

Ecuador adopts national Fair Trade strategy

By *Marco Coscione*, CLAC

In 2008 the Ecuadorian people adopted a [new constitution](#). As President Correa has said several times, the country is living in a change of epoch and not in an epoch of changes. Two of the most significant elements of the new constitution are: the recognition of nature as a subject of rights and the commitment to “good living” (sumak kawsay), beyond pure “developmentalism” in which the vast majority of our societies are still trapped. The ultimate goal of each of our lives is to live well, not to live better, because “better” is a comparative term that does not have limits. The capital accumulation system is an example of that. However, our planet does have limits.

Concerning the solidarity economy, it is a highly innovative constitution. In its article 283, the text could not be clearer: «The economic system is socially oriented and mutually supportive; it recognizes the human being as a subject and an end; it tends towards a dynamic, balanced relationship among society, state and the market, in harmony with nature; and its objective is to ensure the production and reproduction of the material and immaterial conditions that can bring about the good way of living. The economic system shall be comprised of public, private, mixed-economy, grassroots solidarity forms of economic organization, and others as established by the Constitution. The grassroots solidarity economy shall be regulated pursuant to the law and shall include cooperative, associative and community sectors».

Ecuador’s constitution, in addition, makes explicit reference to Fair Trade in several of its articles. Section 5 of Chapter 6 (Labour and Production) is titled “Commerce and Fair Trade.” It is important here to mention the first paragraph of article 336: “The state shall encourage and safeguard Fair Trade as a means of access to quality goods and services, minimizing the distortions of distributors and promoting sustainability.” In article 304, the Constitution underlines that one of the objectives of the country’s trade policy is “to foster the development of economies of scale and Fair Trade.”

In mid-2011, the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy and Popular and Solidarity Financial Sector was approved. The 23rd of July 2014, finally, National government launched the “[Ecuadorian Strategy](#) for the Promotion of Trade Fair, 2014 – 2017”. Built jointly by several ministries, public institutions and national Fair Trade platforms (as the “Ecuadorian Consortium for Solidarity Economy and Fair Trade” and “[Fair Trade Ecuadorian Network](#)”, this strategy represents another important step in that journey of commitment and recognition that Ecuador has begun to travel in order to highlight and strengthen the role of Fair Trade organizations in the economic and trade national and international relations.

It is a call towards organized small producers to continue to reflect on their role in the Ecuadorian society and build in it new solidarity and Fair Trade relations. It is also a call to the Fair Trade movement to continue deepening its advocacy activities in order to gain more and more space in national economic culture, breaking individualistic schemes based on accumulation, and neglecting Mother Nature.