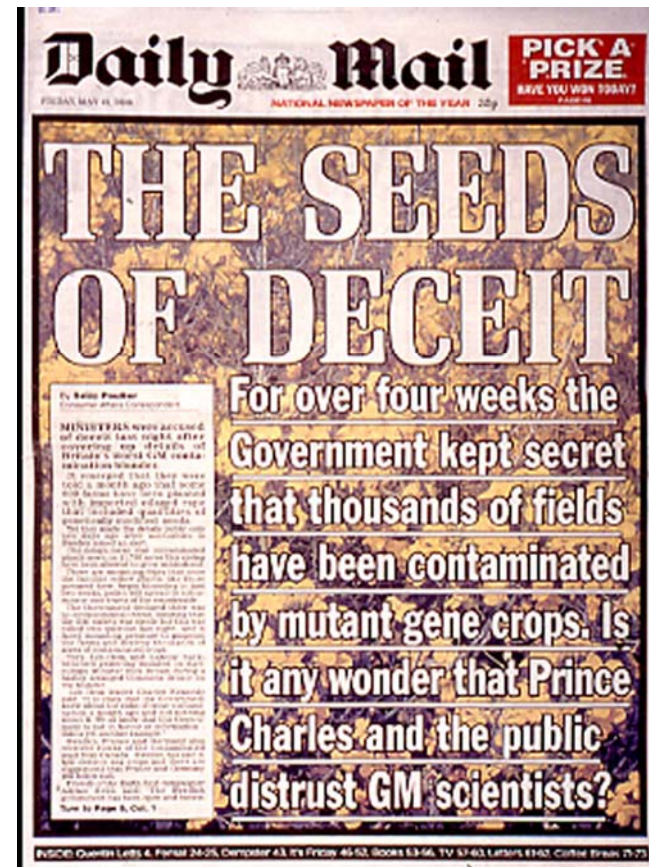


Eating, ethics and the generative spaces of alternative food networks

Sarah Whatmore
Oxford University Centre for the
Environment, School of
Geography

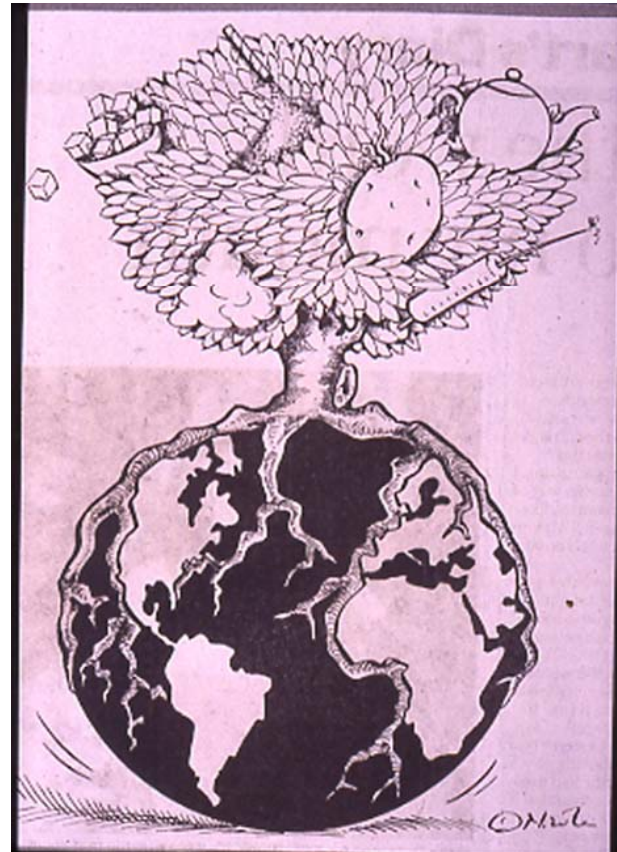
Ethical consumption in an anxious age

- **Food scares** – BSE-
vCJD; GM foods;
salmonella in eggs; listeria
in cheese
- **Food industrialisation** –
environmental and health
consequences of industrial
residues
- **Loss of trust** in regulatory
and scientific authorities >
new food politics



