

CUMBRIA LOCAL AND FAIR

A Cumbrian Brand

The marketing of Fairtrade products has been successful through the development of a strong and trusted 'brand'.

Headline question:

What would be the added value to local food producers of a 'Cumbrian Fare' Mark, and how might it work?

Context:

Currently there are two 'ascriptions' for Cumbrian producers, 'Made in Cumbria' and 'Distinctly Cumbrian'. The first of these is allowed through membership of 'Made in Cumbria' (part of the Chamber of Commerce), which promotes a wide range and large number of Cumbrian businesses. The second was a programme, now ended, which was part of CREA, funded by NWDA, to help develop Cumbrian small businesses. While not a marketing programme, nevertheless some assisted businesses used the 'Distinctly Cumbrian' cachet.

Through the medium of the Conference, we propose to explore how a 'Cumbria Mark' (a 'Cumbria Fare' Mark) could add further value in the marketing of Cumbrian products. In order to have integrity and credibility a 'Cumbria Mark' would need to be awarded on the basis of agreed criteria, similar to those on which the FAIRTRADE Mark is based. We suggest that these would need to cover origin and quality, and also fairness and sustainability.

Questions and response from workshop:

1. *Why have a mark?*

Should the branding of Cumbrian products be focussed inside or outside of Cumbria? The group concluded that for the tourism/local market then a Cumbrian geographic identifier had merit but to add value to the main primary products the brand needed to target a national market. The mark therefore needs to reflect more than just a geographic identifier. A Mark should provide an 'ethical statement' to consumers. This could be supported by geographic identification. If an ethical mark could be developed it could then be replicated elsewhere.

2. *What products would be included?*

General discussion on if the mark should be based around food, produce from land (eg forestry, wool, etc.) Conclusion was that the mark needs to initially focus on a limited number of products. As the aim is to support primary producers then lamb, milk and beef were the obvious first targets. These are also the primary exports of Cumbrian primary producers.

3. *What would be the criteria for the award of a Cumbria Mark for these products?*

Five criteria suggested:

- a) Produced in Cumbria (further clarification required e.g. fat stock market and origin)
- b) Fair Price for producers reflecting real costs of production
- c) Animal Welfare – link to existing e.g. FABBL
- d) Environmental – link to existing e.g. ELS / UELS

e) Has to be delivered through a formalised 'Fairtrade Group'

For the Mark to have legitimacy one or more 'Fairtrade' groups would need to be generated to oversee the Mark. These could be based on existing producer groups or new ones. The groups would include not just the producers but also representatives from within the supply chain. This would develop along the Fairtrade model.

4. *Would a mark based on these criteria add any value to or simply replicate existing or previous marks?*

The aim is to add to existing branding and assurance schemes rather than replicate. The critical component is that the Mark is associated with the organisation of a supply chain and not just another branding exercise. Existing schemes such as FABBL and ELS would form part of the Mark requirement but the key issue is that producers are part of a 'fair' supply chain.

The group discussed the potential of the Mark to add value. It was suggested that this missed the point. If the mark works then the 'fair' supply chain may not necessarily need to generate added value/cost to the end user providing the primary producer receives a 'fair' price. In short part of the process will be to cut costs within the supply chain.

It was suggested that the role of the Mark would be to set a base price for producers rather than necessarily add value. The question is if producers will continue to use the Mark/supply chain structure if they know they can achieve a higher price elsewhere?

5. *Who will take forward proposals coming from this workshop, how and over what time span?*

- i. The practical requirements of establishing and managing a mark were discussed. There are existing farmer groups that could form the initial core but they will inevitably require external support during the start-up phase.
- ii. Within the livestock sector it was felt that the auctions had a key role to play within the supply chain as they had the historic connections with both farmers and buyers.
- iii. If possible one or more large end users i.e. supermarkets should be part of the group. If a working model can be achieved with their engagement then unnecessary costs can be cut from within the wholesale supply chain.
- iv. The existing Fairtrade structures would be critical in supporting the initiative. The question is if they have the capacity to do so?
- v. Public sector intervention through RDPE would be advantageous providing the funding can be flexible enough to support a supply chain proposal rather than just another branding exercise.

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