, many years ago, and put it in every single one of our shops, which turned Fairtrade from being something that you would find in a, the back of a church hall or in a health food shop or a very kind of specialist shop into something that everybody could buy into. Suddenly, everybody could go and get Fairtrade tea, Fairtrade coffee, Fairtrade chocolate, which was absolutely a really important move, I think. But that our business is continuing to think like that, and, you know, I'm really proud that we put producers right at the heart of our business, we have great relationships with our British producers, you know, they are very, very important to us, and recognise that they are under lots of pressures as well, but we absolutely recognise that the producers that provided with tea and coffee and all of those amazing commodities are on the front foot of climate change.

It was coffee producers and tea and cocoa producers [00:24:00] that first really started to talk to me about the impacts of climate change. Before that, climate change was something that was a little bit academic. We all knew about it, and actually were planning for it, but actually, I was suddenly talking to people who were going climate change, you know, unpredictable weather, it's just washed away our village or our crops have gone, our livelihood suddenly have disappeared. And that really, really struck me, and it struck our business, which is why one of the things that we're doing with our Fairtrade producers is really kind of supporting them on that transition and that adaptation to climate change, because it's absolutely critical.

**John:** Thank you. I think also, as you said, Bob, Cafédirect has a special set of, you know, has a different governance and a social enterprise and a B Corp, so on and so forth. I think the other thing, of course, is that Silvia, you're working for a cooperative as well, so I think one of the things that Cafédirect has always prided itself on is only working with cooperatives so that you're working with organisations that are owned and run and governed by the communities they serve. How does it feel being part of a cooperative in Mexico in the same way as you heard how Cathryn feels about being part of a cooperative in the UK?

**Silvia:** You don't realise how different you're doing things until you, like, face the regular market, and we do that here in Mexico because there are not enough cooperatives. We know for sure that this might not be the only one alternative, but at least there's one way of doing businesses different, like, you're not, again, you're not focusing on money, but you're focusing on people, on our community, in that, we know that together, we're stronger, that's why – and when you grow, because my dad is also part of the cooperative, so when you grow on this environment, [00:26:00] you think that things are like this everywhere when you are a child, but then you grow, then you go outside and you realise that everything is different and, of course, when I talk to people here, and I don't want to say that they are rude, but they don't really understand, why are you working as a community, and why do you want everyone being okay, being like okay with the decisions we make. They don't really understand, why are you in this cooperative if you can grow your own coffee and sell your own coffee. Of course, maybe I can sell my coffee, like, maybe more expensive, but not every, like, not every of our being could be with this price, or... Yeah, they don't really understand until you get in this social economics, and you understand that you can do business different, and we are not – we are focusing on development, on projects, on people, on the planet, on climate change.

Now, if we couldn't be in this system, Fairtrade system, we couldn't have the chance of doing this nursery of this project or focusing on quality, but just on growing, growing, growing. And that's the thing that I really like about Fairtrade and social economics, because when you go outside, you can talk about – you can also – I learned this from the first corporate that taught me how to co-op, like he said, when you have a golden egg, you have to shout out about it, and that's why I really, like, I like campaigning [00:28:00] about social economics, because I know that there are more alternatives, but we have to look for them, like, we have to, yeah, face capitalism from some other different ways, not – we have to play on this game, this capital game, but we have our own tools and our own objective, and they don't realize that we are, of course, making money of this, but this is not about, like, luxury, this is about having an impact on the territory.

