

ON THE GROUND

THE PRODUCERS

THREE Fairtrade producers are going to travel around Ireland sharing their stories as part of Fairtrade Fortnight. Two are from Kuapa Kokoo, the only Fairtrade-certified cocoa co-operative in Ghana – Isaac Baidoo and Stephen Boadi – and Miguel Mateo Sebastián is from farmers' organisation Manos Campesinas in Guatemala.

Kuapa Kokoo was formed in 1993 with the help of TWIN Trading Ltd and now has a membership of 64,000 individual cocoa farmers. These farmers are members of 1,431 primary societies located in five geographical regions in Ghana. Each village has its own cooperative society.

Isaac is a cocoa farmer and has been a member of Kuapa Kokoo since 2004. He is the recorder – the one who weighs the cocoa and pays farmers – of Gordon Kuapa Kokoo society. He is also the district president of Tarkwa area and a member of the national executive of Kuapa Kokoo Ltd.

Forty-four-year-old Stephen has been a member of the co-operative since 1999. Married with four children, he is the recorder of Abenabena Nyamebekyere

Kuapa Kokoo society and the former president of Wasa Akropong district.

"One of the activities that distinguishes Kuapa Kokoo from all other players in the cocoa industry in Ghana is its social projects," says Isaac.

"Kuapa invests a lot of the Fairtrade premium money in the physical well-being of its members. It has provided pump wells for many of its member companies and organises periodic mobile clinics. Doctors and medical staff visit farmers at home for check-ups and training on preventative techniques to avoid diseases.

"Kuapa has built KVIP toilets (Kumasi ventilated improved pit) in many communities and several schools have been built."

Regarding economic development, Kuapa has invested in corn mills and palm oil extractors, training in soap-making and batik to provide alternative sources of income for members during the off-season. Women are at the centre of these programmes.

Miguel's parents used to cultivate corn, beans and coffee on a small scale before his father was killed during the civil war in



Growers from the Kuapa Kokoo co-op

Guatemala in 1982.

He speaks Q'anjob'al (a Mayan language) as his first language; he only started to learn Spanish when he was seven years old in school, and English about 14 years later.

For the past 15 years, Miguel has been working with small-scale farmers, most of whom are coffee growers. More recently, he got involved in the commercial side of coffee production and began to learn more about the market.

Since 2006, he has been part of the Manos Campesinas co-operative team,

managing the sales of the various member organisations and looking after finances.

Several farmer organisations founded Manos Campesinas in 1997 with the main objective of developing a market for their coffee and to promote the production of organic coffee.

Since 1998 it has been exporting coffee to the US and Europe under the Fairtrade criteria and organic standards.

Altogether, the co-op has 1,200 individual members, 20pc of whom are women.

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