"Cocoa News" Assembly

An assembly is a great way to let everyone know about Fairtrade and any activities and events the Fairtrade Group are planning. Why not use this fun assembly that involves learners in delivering the assembly through role-playing a news bulletin? There's an optional Reflection, and the "My Fairtrade Adventure" film series supports this assembly too.

Objectives
- Learners find out about how supply chains work and their role in producing our food
- Learners gain an understanding of what Fairtrade is and how it aims to work
- Learners can reflect on their role as consumers and the impact they can have through their interconnectivity with producers

Student involvement
You will need students to play the following parts:
- Newsreader 1 (N1)
- Newsreader 2 (N2)
- Roving reporter (RR)
- Weatherperson (WP)
- Cocoa Farmer (CF)

You will need
- A 'newsdesk' facing the audience with two chairs behind it and a few pieces of paper on it
- A long piece of string with a chocolate bar tied to one end, and something representing a cocoa bean at the other end (e.g. a drawing or the word 'cocoa bean' written on cardboard)
- Image of the FAIRTRADE Mark
- Use the scene-setter from the schools pack for the report from a cocoa farm
- You may like to use other props e.g. a simple weather-map for the weatherperson, a microphone for the roving reporter, suits, wigs or outfits for the cast, or a recording of the intro music to a news programme to start the assembly

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Reflection (for a teacher or learner to read before, during or after the assembly)

Let's think about the millions of people everywhere who work hard to grow all the things we love to eat and drink. Let's take a moment to thank them for their work so that we can enjoy what they grow for us.

When we choose something to eat or drink, we don't often think about it but we are actually making lots of connections with other people, all across the world. We don't often see or hear about the farmers who grow our food but they are a part of our everyday lives. It's not fair that people who grow our cocoa, bananas, tea and other foods struggle to keep their farms going or pay for the basics like school and medicines for their children. Let's reflect on the choices we can make and the connections we can make every day.

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Assembly

[Scene opens on Newsreaders 1 and 2 sitting at a desk shuffling papers]

N1:   Good morning! And in top news today we've found out that sales of chocolate in the UK are increasing – we spend over £4 billion a year on chocolate! That's 660,000 tonnes of chocolate bars each year – the equivalent to 4000 blue whales!

N2:   Wow! That's amazing! Thanks *[insert N1's name]* Now we're heading over to *[insert RR's name]* for news from around the world.

RR: *[standing in front of scene-setter]* Thanks *[insert N2's name]*. Well today I'm in the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean. It's so hot here – if I had a chocolate bar here it would definitely have melted! The Dominican Republic is the second poorest country in the Caribbean with nearly half the people here living on less than £1 a day. Lots of crops are grown here including sugar, coffee, bananas and cocoa. In fact there are about 40,000 cocoa farmers, so some of that chocolate you were talking about would have started here! I'm here with *[insert CF's name]*, a cocoa farmer, to find out more about cocoa.

CF: The cocoa fruit grows on the trunks and branches of cocoa trees and are called pods. Inside the pods are seeds which are called cocoa beans. Cocoa needs a high temperature, plenty of water and moist air to grow so it is grown in hot, humid countries. Most of these are close to the equator like Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Belize and the Dominican Republic. Cocoa pods have two main harvests at the beginning and at the end of the rainy season.

RR: That's really interesting. So what happens at harvest time?

CF: The cocoa pods are cut from the tree and broken open. The white pulp inside is pulled out and fermented to give the cocoa a good taste. This takes 5-10 days. The beans are then dried for five to 10 days. The good quality beans are then sorted and put into sacks to sell. It's hard work and takes a long time. But many cocoa farmers don't earn enough to keep their farms going or pay for things like school and medicines for their children.

RR: So what are they doing about it?

N1:   Well, they don't often have the power to do anything about it. But a lot of young people do not see a future in cocoa farming and are moving away from the farms to find other work. If this continues there will be a many fewer cocoa farmers in the future.

RR: Thank you *[insert CF's name]…* And it's back to the studio.

[N1 and N2 are sneakily eating chocolate at their desk]

N1:   Wow! Thanks *[insert RR's name].* It sounds like very hard work to get the cocoa to make the chocolate we love! And here's the weather with *[insert WP's name].*

WP: Well today it's going to be cloudy with a chance of… hang on! That doesn't make sense. You're saying we're eating more chocolate than we used to. But cocoa farmers are still struggling to make a living. I don't get it. How does that work? Where does the money go?

N1:   That's a really good point. But another good point would be that if cocoa farmers stop growing cocoa, there WON'T BE ANY MORE CHOCOLATE! EVERYBODY PANIC!

[All the cast run around the stage panicking, holding each other, crying and overacting]

N2:   WAIT! *[rest of the cast stops]* I think I can explain this, but I'll need some volunteers.

[N2 picks 6 people from the audience and stands them in a row at the front. The person on the end of the row is given a chocolate bar tied to a long piece of string with a cocoa bean tied to the other end. One person holds the other end and the rest of the volunteers hold the string in the middle.]

This person *[with the chocolate bar]* is the <u>consumer</u> buying the chocolate bar.

They're connected to the <u>retailer</u> – that's a shop *[next person along the row]*. This *[next person etc]* is the <u>manufacturer</u> who uses cocoa, milk and sugar to make chocolate bars. They get the cocoa from the <u>processor</u>, who makes cocoa beans into cocoa powder, cocoa butter and cocoa solids. The <u>exporter</u> transports the beans across the ocean, and finally the cocoa <u>farmer</u> grows and harvests the beans and gets them ready for export. This chain is called a supply chain.

All of these people need to make enough money to cover their costs. But watch this…

[N2 asks the manufacturer and the processor to take a few steps backwards still holding the string which pulls the straight line of volunteers into a 'V' shape.]

In cocoa a handful of very large companies hold the power in the supply chain. Because millions of farmers with small farms sell their cocoa to just a few companies, they find it hard to get a fair deal for their cocoa. Cocoa prices also go up and down on the stock market and this makes it difficult for farmers to know what they will be paid for their crop. This means they can be very vulnerable.

N1:   So although they work really hard they sometimes don't always earn enough to pay for the things they need for their families?

N2:   Exactly.

WG: That doesn't seem fair at all! What can we do to make this fairer?

N2:   Well, one option is Fairtrade – have you ever seen this before? *[Pulls image of FAIRTRADE Mark from under the desk]*

WG: Yes – I've seen that on tea bags and coffee and bananas…

N1:   And chocolate! But what does it mean?

N2:   Well Fairtrade is a simple way to support the millions of farmers in poorer countries who struggle to make a living from selling what they grow. If you see this Mark on something it means that the farmer has received a fair price for their hard work. Farmers also get a little extra, called the Fairtrade Premium, to spend on whatever they think is most important for their communities. This might be a school or a hospital, or it might be used to help farms be more productive or protect the environment better.

N1:   So choosing Fairtrade can make a huge difference to people who work hard to grow our food. Thanks *[insert N2's name]*.

N2:   *[hands image of FAIRTRADE Mark to WG]* How's the weather looking now, *[WG's name]*?

WG: Well, after that it's looking very fair indeed!