**John:** What's hugely exciting that I can hear is that consumers are wanting ethical products, consumers are wanting socially beneficial connections with food and drink and environmentally constructive connections. And clearly, we all feel as part of businesses that provide that, whether it's in Mexico or in the UK, that it makes a really profound difference to the way business is done. And Bob, you touched on it earlier that, you know, business over the last 50 and longer years is becoming incredibly extractive and very, very much focused on financial capital and not on social and human capital. But here you can hear that consumers want to know that they're doing the right thing and they're creating a sustainable framework, and that is possible from the kind of business work that the Co-op and others are doing. And certainly, at Cafédirect, we've spent over 30 years to improve smallholder farmers' livelihoods and the environments in which they operate, and listening to all three of you, it's quite clear that the way you do business makes a big difference. And I think for Cafédirect, and I think Silvia, you'll feel the same, it's quite clear that we need business to change because we need [00:30:00] to create truly sustainable food systems that do pay fairly so that crops can be developed, but communities can be built, and livelihoods could be built. And it's quite clear in coffee that if people don't pay the appropriate and fair prices for coffee, coffee will be very hard to grow, as many crops will be in the future, because climate change will continue to get more and more aggressive. And so, from what I've heard today, I think it really is important for us all to focus on building better business so that actually we have sustainable food and drink. And certainly, in coffee, Silvia, at Cafédirect, we feel if we don't shout about that, and we don't help people to see how much it matters to pay fairly and to build communities and build the environment, we really will find that we don't have coffee tomorrow, and other things that will matter to us hugely. So I suppose it's very, very important, isn't it? It's not just about a nicer way of doing business, it is a truly resilient and very important way of doing business.

**Silvia:** Of course, food and good food, and that's the thing that now people have this perspective that it's expensive, but, of course, if we are not paying, like, fair prices to producers, of course, we can sell a $1 cup of coffee, but someone else is paying for it, and, of course, it will be the producer that is paying for that. He is like, holding your market or those market prices. So okay, if we have – if we want a fair reward, we have to pay fair prices.

**John:** What should we expect from our peers in food and drink, be that in retailing or in brand ownership or in production, where it's not with a cooperative centre? Bob, you've usually got all the answers, [00:32:00] what do you think?

**Bob:** I think we're reaching a tipping point when you guys have pioneered and showed the way, and showed leadership, and showed that it works; you only have to listen to Silvia and talk about the impact it has on producers. And we're privileged, aren't we? We're privileged, we've been to origin, and we've seen the impact on producers of Fairtrade and doing business better, and we need to tell more of those stories, more of those impact stories. And you know, Cafédirect, the Co-op and Silvia's cooperative will do that very, very well. But we also need to advocate, we need to – and the Co-op’s been very good at this, and Cafédirect’s been great at this. We need to tell the businesses that these are the benefits of doing business this way, this is the most long term sustainable way of approaching things like coffee, tea and cocoa and other and other international commodities, because the relationships are better, you get better produce, you can talk about challenges together, and if you look at all the impacts, the negative, you know, all the things about biodiversity and climate change, we need a different approach. And I think that advocacy, going to conferences like you do, and talk to other retailers and other manufacturers about the challenges, about the benefits of co-creating solutions, I think that you can see that other companies are more and more B Corp, more people joining Fairtrade, more people wrestling and thinking about tackling sustainability, more dialog with producer groups, but all really pioneered by Fairtrade and organisations who are part of the Fairtrade movement.

**John:** And Cathryn, how do you see this expectation from others, if I can put it so crudely?

**Cathryn:** I think I'm quite optimistic at the moment. I, with the benefits of working in the food industry for quite some time, I can remember a day when kind of talking about sustainability was quite [00:34:00] unique, there weren't many people talking about it; and if they were, they were talking about it in relation to one single thing. I think there's a lot more understanding within business around the fact that we work in a food system, and all these issues are connected, and you can't think about the environment without also thinking about people and communities, and how it all comes together. So I see a lot of that. Any business that is thinking about what they can do in their supply chain, I would just say, get out into your supply chain, take your senior leaders out into supply chain and go and talk to producers, go and listen to producers. And, I mean, listen, not talk at, listen to producers and understand what their challenges and what their issues are, and how you can work together to kind of overcome some of those, because you can overcome some of them, and there are really clever initiatives out there that will help commute farmers and communities to kind of adapt, or kind of mitigate some of the challenges that they're facing. But I would just say, you have to put producers and farmers at the heart of your business model, and it's, as we said, it's something that increasingly, shoppers and consumers are expecting, and they're open to hear about the great work that businesses are doing in this space. So I think there's a win-win there. You keep your shoppers happy and they keep coming back to you, but also you're securing your supply chain, and you are supporting communities, families with their livelihood. So why would you not do that?

