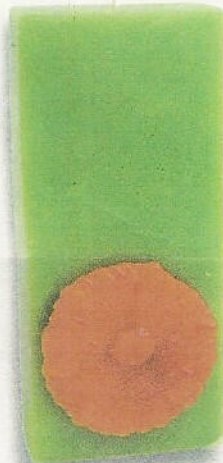


**FAIR TRADE** *from page 132*

The product that made most American consumers aware of fair trade concepts was coffee. However, the first fair trade shop, which opened in the U.S. in 1958, sold handcrafted gifts. Today, the fair trade market for gifts is about \$50 million (36 percent of the total), and there's a growing trend among specialty retailers to seek out these products in order to differentiate themselves from the competition and offer something mass merchants can't.

**FAIR TRADE DEFINED**

The principles of fair trade are to pay primarily overseas artisans a living wage; guarantee that working conditions, hours, and facilities are safe and humane; and offer producers services such as health clinics, child care, education opportunities, and literacy training. Fair traders also educate the end consumer about the producer or artisans' history, culture, and living conditions, and encourage environmentally friendly practices. One of the most common benefits of fair trade is prepayment: while most companies pay when product is shipped, the majority of fair trade companies prepay producers to cover materials and



Handmade Guatemalan candle is produced by Crafts-Pilandros. This line comes in three colors and two sizes. 9¼" and 5" \$16-\$20. **Aid to Artisans**, Hartford, CT. (860) 947-3434.



Group leader Meena, right, does a quality check of ornaments made in Indian homes. Bead and sequin fish ornament is one of several handmade designs. **Rupalee Exclusifs**, Wyncote, PA. (215) 576-7188.



basic needs during production.

Fair trade companies also provide financial and technical assistance, market information, and product feedback. Typical programs range from a cantina and food garden provided by stationery vendor World Paper of Hawthorne, New Jersey; subsidized housing in South Africa made possible by Purple Rhino of Tempe, Arizona; and educational and social programs in Colombia organized by giftware company Terra Luna of Alpharetta, Georgia.

**MADE FOR SPECIALTY STORES**

But what does fair trade offer retailers? Foremost, it's about the product, which has low tech, high design appeal, as well as small production runs that make for unique selections. "Most of our customers are mainstream American specialty boutiques that want smaller production runs because customers won't see our bags everywhere," says Kimberly Person of Gecko Traders, a fair trade

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Hand-woven and hand-dyed silk hand and evening bags come in a variety of fashionable shapes and are produced by disabled and disadvantaged Third World artisans. **Gecko Traders Inc.**, Arlington, VA. (703) 533-3939.

