**PRESS RELEASE: Five flagship events with celebrity speakers held across the UK to mark Fairtrade Fortnight’s ‘She Deserves’ campaign**

Two of the women cocoa farmers will tour the UK and give keynote speeches at five special flagship community events followed by panel discussions with guest inspirational women speakers in Manchester, York, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Oxford to mark Fairtrade Fortnight’s campaign *She Deserves Fairtrade* (24 February-8 March 2020).

The two cocoa farmers – Rosine and Leocadie – will tell their stories about how, against the odds, they have become leaders in their communities, alongside inspiring womenfrom the arts, food, civil society, business and politics including Hollywood actress and Fairtrade Patron Adjoa Andoh, chef, writer and restauranteur Fairtrade Patron Allegra McEvedy, the award-winning poet Jackie Kay CBE, sustainable chef Melissa Helmsley, MP Rachael Maskell, chef Mary-Ellen McTague, academic Dr Lesley Orr, from Edinburgh University and Cathryn Higgs, Head of Food Policy, the Co-op.

Julia Nicoara, Fairtrade Foundation’s Director of Public Engagement, said:

*“Thanks to Fairtrade women are gaining the skills to become leaders and business people in their communities – this Fortnight Fairtrade is sharing the stories of empowering, inspirational women fighting for a different future.*

*“Thousands of communities, faith groups and schools across the UK will be getting involved in events throughout Fairtrade Fortnight and these special flagship events are an opportunity for people to hear directly from the women behind their chocolate bars, as well as inspiring women from the arts, business, charity sector and politics as we show solidarity with the global movement for women’s equality.”*

Fairtrade’s nationwide ‘She Deserves’ campaign is highlighting the inequality experienced by the women and girls behind the multibillion global chocolate industry. In West Africa, where 60% of the world’s cocoa is grown, the average woman farming cocoa earns as little as 23p a day. In Côte d’Ivoire, despite carrying out 68% of the labour which involves planting and harvesting, hacking cocoa pods, fermenting, drying and bagging up the cocoa beans as well as domestic duties in the home, women have fewer rights than men and are often landless.

Fairtrade’s industry-leading Standards, innovative programmes and ground-breaking research are changing this. Fairtrade is striving towards equality for women and is enabling women farmers to earn better incomes and become leaders.

Julia Nicoara added: “*Women deserve the same as men. That’s why this Fortnight, our campaign is: She Deserves Fairtrade. We’re calling for fair pay, equal rights and a sustainable future for all farmers and workers.”*

**Manchester 25 February 2020**

Speakers include: Cocoa farmer Rosine Bekoin, Chef Mary-Ellen MacTague, the Co-op’s Cathryn Higgs and will be chaired by the Fairtrade Foundation’s Head of Commercial Catherine David

Event details: 25 February 2020 at the Old Bank, <https://www.oldbanknoma.com/> doors open at 5.30pm, speaker and panel discussion 6-7pm followed by refreshments.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/she-deserves-fairtrade-the-story-of-chocolate-tickets-91626343861>

**York 27 February 2020**

Speakers include: Cocoa farmer Rosine Bekoin, Rachael Maskell, York Central MP, Sarah Wakefield, Food Sustainability Manager, Co-op, Sophi Tranchell, Managing Director of Divine Chocolate and the Fairtrade Foundation’sJulia Nicoara, Director of Public Engagement

Event details: 27 February 2020 at the Spurriergate Centre, doors open at 5.30pm, speaker and panel discussion 6-7pm followed by refreshments. Event closes at 8pm.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2752447751512915/>

**Edinburgh 29 February 2020**

Speakers include: Cocoa farmer Leocadie, Fairtrade Patron Adjoa Andoh, Scots Makar Jackie Kay CBE, Edinburgh University academic Dr Lesley Orr, Twimukye Macline Mushaka, from the Scottish Poverty Alliance, Amy Oroko, Sustainability Manager at Matthew Algie, the first roaster to launch Fairtrade coffee in the UK, and the event will be chaired by Rachel Farhey representing the Scottish Fairtrade Forum.