**John:** It's becoming increasingly clear that it's good business, isn't it?

**Bob:** I went to – I was lucky enough to go to Entebbe, to producers conference of coffee back in 2013, and those farmers said to me, we've never defaulted on a contract with Cafédirect, never, never defaulted because of the relationship we have with Cafédirect. We give them the best quality coffee, because they help us ensure that we are here in 20, 30, and 40 years, [00:36:00] and that's what consumers need to do, they need to support and buy Fairtrade, and buy Fairtrade from pioneers like Cafédirect and the Co-op.

**John:** I remember when Silvia, you were over here in the UK a few weeks back that it was very clear that your perspective was, this is business, it's just good business, it's not about seeing farmers as impoverished beneficiaries at the end of the supply chain, it's about joint leadership, isn't it, and about working together to find a more sustainable kind of way of doing business. Could you add something to that, do you think, Silvia?

**Silvia:** Yeah, and that's something that really makes me happy about us being here together, because this is the real thing, we have to share our thoughts and our points of view, because we are together in this, and sometimes, if we – this is part of the system, you know. If we are like everyone by their own means and making their own path, this might be really hard for us to achieve what we want to achieve, and this is something that we share. So that's something really important about Fairtrade as well, like, we are building bridges between – not just between the producers and consumers, but also everything that is in between, and this is really important.

**John:** Yeah, it's so important just to connect and to listeners as Cathryn and Bob say as well. Certainly, for me, I think when we listen to producers, be those on the board of Cafédirect or through the supply chain, it really is important to have the integrity and respect that Cathryn talked about, and it is about fair pricing, it's about [00:38:00] consistent, stable pricing. I mean, coffee is such an unstable commodity where speculators are trying to make money from the commodity rather than make livelihoods for the farmers. And certainly, you want to secure fair income upon which you can plan both socially and environmentally. I think also the thing that's always struck me listening to people like yourself, Silvia, is, it's not really the right of large multinational companies to have farmer information, it's the right of farmers, and I think farmers have a huge amount of value they can add, and insight, and it is about their relationship, isn't it? It's really about valuing each other rather than being extractive, because I think earlier we talked about extraction in a more financial way, but I think extraction is really in a power way, and then, information way as well.

Keeping going, we've talked about Fairtrade, we've talked about business models, we've talked about some of the things that consumers have been looking for. The other thing is, you know, consumers play a huge role in the future of food and drink, Bob, you suggested, we need to move to a diet that's got more balance in it, that's got less processed food in it. What else can consumers do from, Cathryn, from your point of view, you're uniquely positioned, where 5 million of your consumers are actually members and owners, what are they looking to do in the future of food and drink?

**Cathryn:** I think for consumers there, as we said, we've already described, that there's such a lot of interest in this, a lot of consumers want to play their part. I think there is a real desire to kind of take action that benefits both the planet and communities, and for people to make good or better choices when they are purchasing products. But I [00:40:00] think, sometimes it can be quite complicated to do that, to kind of sift through all of the information that's out there around what to do. So what we do with our members is we run things called join-in sessions, where members can come online and they can learn more about different issues, including issues around food sustainability, whether that's about Fairtrade, whether that's about help, whether that's about packaging, lots of different issues, or climate change, even. And through those sessions, we hope to kind of demystify things, I think, really for shoppers and members, so that they can then go away and kind of make their own decisions, we're not about preaching, we're not about telling people what to do, but just giving people a little bit more information so that when they're in a shop, they can make what they feel is the right choice in line with their values.

