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Carmen Valor

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Abstract

This paper focuses on one of the strategies proposed in the name of 'fair trade': the inclusion of social clauses in trade agreements. Although the social clauses could cover any non-economic aspect of trade exchanges, such as environment, they are more commonly used to protect labour rights. Although examined in other disciplines, this issue is still elusive for marketers, despite its implications for this discipline. This paper attempts to answer the question: Will the inclusion of a social clause in bilateral and multilateral trade agreements help to achieve the objective of fair trade? After analysing the possibility and the effectiveness of such a social clause and examining

whether the objectives attached to the social clause are coherent with those of the fair trade movement, the conclusion follows that only to some extent will the inclusion of a social clause in trade agreements help to achieve the goals of the Fair Trade movement. Since it does not aim at altering ‘unjust’ trade structures but ‘unfair’ labour practices, the social clause should be better understood as an improvement of existing Ethical Trade initiatives.

Keywords:

Social clause WTO Ethical Trade Fair Trade

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Notes

1. http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/2000/12/feature/eu0012286f.html

2. http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/policy/brussels_traffpaper2002.pdf, http://www.globalmarch.org/worstformsreport/world/europe-region.html

http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min01_e/brief_e/brief16_e.htm

FINE is an alliance of FLO (Fair Trade Labelling Organisation), IFAT (International Federation of Alternative Trades), NEWS (Network of European World Shops), and EFTA (European Fair Trade Association).

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