

Nicaraguan Fairtrade Producers Tour Northern Ireland

9 March 2017

BELFAST, Northern Ireland: Facilitated by the Consulate of St Vincent and the Grenadines to Northern Ireland in partnership with Fairtrade Ireland, Ms Heydi Janeth Espino Mairena and Mr Haris Ulises Lopez Picado from the Soppexcca coffee cooperative in Nicaragua are touring all the council areas across Northern Ireland during Fairtrade Fortnight 2017.

SVG established Diplomatic relations with Nicaragua on June 28, 1991.

Haris and Heidi both work in a chocolate factory in Jinotega, which was set up by the cooperative as a diversification project from coffee production.

The purpose of this tour is to engage with groups, schools, businesses, government and wider society across Northern Ireland about how Fairtrade is working on the ground, providing a better deal for their produce, when consumers choose Fairtrade certified products.



R(Back) Heydi Janeth Espino Mairena; L(Front) Dr Christopher Stange with Suki Tea Directors, Fairtrade officials and Belfast Fairtrade Committee at Suki Tea House Ltd

This is part of the regional campaign to make Northern Ireland a Fairtrade devolved region as has already been achieved in Scotland and Wales.

Government across Northern Ireland serves Fairtrade products at its meetings and in its offices and canteens per hospitality with many churches, schools, universities, colleges and workplaces becoming Fairtrade accredited.

Fairtrade is a global movement for change that works to guarantee a better deal for disadvantaged producers in the developing world. It helps to secure better prices, decent

working conditions and fair business terms by tackling exploitation (human trafficking, child labour) and ensuring best environmental and social agricultural practices. It offers a minimum price paid by importers and buyers to cover the cost of sustainable production plus an additional, premium designated for social and economic development of developing communities.

Heydi and Haris explained: “Thanks to Fairtrade, Soppexcca can pay higher prices for the coffee and offer special programmes through the social Fairtrade premium for young people, training them in cultivation and rural management, which would have not been possible without Fairtrade. Various projects have been set up to improve roads, infrastructure, environmental best practices with increasing rainfall and landslides, building schools and providing assistance for scholarships and materials to empower future generations through Fairtrade.”



Centre (L-R): Heydi Janeth Espino Mairena; Suki Tea Fairtrade Hamper Winner - Alexa McClean; Lord Mayor of Belfast - Alderman Brian Kingston with Suki Tea Directors and members of Fairtrade Belfast Steering Committee at Belfast City Hall

Dr Christopher Stange – Hon. Consul, St Vincent and the Grenadines to Northern Ireland and Secretariat, All Party Group on Fairtrade, added: "We have an ethical and moral obligation to care for our poorer neighbours that produce much of the products we consume daily. Fairtrade allows us to take practical local action to help internationally some of the world’s most disadvantaged farmers in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa and the Pacific. Fairtrade is about encouraging trade not aid. I am delighted that every council, central government and wider society is committed to Fairtrade and making Northern Ireland a Fairtrade devolved region.”

ENDS