So I think that's something that we can do, and, I guess, as a shopper, if I was a shopper listening to this, or I was somebody that regularly shopped in the Co-op, why not become a member if you're not already a member. But with our business, you can then have a say in how our business is run, you can vote in our AGM, and you can ask questions of our business. And whilst we can't do everything, you know, we will definitely listen, and there are some really great examples of things that our members have been passionate about, that have then driven our policy and approach as a business, Fairtrade, being a prime example. Our members have really got behind Fairtrade, and are very clear when they think we're doing a great job, and they're very clear with us, and very totally with us, when they think that there's more that we can do. So, as I said before, they really keep us on our toes, and I think, any shopper of any business could do the same. Your views [inaudible 00:41:48] is what I'd say.

**John:** Fantastic. It feels like we're there to listen as well, and then, to act. So it's, yeah. So often, I don't think we realise the power we have as consumers, [00:42:00] a little bit of conscious, and you could go – that could go a long way.

**Bob:** Completely agree with, I mean, the Co-op's a great example of how consumers can have an influence on policy, and they run those dialogs and have those mechanisms, the annual conference and dial-in sessions, really important, and other businesses have that as well. I think consumers have been an important part, obviously, the food system, and they don't realise sometimes, the power they have, and the power they have on supermarkets, and I think unleashing that in some ways, and getting more people to use their shopping as a means of putting their message across and writing letters if certain products aren't stopped. I mean, Fairtrade, when it started, as Cathryn's already said, was mainly in health, was mainly in whole food shops, was mainly in church shops, but it was consumers that really drove the change. Obviously, they had to have products to buy and products to advocate for, like, Cafédirect and Divine Chocolate and so on and so forth, but they were the people who were asking the supermarkets to stop these products, standing outside, you know, doing tastings, telling their friends. Now, social media is obviously a big difference, so you can tell more people quickly, and that has a big, big impact as well. So I think they sometimes underestimate how important they are, shareholder activism is also important. So as people have already said, certain companies are kind of run by shareholders, and you get groups of shareholders who actually try to change policy within their companies, and that has a positive impact as well. So yeah, they play a huge role, and I think increasingly they'll play even more of an important role as well.

**Silvia:** I think that you have been building that perspective for at least 30 years, and we as producers, we really appreciate that. And now, when I came back from, [00:44:00] like, of course, I understand that it's important for you, like, hearing, like, directly the perspective of producers, but also for me, was really interesting facing the market like hearing and understanding how it were from the quality perspective, when I was at Cafédirect roastery from the market perspective, prices' perspective, so it was really interesting for me, and helpful. So I came back and shared not just to my cooperative partners, but also for this Fairtrade Mexican network, you know what, we have to invest in that because we have been investing in quality like the last 25 years. So I think that Mexican market is ready now to have these conversations, to talk about sustainability, to talk about fair prices.

**John:** I mean, it strikes me, in 30 years there's been a huge amount of progress being made, and I think, as Cathryn said, yeah, it's right to be optimistic. I was reflecting on – I mean, I went to university much longer than 30 years ago, Bob, I was up at York University only recently as well, and it – it strikes me, if my memory serves me well that 35 years ago, or 30 years ago in the case of this, sustainability wasn't a large component of university education, and it feels to me like it is almost whatever course you're doing, social and environmental sustainability flows through those courses. So the whole structure of education has shifted considerably, hasn't it?

**Bob:** So it's marbled throughout the whole of our education system at the University of York and other universities as well, and we have a Sustainability Committee, which has an influence on university operations as well, and we've also [00:46:00] developed a set of interdisciplinary modules, one I teach on is called Future of Food, and any student from any department, whether it's management, philosophy, environment, biology, health sciences, can actually elect to take that module, and it's all about food sustainability. That's why it's called the Future of Food, and we get students to debate about the problems in the food system and come up with solutions, we get guest speakers coming in, and you kindly regularly come in and do guest talks, because such a unique model is Cafédirect. And honestly, students get really passionate about it and start to campaign locally about it, start to get annoyed with our own procurement on campus. So, yeah, I mean, I think it's, you know, I'm very confident and very optimistic, as Cathryn said earlier, about young people's influence on the future of the food system.

