

# THE BIG THREE

## Aramark, Compass and Sodexo

### Aramark

#### **Current Fair Trade Offerings**

Aramark's three principal vendor partners are Starbucks, Java City, and Sara Lee. Each of these companies offers one Fair Trade option, but does not offer anything close to a complete line of Fair Trade coffees. However, many campuses have made the switch to 100% Fair Trade outside Aramark's approved vendor system due to successful student campaigns.

#### **The Aramark Fair Trade Strategy**

Aramark is currently in the process of developing its Fair Trade strategy. It is trying to figure out how to make Fair Trade work, i.e., still make a profit with sometimes smaller margins. Aramark is trying to gauge the strength of demand for Fair Trade on campuses. It's time to let them know just how strong that demand is!

#### **Aramark and the Taco Bell Story**

Aramark is feeling the heat from student groups working in solidarity with the **Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Boycott of Taco Bell** to campaign for better treatment for the farmers who supply Taco Bell. After continuous pressure, Aramark has agreed to discontinue contracts with Taco Bell restaurants on campuses where students raise their voices in protest. The campaign is three years old and is beginning to get traction. The message for Fair Trade activists is that Aramark has an ear for ethics, and is beginning to understand the importance of supporting the people who grow our food.

### Compass

#### **Current Fair Trade Offerings**

Compass Group's principal coffee roaster is Ritazza, which is wholly owned by Compass Group. Ritazza coffee has one Fair Trade blend, but it is extremely overpriced relative to other Fair Trade coffees. Because of its interest in Ritazza, Compass uses tremendous pressure to ensure dining service managers buy Ritazza coffee. But there are notable exceptions—the Fieldston School in New York saved close to two dollars a pound by sourcing from Equal Exchange over Ritazza.

#### **The Compass Fair Trade Strategy**

Compass Group has shown relatively little interest in Fair Trade. Often, general managers will offer to test out the Ritazza Fair Trade blend as a gesture toward student activists on campus. They not only pretend as though Fair Trade is a flavor, but they overcharge for it by leaps and bounds. This is hardly a fair trial. It artificially undermines Fair Trade's validity, and compromises the demands of students. It is time we let Compass Group know that we have a legitimate demand for 100% Fair Trade coffee on campus, and hundreds of examples to show that it works. It's time to move beyond the single blend!

### Sodexo

#### **Current Fair Trade Offerings**

Sodexo currently offers Fair Trade options from Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Peets, Starbucks, and Seattle's Best (now owned by Starbucks). While Green Mountain Coffee Roasters is not a 100% Fair Trade roaster, they are the only approved Sodexo vendor that can offer the Fair Trade Full Monty with 25 blends of Fair Trade-Organic coffee including espresso and flavored options.

**Continued on the following page.**

# THE BIG THREE

## **Sodexo (continued)**

### **The Sodexo Fair Trade Strategy**

While far from a perfect company, Sodexo has taken the Fair Trade lead by partnering with Green Mountain. Sodexo hopes that its partnership with Green Mountain will satisfy demand for Fair Trade on campus. And it could, if our dining service managers understand what is available to them, and are freely able to collaborate with students to make the 100% Fair Trade switch. Sodexo can't play favorites among its vendor partners, but we can!

### **The Sodexo Story**

#### **The Good...**

Green Mountain became a nationally approved vendor for Sodexo in June 2003. This makes Sodexo the first of the Big Three to officially give students access to the Fair Trade Full Monty.

#### **...the Bad...**

Although Sodexo has added Green Mountain to its list of approved vendors to address the exploding demand for Fair Trade coffee on campuses across the country, it is still trying to protect its long-standing relationships with other companies that do not offer a complete line of Fair Trade—a tactic also used by Aramark and Compass. So Green Mountain is listed as one of four options for Fair Trade organic coffee in the Hot Beverage guides that all Sodexo managers receive, but it is the only Sodexo-approved vendor that can service a switch to 100% Fair Trade coffee.

#### **...and the Ugly**

Sodexo was the target of a massive divestment campaign between 1999-2001 that targeted the company's investments in private prisons. It received a tremendous amount of bad press, and lost a number of key accounts before agreeing to divest from the private prison industry in North America. Sodexo is still involved, however, in the private prison industry in Europe and Australia.

### **What if my campus is not served by one of the Big Three?**

There is a shrinking multitude of independent food service providers in the United States. Working with them to promote Fair Trade coffee comes with unique challenges and rewards.

Working with an independent food service company may require a bit of extra research to understand the specific business model in place on your campus, and some extra energy building up relationships with companies whose policies and practices are not necessarily as well known as those of the Big Three.

But students can approach independent food service providers directly. And because they are usually much smaller than the Big Three companies, they are often more flexible with their sourcing guidelines. In sum, you may work a little harder to move independent companies to Fair Trade, but the reward is well worth the effort!

These profiles were adapted from original material developed by the United Students for Fair Trade ([www.usft.org](http://www.usft.org)) as part of its Fair Trade Full Monty initiative—a campaign to convert college campuses across the country to 100 percent Fair Trade coffee.

USFT is a student-run organization working to promote an international economic justice and to advance its vision of a global economy based on just human relationships.