Spatial connectivities

- Creative tension between **spatial practices** of *fixity* (territorialisation) and *flow* (de-territorialisation).
- This complicates the *binary moral landscape* of - **local = good / global = bad** in the making of agro- food networks (AFNs).
- A key aspect of alternative food networks is an overt promotion of *acting at a distance*



Corporeal connectivities

- A 2nd key aspect of alternative food networks is the promotion of **ethical connectivities** generated by our actions and choices as consumers that extend beyond questions of social justice to *more-than-human (or post-human) ethical concerns*.
- Using the register of the bodily (or corporeal), they extend to ethical concern with the consequences for, and responsibilities towards, the *animals and plants we eat and the wider ecology* of food production (eg pesticide residues), **distribution** (eg air-miles and carbon emissions) **consumption** (eg landfill waste). Here human health & wellbeing are intimately bound up with animal/ecological health & wellbeing.



Ethical consumption 1: Fairtrade and global justice

- Sales of fairtrade coffee grew by 27% in 2001 in the UK, accounting for **10.5% of total volume** of roast and ground market.
- **25 companies** market Fairtrade coffee + coffee house chains eg AMT (fairtrade only), Costa and Starbucks)



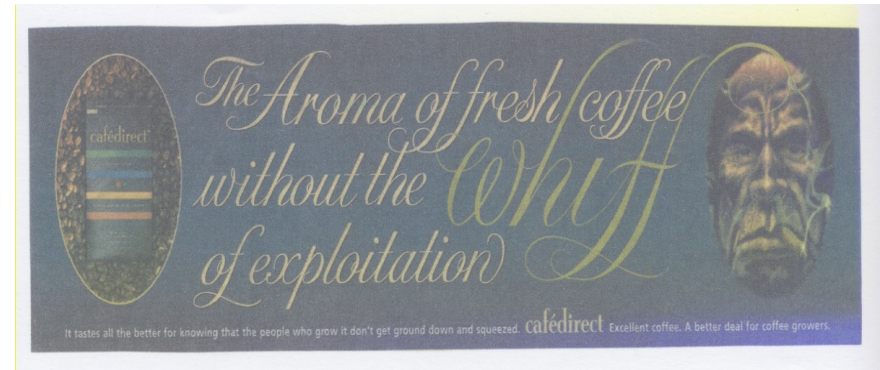
The Fairtrade Mark

- The **FAIRTRADE Mark** consists of two parts. To be licensed to use the logo, licensees must ensure that
- (a) the two parts of the Mark always appear together and unaltered;
- (b) the Mark is not redesigned, amended or re-proportioned in any way;
- (c) the typeface and spacing should not be altered.
- This is the guarantee that the Fairtrade Foundation makes to consumers and that is an integral part of the marketing symbol of Fairtrade – the FAIRTRADE Mark (www.fairtrade.org.uk)



Cafédirect – against the corporate bean

- **Cafédirect** was the 2nd fairtrade product to receive the FAIRTRADE Mark in the UK and is now *the top selling brand* in the fairtrade coffee market in the UK.
- **Cafédirect is a consortium** that grew out of informal cooperation in the 1970s between the trading arms of 4 non-profit / charitable organisations long involved in the trade justice movement – **Oxfam trading; Twin Trading; Traidcraft and Equal Exchange.**
- In 1993 the consortium *registered as a private non-profit company* that helped to move fairtrade coffee sales from small-scale solidarity markets to a significant mainstream market share in leading food retail outlets.