**John:** We've had a fantastic discussion today. I think it's quite remarkable that 30 years have passed since Fairtrade started and since Clipper Tea Cafédirect and Green & Black started to lead the way, and Co-op embraced Fairtrade in all the categories possible. And listening to the speakers today, it's quite clear a lot's progressed, it's quite clear that consumers genuinely care about food and drink and where it comes from and who's involved and making sure that things are done properly. I'm going to ask each of our speakers for some final comments. Bob, what would you say to listeners, finally today?

**Bob:** Yeah, I mean, it's hard being a farmer, I think that's what I would say. I mean, you can see, even in the UK at the moment, the impacts of climate on crops. It's same in crops like coffee. They're under severe challenge and pressure because of environmental pressures of things like climate change, but they're also under [00:48:00] severe pressure also because of the problems with livelihoods and price and volatility in the market, and the difficulty of planning ahead, and Fairtrade actually solves a lot of these challenges in terms of economics, in terms of the social premium, and in terms of the projects that companies like Cafédirect and the Co-op instigate with producers to help them be more resilient against those environmental factors. And so, if you want coffee, good quality coffee in the future, you need to support Fairtrade and make sure those farming communities are resilient.

**John:** Cathryn?

**Cathryn:** My key message would be, think about where you are choosing to spend your money, and think about what you are putting in your basket. And I know we are in a cost of living crisis, so I know for some that might be quite challenging, but just look out for the Fairtrade logo on pack. There's lots of products out there that you can choose from. Most retailers will stop Fairtrade, and there are specialist shops as well. If you come to the Co-op, you can choose, you know, make it really easy for you to choose Fairtrade, tea, coffee and chocolate, just making that small purchasing change maybe makes the world of difference. It will really help producers, and when producers come and talk to us and we go out to see them, the one thing that they ask of me is tell all your shoppers to buy Fairtrade, so that would be the message that I'd want to get across.

**John:** Fantastic. And Silvia, some closing remarks?

**Silvia:** Yeah, thank you, John. I just want to summarise some of our ideas. Of course, I want to say that we as consumers also have our voice. So we have to choose what kind of companies do we want to support and to stay in the market. So those that has an impact on the territory, not just [00:50:00] in the UK, but all around the world, all those that are exploding, not just the planet, but also people talking about that, I want to say that if we want – if sometimes we're struggling with our own budget, our own economics, we had to think about these fair prices and the impact they have on the world itself. And, of course, what we are not paying today, the planet or people is paying back there or at some point in the future. So I would like to say that now we, as producers, sometimes we have to have not just our producer work, but also find any other job that help us making to the end of the month, and that's something that we have to do, because nowadays, most of producers, we are not making enough money from, at least, from coffee, we are not making enough money to survive or have a decent life just from coffee. That's something we have to think about and maybe, like, try to picture how life could be if we have to have two jobs at the same time, and that's something that I would like to share with you, and I want to thank all of you for this wonderful conversation.

**John:** Thank you so much, and thank you for all your remarks and bringing to life the issues that we do face. I think from all that, it's quite clear that to anybody listening, a little bit of thought and a different action can make a remarkable difference, and the more and more of us who do that, the bigger the difference is going to be. So message is there. Thank you very much, Cathryn from the Co-op. Thank you Bob from York University. And [00:52:00] Silvia, thank you for coming from to us from Mexico and from San Fernando. I think – thank you for everybody who's been listening to this special 30th Fairtrade edition. And if you enjoy this episode, feel free to listen to many of the other episodes from Series 1 and 2, where you'll get dialog between a number of thought leaders, be it from Oxfam or Riverford Organic and other organisations, even the wonderful Erinch Sahan from Donut Economics who can talk about making sure that business is in balance with social and environmental boundaries. And as always, please rate this podcast and review it. Thank you for listening. Bye.