

In previous issues of *Florist & Wholesale Buyer* and *Business Briefing* we've taken a look at the growers and wholesalers who are doing their bit by participating in Fair Flowers Fair Plants and talked about the benefits the label could bring retailers. But what about the florist? How is the retail end of the chain benefiting from the label and what more can be done to further increase the consumer appeal? We talked to two businesses – one a high street florist and one an online flower seller – to see what their thoughts were.



FFP The friendly label for the retailer?

Whilst the environmentally friendly and 'sustainably produced' labels such as Fairtrade and Fair Flowers Fair Plants (FFP) do, without doubt, benefit the world around us by improving conditions for workers and safeguarding the environment around us, no effective, widespread improvements could be achieved without the help of the last link in the chain – the retail end.

The good news though is that consumers are becoming more and more switched on to 'friendly' products. Consumers want to know the origin and production methods of the products they buy, meaning there's a niche there for retailers, with the FFP label providing the opportunity to capture this market.

One florist who has signed up to the FFP scheme is **Helen Jamieson** (right) from **Flower Design** in Whickham near Newcastle-Upon-Tyne.

"After visiting Antigua last year and seeing and hearing about the Fair Trade in Bananas, which is on the island, I wondered if there was any part of our industry which supports sustainable trade for farmers and growers of flowers and plants, in countries with a poor local economy," commented Helen. *"That's why I Wanted to learn more about Fair Flowers Fair Plants."*

Asked if she thought there was a niche in the market for FFP labeled products, Helen's answer was a resounding yes.

"Yes, I think there is a niche because consumers are growing much more conscious of the environmental issues and the fair trading ethos. These products may open our services up to those who are more 'green' minded, but I think it is more important for our customers to see that we as a company care about where our product comes from

and the farmers and growers who work on the land. I believe that a typical buyer will be from the younger generation who have been most exposed to the injustices which conventional trade has inflicted on the growers and farmers within different areas of the world."

Helen continues: *"I am passionate about 'Fair Trading' and will support and promote the Fair Flowers Fair Plants label through point of sale material and via website links, as well as talking to my consumers about what they are buying and how it can help."*

For Fair Flowers Fair Plants to be truly successful in capturing the attention of the nation, Helen has a rallying cry for UK based wholesalers and Dutch exporters.

"There are simply not enough wholesalers in the UK which stock, or are aware of Fair Flowers Fair Plants. Lots of the wholesalers buy from Dutch members of Fair Flower Fair Plants, but they possibly aren't aware that they hold these products. Therefore more work needs to be done to make wholesalers aware



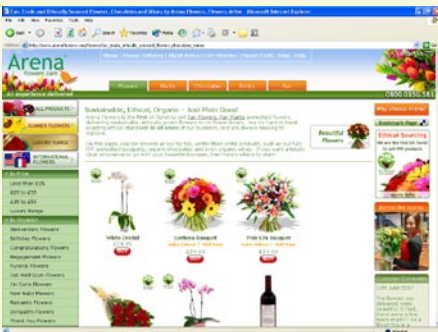
of the FFP label and what it stands for. Until wholesalers and retailers continue to receive more information there will always be limits."

Another company firmly behind the FFP initiative is online retailer **Arena Flowers**, the first company in the UK to sell Fair Flowers Fair Plants products, something that they started back in November last year.

"When we started our company we knew we wanted to include an ethically sourced range of flowers and other gifts such as organic wines and chocolates," said the company's **Sam Barton**. *"We were entering a busy and changing market place and in order to succeed we had to ensure we were not rolling out the same old offering to the modern customer but offering an innovative and relevant product range."*

When asked the same question as Helen about there being a niche for FFP labeled products, Sam commented: *"Yes, without question. Whilst the average customer may not have heard of Fair Flowers Fair Plants as an organisation, the concept of ethically sourced flowers is a hot topic. In the current consumer*





environment, whether selling household appliances or a bouquet of flowers, businesses have to be increasingly conscious of evolving consumer tastes; purchasing decisions are no longer solely made on the basis of price, but also on ethical factors and "peace of mind". We would also argue that, given FFP flowers are no more expensive than their non-FFP counterparts, that they are not really a niche but could potentially comprise the whole market. It's certainly our intention to sell a 100% Fair Flowers Fair Plants accredited range, as soon as that's possible."

Sam continued: "Gone are the days that you had to have red socks and open-toed sandals to want to buy ethically. In our experience ethically conscious customers come in all shapes and sizes across all ages and demographics. It is fair to say that there is a bias towards the female sex in buying FFP flowers but then this also partly to do with the nature of the product in the first place and the growing importance of women as the drivers of e-commerce."

A staunch supporter of Fair Flowers Fair Plants, how do Arena Flowers promote their ethical products?

"As soon as you get to our home page you can see our FFP products which are clearly visible by the FFP label in the main image," explained Sam. "There is also a button on the right hand side of our site that appears on every

page promoting our ethically sourced category. We also have a page dedicated to Fair Flowers Fair Plants to help explain it to those who are unfamiliar with the organisation.

"In order to increase awareness we advertise our FFP range on third party sites either via banner advertising and where possible with off site sales of our FFP products.

"Most recently we went to a special event hosted by an investment bank to raise awareness amongst their staff and clients regarding ethical sourcing and climate change. We were invited to explain the benefits of buying Fair Flowers Fair Plants flowers and plants and to illustrate the supply chain that FFP accredited flowers or plants go through. Everyone who came to our stand got a brochure and a free FFP flower."

This positive promotion has helped Arena make a go of their FFP offering, with plenty of new customers attracted by the label, something that also helped differentiate itself from the competition. However, moving forward, Sam believes that things can still be improved, with the Fair Flowers Fair Plants label made stronger with more support.

"Whilst the concept of ethical sourcing is established, FFP as a brand still needs to make its mark as a household name," he told us. "This can only be achieved with the support of all concerned in the flower industry. Whether you are a grower, wholesaler or retailer adopting the FFP accreditation is the only way we can make the FFP label as important as

seeing free range or organic when making a purchase. We know the demand is there, we just need to help in establishing the foothold."

How do I participate?

As a retailer, becoming part of the FFP initiative is straightforward. The criteria for participation are:

- You must sign up to become a member of FFP (current cost is just €50)
- You can only sell products under the FFP label when they are bought as FFP products
- FFP flowers and plants must be sold with a special label
- You are expected to purchase the standard FFP promotion material and labels (a trial parcel is supplied free on registration)
- Be able to demonstrate from which FFP supplier they were purchased
- Participating retailers must co-operate with checks

In return, participants will receive an information pack, and be listed on the FFP website so that consumers can find you. Membership also opens up a whole host of marketing opportunities. For only €50 a year, it makes a lot of sense and registration is easy!

To register, for more information on FFP and to source registered producers, exporters, wholesalers and florists, contact: www.fairflowersfairplants.com
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