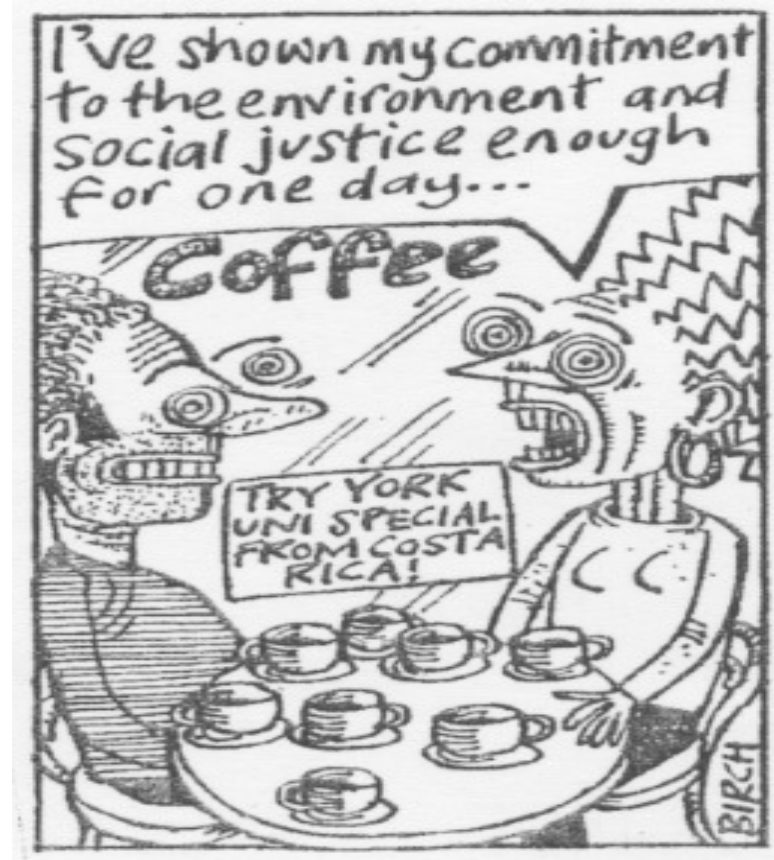
Fairtrade farmers: the case of cafédirect and COCLA Peru

- **Cafédirect** (www.cafédirect.ie)
- COCLA (*Central de Co-operativas Agrarias Cafetaleras*) – peasant farmers’ co-operative producing *organic* Machu Picchu fairtrade coffee since 1999. Now comprises some 24 primary producer societies and has a membership of 4,500 farmers over an area of 40,000 KM² .
- Marketing and website materials all endeavour to *localise and personalise the production process* (eg Guillermo RIGHT) – to bring the place and the people involved in producing fairtrade coffee ‘near’ or ‘home’.



York University's Fairtrade coffee initiative in the UK Press

- The most recent major development in Fairtrade is to move from marketing to individual consumers towards **collective initiatives** – eg **Fairtrade regions** (usually centred on schools and/or universities) or **institutional catering initiatives** – eg House of Commons; local government offices.
- Also AMT commercial coffee franchise that populates most railway station concourses and uses **100% fairtrade products**.



Ethical consumption II: Animal welfare, the price of industrial farming

Bramwell five freedoms

- ***Freedom from hunger and thirst***
By ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- ***Freedom from discomfort***
By providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a resting area.
- ***Freedom from pain, injury or disease***
By prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- ***Freedom to express normal behaviour***
By providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company to the animal's own kind.
- ***Freedom from fear and distress***
By ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

Source: Farm Animal Welfare Council, 1979. *Codes of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock*



Animal welfare: case of the battery chicken/egg

- Some **29 million egg-laying chickens** in the UK, > **70%** housed in battery cages.
- Battery production allows some 550 cm² (an A4 sized piece of paper) per bird
- At these densities, movement is severely restricted and levels of aggression and fear high > high levels of stress behaviours; pecking and disease.
- To control these problems, battery chickens are routinely kept in semi-darkness; de-beaked; wing-clipped and fed antibiotics. **Everyday, some 100,000 chickens die** prematurely in these conditions.



Antibiotic chickens

- Animal welfare concerns + the common-sense linkage between animal and human health has led to *a variety of animal welfare and / or organic* chicken egg production regimes from - *'Freedom Foods' run by the RSPCA* to *organic meat/egg standards set by the Soil Association*.
- Each regime sets *different standard specifications* and the consumer is faced with a bewildering range of labels; terms and logos – eg 'barn' / 'free-range' / organic eggs etc.
- Here, *vernacular skills* (eg colour, taste; smell) come into play alongside the conventions of trading marks.



A small step for animal welfare

- Here, AFN conventions are *made flesh* in the animals (and plants) and ecologies they designate. Developments in animal welfare AFNs are starting to leach across to mainstream food networks.
- Here, the *routine de-beaking of hens* in battery production regimes contracted to supply McDonald's has been phased out under pressure from consumers, and the raising of conventional animal welfare standard regimes.

