

ESRC Festival of Social Science - Ethical Dilemmas

Locations	G12 Main Lecture Theatre University House Birmingham Business School
Date(s)	Tuesday 1st November 2011 (14:00-15:30)
Download	Add to Calendar (/schools/business/departments/management/events/ethical-dilemmas.aspx?ical=true)

Context of the Debate

Consumers want cheap and good quality products, but what impact does this have on the workers in the world's supply chains? This debate will explore the tension between low prices, fairness and the importance of international trade for the developing countries that produce these goods. On the one hand, consumer groups campaign for business to tackle the issue of poor labour conditions in global supply chains. Accusations of reputable companies selling everyday goods made by exploited workers has helped to galvanise companies take greater responsibility for fairer trading terms and improved labour conditions, and this has resulted in a number of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies being developed and implemented. On the other hand, such activities are considered not to be in the interest of a business organisation's key stakeholders, for example shareholders, and are viewed as creating an uncompetitive position for companies in the marketplace because of increased costs. This 90 minute debate will explore and discuss these issues in relation to the buying and selling of food and garments. The 'dilemma' that participants may discover is that cheap products come at a price – potentially poor working conditions, but equally, international trade can offer employment opportunities and provide foreign exchange that is much needed in developing countries.

