

Interview 1

From an article by James Arnold entitled, "Farmers struggle with the supermarket squeeze" on BBC News Online, Thursday, 2 September, 2004. Full article available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3594908.stm>

Interviewer 1: Good morning, viewers. Welcome to UK Farmers Today. This morning we are interviewing Mr. Stuart Thomson of English Farming and Food Partnerships. Good morning, Mr Thomson.

Mr Thomson: Good morning.

Interviewer 1: As we all know, viewers, supermarkets dominate retail trade. They seem to have unlimited opportunities to squeeze their suppliers. But things may be about to change! Some farmers are learning to work the system to their advantage. Let's find out more. Mr. Thomson, how important are supermarkets to UK farmers?

Mr Thomson: Hugely! For more than 90 per cent of the population, a supermarket is the main or the only place where they buy their food.

Interviewer 1: This must give supermarkets tremendous bargaining power?

Mr Thomson: Yes, indeed. There's a massive chain between the producer and the consumer, and the farmer is the weakest link. In the last 10 years the amount of food the UK public consumes has gone up by almost 50 per cent. But in that time British farming output has actually fallen.

Interviewer 1: That's terrible news for farmers whose businesses can't survive on the prices that supermarkets pay them. But I believe you have some good news?

Mr. Thomson: Yes. Farmers are starting to group together so that they have more influence with the big supermarkets. In August 2004 a group owned by over 3,000 farmers, called Dairy Farmers of Britain, acquired the processing business of the Co-operative retail chain. This makes them the country's third-biggest milk supplier.

Interviewer 1: And how are the supermarkets reacting to farmers grouping together in this way?

Mr. Thomson: Very positively. In May, Asda signed a deal to buy milk from Arla, the country's biggest dairy firm. Arla isn't actually a co-operative, but it buys from co-operatives and makes a point of being farmer-friendly. This deal means that the farmers will have complete transparency as regards price.

Interviewer 1: So that means the supermarkets cannot cut the amount they pay to farmers unless they have given a valid reason?

Mr. Thomson: That's correct. This is really good news for farmers.

Interviewer 1: Thank you for joining us, Mr. Thomson.

Mr. Thompson: Thank you.

Interview 2

Based on a true account from the Fairtrade Foundation website at: www.fairtrade.org.uk/suppliers_growers_cocoa_comfort.htm

Interviewer 2: Good morning viewers. Welcome to BBC News 24, where we are continuing our feature on Fairtrade Fortnight during the first two weeks in March. Our guest today is Comfort Kumeah from Ghana. Welcome Comfort.

Comfort: Thank you.

Interviewer 2: Can you tell us a little about yourself?

Comfort: Certainly. I am a widow in my early fifties with five children. I grow cocoa beans, and I also teach at the local primary school.

Interviewer 2: Comfort, I believe that you are a member of a cocoa farmers' co-operative called the Kuapa Kokoo Union? Can you explain what that is, for our viewers?

Comfort: Yes. The co-operative was set up in 1993. It now has 35,000 members. It is part of The Day Chocolate Company – making Fairtrade Divine and Dubble chocolate bars in the UK market.

Interviewer 2: It must be a hard life for you?

Comfort: It is hard. The cocoa harvest is from September to February. It is a hard time of year. You have to ferment the beans then they are dried for six days – it is a lot of work.

Interviewer 2: Obviously you could not hope to sell your cocoa in UK supermarkets before you joined the co-operative. So what difference has Fairtrade meant to you?

Comfort: A lot of difference! Before the co-operative we farmers were cheated. We got little money from the purchasing clerks and no bonuses. The farmers' welfare was neglected. I joined Kuapa because I saw it was the only organisation which could solve some of our problems – they trade without cheating, with the welfare of farmers at heart.

Interviewer 2: I know that you suffered great poverty before joining the co-operative. Having a guaranteed fixed price for your cocoa must help you a lot. Are there other ways that Fairtrade helps you and your family?

Comfort: Yes, there were many problems with poverty. During the lean season there was no money. Now there is a Credit Union we can borrow to keep our farms. The co-operative also means that farmers make their own decisions.

Interviewer 2: Finally, Comfort, I imagine you'd like UK supermarkets to deal with Fairtrade co-operatives much more than they do at the moment?

Comfort: Fairtrade deserves its name because it is fair. We would like more cocoa to be sold to Fairtrade because it means a better price for the producer.

Interviewer 2: I'm afraid we'll have to end there. Comfort Kumeah, thank you for joining us.

Comfort: Thank you.