McDonald's orders its suppliers to phase out de-beaking of hens

THE FAST-FOOD giant McDonald's has ordered all its egg suppliers in the United States to improve the treatment of their hens, including phasing out the practice of de-beaking and providing much bigger cages. The company also wants to ban forced moulting, when farmers withhold food and water to make the hens lay more eggs.

The new standards were recommended by a panel of scientific experts appointed by the company to address concerns from lobby groups, including animal rights campaigners, about the way animals are treated. That McDonald's has decided to require the improvements, and made them public, is evidence of increased public concern about food quality and animal welfare in the US. It is the first American food supplier to introduce such regulations.

BY MARY DEJEVSKY
in Washington

rector of public and community affairs for McDonald's, said: "This is our pathway to be a leader on this issue."

Bruce Friedrich, a spokesman for the animals rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, said that the new rules were an improvement, but "it's the bare minimum of bare minimums that you refuse to starve and dehydrate animals to death".

The move was also believed to reflect concern among scientists that the current treatment of hens could increase the risk of diseases that can spread to humans. Recommendations along the lines now adopted by McDonald's were made to all egg producers recently by the industry's own scientific advisers.



McDonald's addressed lobby groups' concerns

billions of eggs a year, has recently been the target of action by animal rights campaigners in Europe, and US observers were frank about the degree to which European concerns about food safety and animal

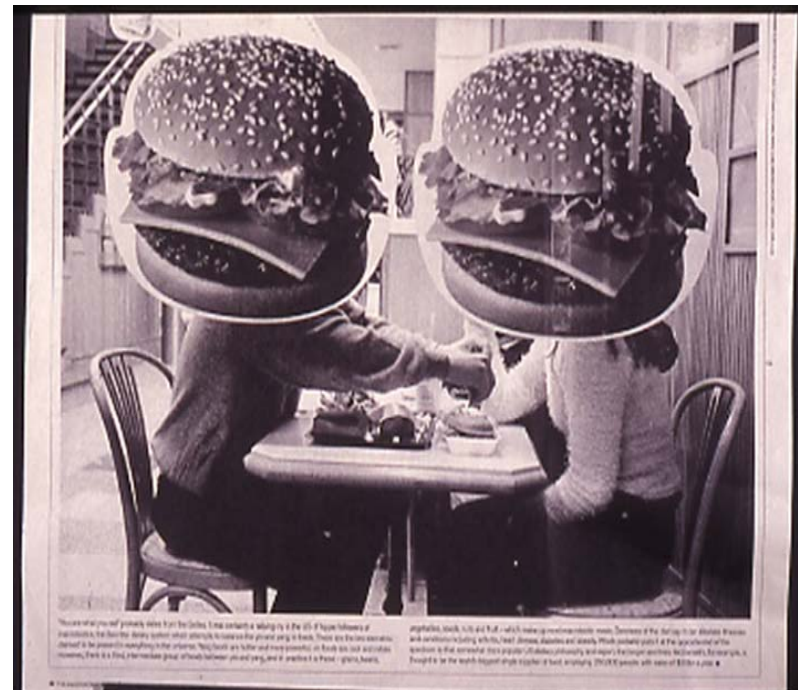
US consumers. Several of the practices that McDonald's wants outlawed are already banned or in the process of being phased out in Europe.

McDonald's appears also to see a market advantage in the US from being regarded as a pioneer in a move away from factory farming. The company has already tightened its regulations for the treatment of livestock and is renowned for its strict quality control from farm to table. It conducts regular inspections of slaughterhouses and farms to monitor compliance with its regulations, and the new rules will be enforced in the same way.

The company had no comment on whether the changes would raise prices in its hamburger outlets. Increasing the size of cages by 50 per cent will be the most expensive im-

You are what you eat

- *Small habits of consumption, typically daily food habits, can perform a percussive role in organising large-scale consumption patterns...made up of much more complex orders of repetition and improvisation' .*
- **(Appadurai, *Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalisation.* 1996: 68)**



You are what you eat eats too

- *‘The stuff of food is a ready messenger of connectedness and affectivity that transacts ‘risk’ as a property both of the growing distances between the spaces of production and consumption and of the enduring metabolic intimacies between human and nonhuman bodies’.*
- **Stassart and Whatmore,**
Metabolising risk. 2003. : 450)