Event details: 29 February 2020 at Augustine United Church, <https://www.augustine.org.uk/>, doors open at 10.30am, event starts at 11am with introductions from the Lord Provost, speaker and panel discussion 11.05-12.05pm followed by refreshments. Event closes at 1pm.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/2461767194139430/>

**Cardiff 2 March 2020**

Speakers include Cocoa farmer Rosine Bekoin, Jenipher Wettaka Sambazi from a Coffee Co-operative in Uganda, Kathryn Llewellyn, CEO of United Purpose, Chisomo Phiri, women's rights activist and Katie Colvin, Head of Marketing and Communications at Cru Kafe.

Event details: 2 March at Portland House, <https://www.portlandhousecardiff.com/>, doors open at 6:30pm, panel discussion 7-8pm to be followed by refreshments, event closes at 8.30pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/she-deserves-fairtrade-women-in-leadership-tickets-92196549361>

**Oxford 3rd March 2020**

Chef, writer and restauranteur Fairtrade Patron Allegra McEvedy and Sustainable chef Melissa Helmsley, Rachel Wilshaw, Ethical Trade Manager, Oxfam, and Polly Astbury, Waitrose & Partners, the event will be chaired by Fairtrade Trustee Alison Marshall of The Women’s Equality party

Event details: 3rd March 2020 at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University <https://conference-oxford.com/venues/conference/lady-margaret-hall>, doors open at 7pm, speaker and panel discussion 7:30-8:30pm followed by refreshments, event closes at 9pm

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/she-deserves-the-story-of-chocolate-pulling-on-the-threads-of-liberation-tickets-92546592349>

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE – keep up to date and find links to campaigners’ Eventbrite or Facebook pages via: <http://www.fairtrade.org.uk/en/get-involved/events>

**Case studies of the Cocoa Farmers**

Rosine and Leocadie are graduates of an innovative Fairtrade programme, ‘The Women’s School of Leadership’ which supports women to raise their voices and understand their rights.

**Rosine Bekoin**Rosine Bekoin, a mum of five, is one of the 25 percent of women in Côte d’Ivoire who does own her own land. She runs a 2.5-hectare farm, which she inherited from her mother and is a member ofCAYAT cocoa co-operative. Rosine used to sell her cocoa to local middlemen but struggled to make a decent living. After joining the farming co-operative CAYAT, she received training in quality and good agricultural practices helping to increase her production by 50 percent. This was a welcome boost to her income, which she put towards building a new house. She also found the training on women’s rights as part of the Women’s School of Leadership transformed her entire outlook on life, and has seen her advocate for other women ever since.

Rosine Bekoin, said: *“Before the Women’s School of Leadership, I was full of doubts. I’ve never been to school before, and I can’t even speak French properly. On the first day, I couldn’t understand anything. On the second day I thought, if I look inside myself, I have potential. Then I woke up and I joined in. Today, I’m strong. I’ve changed all those misconceptions, and I can stand proud and say I am capable and can do things on my own. Before I was an invisible woman. I’m so grateful I was taught about what was hidden inside ourselves. I am a leader today for many people because I am very confident.”*

Now, through her role as secretary of the women’s society, Rosine is helping more than 400 women who are collectively investing their Fairtrade Premium in income diversification projects, such as a communal vegetable garden. Growing food crops to sell locally provides a good source of additional and independent income, particularly for the women who don’t own land. Ever entrepreneurial, the group is expanding into chicken rearing too, which has a positive effect for their fellow farmers. They are able to buy bags of organic fertiliser produced from the chickens at a much reduced rate.

**Cyr Leocadie Voho:**

Leocadie is a member of Fairtrade co-operative CAPEDIG in Côte d’Ivoire. Leocadie is a mother of seven, four girls and three boys and she too owns her own farm, which is around a hectare in size. She is the Chairwoman of the Women’s Society in her village. She has been a cocoa farmer since 1985 when she inherited land from her grandfather. In her spare time, she enjoys going to church and taking part in community activities. Since joining the Fairtrade in 2015, Leocadie has received regular training to farm in more efficient ways which meant she’s increased her cocoa yields and therefore income each year. This has been hugely important to them, it’s meant they’ve been able to prioritise their children’s education.

Leocadie has also seen many other benefits of Fairtrade in her community from constructing school classrooms to building warehouses to store their cocoa securely. She says: *“Fairtrade is a win-win relationship - it helps us to have good quality production, to have bonuses - to invest and to have a good income... with Fairtrade we are autonomous. Our community has benefited from a hydraulic water pump, and classrooms at the primary school and high schools.”*