



▲ We all live on the same planet: From the left, Christel Dillbohner, Gero Leson, Adam Eiding, Britta Wyss and Robin Bell. ▲ Free of stabilizers and preservatives - Dr. Bronner's products.



החברה רוכשת חמישה אחוזים מכלל תוצרת שחן
היזת האורגני שלה לייצור סבון ממשק שטראוס
הישראלי, חמישה אחוזים נוספים מעמותת
סינדיאנת הגליל, ואת 90 האחוזים הנותרים
מספקת לה התאחדות הסחר ההוגן הפלסטינית

body. However, emerging from among the aisles of processed foods and glitzy wrappers is the demand for products and foodstuffs that have not gone through Hell and back on their way to you – namely, products that have been manufactured under fair employment conditions, for a reasonable wage, and without exploitation on the part of the employers or subcontractors, i.e. Fair Trade products; and foodstuffs that are free of pesticides, that were cultivated in chemical-free soil, far from contaminating factories and high-tension wires, or, as they are known, organic products. The Fair Trade notion, into which the principles of organic cultivation and production are often incorporated, is already gaining momentum in the Western world, and it has arrived here too – late as per usual, of course. It is indeed painfully expensive, but quality, as you know, costs.

Some two weeks ago, four Americans and a Swiss arrived in Israel and chose Haifa as their center of operations. From here, they set out on a visit to Yokneam, continued on to Nazareth, and then popped over to

Jenin for two to three days. The five came here to look into the possibility of establishing business ties between the U.S. company with a somewhat psychedelic name, Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, and Israeli and Palestinian suppliers of organic olive oil, most of which is produced under the Fair Trade system. Who would have believed it, but in Jenin, of all places, they were able to find excellent conditions, they said, for crop cultivation of this kind, far from industrial contamination, without pesticides, and even, hold onto your hats, under decent working conditions.

The story begins in the 1920s. Emanuel Bronner, heir to a German Jewish family with a well-established soap manufacturing business, rebelled against his parents and uprooted to the United States. In the late 1940s, he founded his own factory, where, unlike most of the soap manufacturers in those days, he used natural and organic materials. Over the years, his business activities developed under the influence of firm social and environmental principles: We are all a part of the same



אדם אידיינגר: "כל מי שדיברנו
איתו בישראל וברשות הפלסטינית
שמח מאוד שאנחנו חנסיים, ועצם
המאמץ כדאי. אנחנו קבוצת
אנשים בתוך חברה מסחרית שלא
לוקחת צד אלא מאחדת אנשים.
בחקרה הזה פלסטינים וישראלים"



גרו לסון: "חשוב לנו שבכרישת
שמן חקבוצה מאורגנת בגדה
המערבית אנחנו מספקים מעגל
רחב יותר של חקלאים וחשפרים שם
את המוצר. מכאן אפשר לעצור את
מעגל האלימות. באמצעות הבסיס
הכלכלי אפשר לפתור את הסכסוך"

אידינגר: "יש המוענים שגידול קנבים תעשייתי יביא אנשים לגדל גם מריחואנה באותו שטח. אלה שמויות. כי המקום האחרון בעולם שתרצה לגדל בו מריחואנה הוא שדה של קנבים תעשייתי. זה רק יהרוס את שניהם"



אידינגר: "אין ולו עדות אחת בהיסטוריה לחוות שהיה תוצאה של שימוש במריחואנה בלבד. אנשים מתים כל יום מסמים חוקיים כמו אלכוהול או סיגריות. אבל עובדה שאף אחד לא מת עדיין משימוש במריחואנה"

Spaceship Earth; in other words, we all live on the same planet, and there is no place for discrimination against some of its inhabitants as opposed to others. It is inconceivable for some to get a lot and for others to only get the scraps. Bronner believed in constructive capitalism, under which you share the profit with the workers and the earth from which you made it. And no, we are not talking about a cult, but a commercial society for all intents and purposes. ...

At this stage, it [Dr. Bronner's] is purchasing 5 percent of its total consumption of olive oil (for manufacturing soap) from the Strauss farm in Israel, a further 5 percent from the Sindyanna of Galilee non-profit association (which works primarily with farmers and women from the Arab and Palestinian sectors), and the remaining 90 percent comes from the Palestine Fair Trade Association.

I decided to ask whether they were not a little naïve. The idea of buying olive oil from both sides of the conflict and then sell it afterwards, in Israel too, among other places, sounds a little delusional, doesn't it? "It will sound naïve to the average person, who has been worn down over the years by all the violence," Eidinger says. ... We are a group of

people within a commercial society who are not taking sides but rather bringing people together; in this case, Palestinians and Israelis."

Leson, with a somewhat scolding look in his eyes and with typical restraint, adds: "You present it as if we are coming to mix oil and soap and then, as if with a magic wand, to resolve the conflict. That's not the idea. We are checking to see if the raw materials are organic, which is, after all, the company's number one commitment, if the environmental management of the production process is worthy, and if the appropriate social conditions exist. It is important to us that with the purchase of oil from an organized group in the West Bank, we are providing for a widening circle of farmers and improving the situation there. ... We want to create cooperation among the crop growers on both sides, and this is

another way to help people who are at the bottom of the social and economic ladder. Mixing the oil with soap is only a symbolic act that is important to us and our customers, so that they can know that by mixing the oil of Israeli and Palestinian suppliers, we are supporting both of them."

