

# Fairtrade: a World of Difference

## Commodity Profile: Sugar

Sugar, Craft Aid, Mauritius  
Kasinthula, Malawi



**1.** Sugar cane is a grass and is the source of 70% of the world's sugar. The sugar is taken from the cane stems. The crop needs lots of sun and a lot of water. For many centuries people in Asia have chewed pieces of the stem as a snack - it was later that people thought of extracting the sugar from the plant!



**2.** Sugar cane is harvested by chopping down the stems but leaving the roots so that it grows again the following year. It is usually harvested during the dry season and the length of the harvest ranges from two and a half to eleven months.

**3.** The first stage of processing is to extract the cane juice. In factories the cane is crushed in large roller mills (like a mangle or wringer). The evaporation process thickens the juice into syrup by boiling off the water. Then the syrup is placed into a very large pan for boiling. Even more water is boiled off until the conditions are right for sugar crystals to grow.

**4.** Once the crystals have grown the mixture is spun-like in a tumble drier - to separate the crystals from the rest of the mixture. The crystals are then given a final dry with hot air before being stored and then sent for packing to places like Craft Aid in Mauritius.



Photo: Traidcraft/Philip Warren