

## The real cost of chocolate

Before I start, I would like to let you know that I like chocolate as much as the next person. Probably more. In fact, my housemate says he has never seen anyone eat as much chocolate as I do. Despite my love for all things chocolate, I am still going to write this article exposing the truth about the chocolate industry.



I went to my local supermarket yesterday to look at the price of chocolate. You can buy 250g for just over \$3.50, but it turns out that the true cost of one chocolate bar is far higher.

More than one third of the world's chocolate is produced using cocoa beans harvested in Cote D'Ivoire in West Africa, and it is known that many farms in this country use child labour. It gets worse - the children are not paid for their work, and they didn't even sign up for the job.

Thousands of children have been trafficked to pick and shell the cocoa pods. After being sold to the farm owners, they are threatened, beaten and forced to work so that their 'owner' gets his money back. Some of the children have been able to escape and their stories have started to be told – the book 'Bitter Chocolate' by Carol Off explores some of these stories.



A basic description of human trafficking is being taken against your will, sold and forced into slavery, and child trafficking is just one of many forms. According to World Vision, children are most vulnerable to trafficking because they are easily exploited and in many countries, children are not able to defend their rights. Poverty is one of the main causes of trafficking, with parents sometimes being tricked into selling their children for a small amount of money.

So why am I telling you this? Every time you buy chocolate, you are contributing to their suffering. Obviously, I am not suggesting that we all give up chocolate, but perhaps we should take more interest in where it comes from. Chocolate manufacturers have no requirement to tell us where their ingredients are sourced so we can't tell whether or not the chocolate is traffik-free.



One solution is Fair Trade chocolate as this, along with all other Fair Trade products, comes with a guarantee that all workers involved in its production, from the factory workers to the farmers, receive a fair wage and a set standard of working conditions. It is possible to buy Fair Trade chocolate on campus – the Guild shop sells Green and Black chocolate – and some supermarkets also stock Fair Trade products.

An alternative is to convince all chocolate manufacturers to guarantee that their merchandise is produced free from people trafficking. Ideally, companies can

then stamp their wrappers with a symbol that lets consumers know that their cocoa beans are sourced from farms that do not use trafficked labour. It sounds like an impossible task, but...

Cadbury in the UK has recently announced that, from the middle of this year, Dairy Milk bars and their packaged cocoa will be Fair Trade! It's costing the company an extra £1.5 million (roughly \$3 million), and I am sure that I will be forking out more at the supermarket too, but it will be worth it to know that I can enjoy it guilt-free.

Look out for the Fair Trade chocolate fountain on Bush Court later this semester. If you would like to get involved with this campaign, please email [swb@guild.murdoch.edu.au](mailto:swb@guild.murdoch.edu.au)