"Our company may be small," Leson says, "but it is tied to other companies that work in a similar fashion." ... "We think that a message of Fair Trade combined with organic products will drive the market," Leson says. "Of course we want social change, but we are not fools. In the United States and Europe there is a market for this combination among consumers who want to know where the products they are buying come from, and are also willing to pay for this. Our challenge is both to provide this and to convey strongly the message that we are able to do it."

More to Explore ...



To improve the livelihoods of farmers and workers in our "area of economic influence," Dr. Bronner's will in 2007 reorganize how we source our major ingredients: organic coconut, palm, olive, hemp and peppermint oils account for more than 95% of our raw material purchases, and we want to ensure they are produced according to "Fair Trade" standards. You can learn more about the benefits of Fair Trade to communities across the globe at the following Web sites.

www.imo.ch

www.transfairusa.org

www.drbronner.com/fair_trade.html

www.fairtradefederation.org

www.globalexchange.org



▲ Amos Strauss: "There are very few really good oils around the world."

"If I don't ensure that my neighbor has it good enough, I will have it very bad."

Amos Strauss, *the Strauss farm*

The Strauss farm has been in operation for the past 25 years, and went over a number of years ago to cultivating only organic produce.

Amos Strauss: "Dr. Bronner's approached me through an agent with a request to purchase organic olive oil in Israel. I have permits and licenses to supply to Israel and to Europe, but I obtained a permit in keeping with the American standard for them, and I am also making inquiries regarding Fair Trade approvals and standards. This year, we are starting to supply them with a few thousand [kilograms] of olive oil in the first shipment."

The fact that the company purchases most of the raw material from the Palestinian Authority is, as far as Strauss is concerned, a good thing: "If I don't ensure that my neighbor has it good enough, I will have it very bad," he says. "I don't have to like him, but I want his situation to be good so that he doesn't start trouble and make it bad for me. Beyond this, I believe in the approach that there is a need to expand the circle of olive oil producers, and thus enhance the [production] capabilities, because there are very few really good oils around the world. I teach consumers how and what to ask when they go buy olive oil, and how to identify a truly high-quality product."

Nasser Abufarha, *head of the Palestine Fair Trade Association*

Established in Jenin some two years ago, the Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA) is a union of 43 cooperatives, most of which are producers of organic products, and whose members include farmers, producers and traders.

Nasser Abufarha explains that PFTA operates in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the International Fair Trade Association, and that most of PFTA's consumers are in Europe and North America. The Palestinians are slated to supply Dr. Bronner's with some 80 tons of olive oil



▲ Identity and equality:
Nasser Abufarha

a year, to be produced by 20 cooperatives. According to Abufarha, PFTA has IMO approval and it pays the farmers NIS 20 per kilogram of oil, while the market price ranges from NIS 12 to NIS 15.

"This project is wonderful for us," Abufarha says. "First of all, it helps the farmers to survive better and earn a decent livelihood. Secondly, we are adopting Fair Trade as a global notion of recognizing the identity and equality of the different communities around the world. The Fair Trade idea is gaining momentum in the Palestinian Authority because we have held seminars and conducted numerous activities on the subject. We have even gone as far as the Ramallah area. We are continuing to educate people about the Fair Trade principles and the transition to organic crops. The fact that a farmer who is associated with our program gets more money than a regular farmer is stirring much interest among many people."

The bottom line, Abufarha says, is that Fair Trade has the ability to shatter misconceptions and prejudices arising from an ethnic or religious backdrop, and could even facilitate the expression of cultural and political ideas on a daily basis. "After all," he concludes, "Dr. Bronner's is a company under Jewish ownership that is investing in the Palestinian Authority. This is excellent exposure for both sides, and a good example of the way in which business can be done."



Israeli Arab women own and operate Sindyanna of the Galilee ▲

Hadas Lahav, *Sindyanna of Galilee*

"Sindyanna of Galilee is a non-profit organization that encourages Arab farmers and producers, and women in particular, to go out to work and receive the same opportunities that are available in the Jewish sector," says Hadas Lahav. "Our principal objective is to encourage Arab women to find a place for themselves in the job market. We work according to the Fair Trade system because we believe that it helps to advance the poor sector, which has more unemployment and is technologically behind. Sindyanna of Galilee markets olive oil that is produced by Arab farmers in the Galilee region; and at the same time, we also purchase soaps and olive oil from Arab farmers and producers in the territories. You could say that we provide a service to the farmers from the stage of acquiring a trade and through to the stage of the sale of the finished product. All the profits, by the way, are reinvested in society, primarily in fields relating to the development of women. We will be supplying Dr. Bronner's with several tons of olive oil a year starting this season. The company approached us, I believe, because I think we are the only ones in the Galilee region at this point in time who are both producing the oil ourselves and are working according to the Fair Trade system."