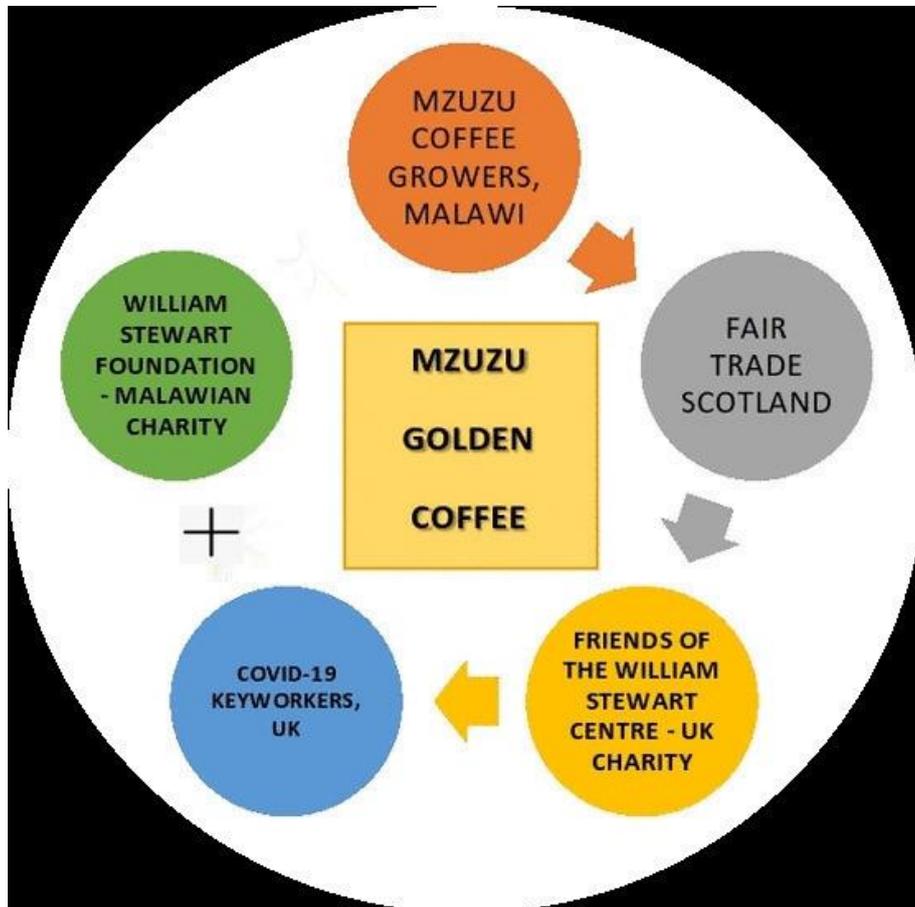


# MZUZU GOLDEN COFFEE

## SUNSHINE IN A CUP



**Mzuzu Golden Coffee** has been enjoyed by many of Scotland's keyworkers as a result of the fundraiser which our Scottish charity **Friends of the William Stewart Centre, Malawi** has been running during lockdown, whereby when £15 was raised for our **Foundation's feeding programme** a bag of coffee was given to those who help Scotland to keep going.

**'Sunshine in a cup'** has been donated to hospital doctors and nurses; GPs; police; search and rescue; educational hubs; care homes; hospices; church ministers and a lady making hospital/care home scrubs.

Our original idea was to sell the coffee and a consignment was ordered. Then lockdown came and it was stuck in Malawi. However, Eve Broadis, CEO of **Fair Trade Scotland**, stepped in and donated coffee to us to enable the amended fundraiser to begin: **'Coffee for our Keyworkers – Food for the Children'**.

We have been asked where the coffee can be purchased, by keyworkers who have been given it; by friends of our team who have sampled a cup, and by a couple of retail outlets (even

though we have not as yet been promoting the coffee). When our consignment is released and flown over to Scotland, we will be selling. In the meantime, Eve has generously donated a further 40 250g bags of coffee and it is being sold at an introductory price.

We thought we'd let everyone know a little about Mzuzu Golden Coffee.

It's produced by the Mzuzu Coffee Planters Cooperative Union, a farmer owned organisation, currently with six primary cooperative societies on land in the high mountains in Northern Malawi.

The Cooperative was formed in 2007, having been the Smallholder Coffee Farmers Trust since 1999, and comprises business centres which then form business zones which then join up to become the Primary Cooperative Societies which make up the Union. There are approximately 3,000 growers and the whole Union is fairly structured to benefit growers and to achieve gender equality. For instance, if the Chair of one of the centres is a man, then the Vice Chair must be a woman. There is a Women in Coffee movement; about 25% of growers are women and there is a Coordinator for the women coffee farmers and youths.

The goal of the Union is to improve the quality of life of its member farmers through promoting its organically certified coffee produced via excellent, sustainable production and processing technologies and to promote diversification at farmer, cooperative and union levels. So the Union runs its own commercial farm, the Mzuzu Coffee Den – coffee shop, restaurant and the first free Wifi premises in Malawi (and Levison can attest to the excellence of the Den) - and Mzuzu Coffee Suites – a stunning guest premises with conference facilities just outside Mzuzu.

