



Photos: Traidcraft/Richard Else

Eksteenskuil Agricultural Co-operative

Eksteenskuil Agricultural Co-operative (EAC) is based in the Orange River area of South Africa near the Kalahari Desert. There are 65 farmers in the group scattered across 21 islands. The infrastructure here is poor; some farms still lack electricity and piped water. Growing and drying the grapes which become Fairtrade raisins is an important additional source of income to farmers, many of whom work small uneconomic pieces of land. Small-scale farmers who can get the money to invest in vines and learn the relevant skills can begin to sell their grapes after three years.

Traidcraft began the development of dried fruit fair trade standards to bring EAC into the Fairtrade system, and in fact until 2009 they were the only producer of Fairtrade raisins in the world!

Traidcraft has bought raisins since 1995. It took eight years to support EAC to the point where they could become registered as a Fairtrade supplier in 2003. But Traidcraft's relationship with EAC is more than just buyer and grower. Traidcraft have supported them for 15 years, for example through sending advance payments to help farmers rebuild when a hail storm wiped out 70% of their vines.



Fairtrade: a World of Difference

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EAC, South Africa, Raisins



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The EAC committee co-ordinates the spending of the Fairtrade premium, which has been used in a number of ways, including the purchase of machinery, water pumps, school books and computers as well as training for farmers. They now have a collection of farming equipment which is shared among members so everyone can benefit from it.



“I say buy these products, it will help us have a better life.”

Farmer and EAC member Basie Oranje who has been farming for about 30 years. He took over from his father in 1985.



Photo: Traidcraft/Peter Collins

EAC has also launched a youth project of vegetable growing, providing another source of income for families.

As a co-operative, EAC can have more involvement in the marketing of their grape crop - they are able to sell in bulk and develop strong relationships with buyers and processors.

Unity gives EAC strength, and as sales of Geobars have grown more members have joined the co-operative and been able to benefit from Fairtrade.