The ethos of the Union is that the communities and the farmers should be empowered and that they should have a decent life – the Union has, for example, enabled a hospital to be built in Misuku which benefits not only the growers but people from the surrounding areas who previously couldn't afford travel to a hospital, as is the case in so much of rural Malawi.



On the left is Bernard Kaunda, the CEO and the Cooperative's driving force with a great team working with him, and Christopher Gondwe, Quality & Processing Executive.

Bernard first met Eve Broadis in 2006 when Scotland was going for Fair Trade Nation status, and he asked her to buy his R & G Filter Coffee

In 2018 the two gentlemen came to Scotland to promote their roast and ground Fairtrade coffee and the benefits of Fairtrade certification. The Mzuzu Cooperative was Fairtrade Certified in 2009.

## **Fair Trade Scotland and the Mzuzu Growers Cooperative**

Bernard and Christopher spoke with Eve about the benefits of Fairtrade certification, but they also highlighted challenges. Almost all coffee, wherever grown, is purchased as the 'green bean'. It is then roasted and packaged in the destination country.

This results in the coffee farmers receiving a very small amount of the overall coffee profit and so Bernard and Christopher spoke of how they wanted to add to their export range by selling their roasted, ground, and packaged in Malawi coffee, thus bringing huge added benefits for the farmers and their communities.

Eve took this on board and Fair Trade Scotland went into partnership with the Cooperative. Fair Trade Scotland is the only World Fair Trade Organisation Guarantee System Member in Scotland, strictly adheres to the WFTO 10 Principles of Fair Trade and is externally audited against those principles, allowing measurement of the social impact of its trade on sustainable economic development.

### **Win-win?**

***This coffee is the first in the world to have both the Fairtrade Mark and the WFTO Guaranteed Fair Trade Label – an absolute gold standard product!***

That wonderful statement was able to be put on the initial promotion of the roasted, ground and packaged Mzuzu Golden Coffee – with revenue going to source rather than in the coffers of companies buying up the green bean much cheaper.

That would be fair, wouldn't it? All part of fair trade? To the average person, that's what fair trade is all about, surely? Making sure that indigenous farmers get the best possible crack of the whip?

Well, no, that's not the case and the Mzuzu Cooperative fell foul of stringent rules which operate on a 'one size fits all' basis.

The price fell out of the international coffee market and the Cooperative had to take a much reduced income, selling coffee where they could. As a result, they were unable to pay all their workers. But that was OK – as often happens in the real world in Malawi, the workers understood this and were prepared to wait, to freeze their income.

It was not OK, however, with Fairtrade International which had an audit conducted in Autumn 2018, smack bang in the middle of the coffee crisis. The Cooperative was served a Suspension of Certification notice, late June 2019, on the basis of 'non-compliance' – this is done, by the way, via FLO-CERT, the global fair trade certifier in Germany, owned by Fairtrade International, whose slogan is 'assuring fairness'.

The Cooperative had a month to rectify the situation before decertification. How could they in that time frame? It had resumed paying the workers, but the backlog remained. Despite the Cooperative informing FLO-CERT of the situation, the decertification order was sent at the end of July.

Immediately following decertification, all Fairtrade buyers' orders were cancelled, thereby creating a Catch 22 for Bernard and the team and an outcome which have had an adverse impact not only on the Cooperative's coffee income but on the community, too, with the removal of the Fairtrade premiums which were helping with the Cooperative's other projects

for the benefit of their people. One non-compliance issue in the ten years since Fairtrade certification and no account taken of market conditions!

Up stepped Eve again. Fair Trade Scotland has partnered with Not1Bean, whose aim is to – in their own words - ‘empower farmers to roast their own coffee and rise above the abject poverty haunting the global coffee belt’ and to put an end to modern slavery around the world.

‘The insistence that coffee farmers must only export their green unroasted coffee, at many, many times less than the prices achievable were it to be roasted beforehand, leads to something we call ‘green coffee slavery’.

**‘\$3.08 per kilo paid to the farmer, \$3.52 with the FAIRTRADE premium, the same coffee then sold by roasters in consumer countries for up to \$72.86 per kilo’**

And yet an enterprising Cooperative, trying to do just that – to empower farmers - has been heavily penalised, losing not only the FT mark but also the FT premium which subsidised community ventures such as the hospital mentioned above. Fair trade? Justice?

We don’t think so.

And now there is COVID-19, and its impact, to deal with. Fairtrade Africa issued information about a relief fund – but because of decertification, the Cooperative cannot take advantage of that either.

What makes sense, in these changed times, is the promotion of coffee roasted and packaged in its country of origin, up to 20% lighter than green beans thus also being of benefit to the environment.

We intend to do just that; to help where we can to bring lots of cups of Malawian sunshine to the UK, keep that lovely smile on Bernard Kaunda’s face, and play our part in the Golden Coffee Circle. As Lovemore Pemba of the Cooperative Union says: ‘By buying a packet you are doing two great things – uplifting the living standards of the producers, processors and packers in the remote rural highlands of Northern Malawi and assisting the Foundation which has, at its centre, the poor and vulnerable. You may not physically and personally reach out to them, but by purchasing one coffee pack, that money goes a long way’.

Mary Young  
Administrator  
WSF

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