

# 18 Time to Act: Implementing the Resolutions

New study on procurement in Church and Diaconia

FACTS



Photo: Frank Schultze

## ■ Eco-fair procurement is en vogue

Long gone are the days when nobody cared about the political correctness of enjoying food, wearing clothes or giving away flowers that were not produced according to eco-fair criteria. More and more consumers make a political statement with their shopping carts and pay attention to fair traded and organic products. Thus, so far 250 of the 12,000 municipalities in Germany have decided to drink only fair traded coffee at their council meetings, to use mainly environmentally friendly office supplies and to not purchase anything produced in exploitative child labour with their public procurement.

The churches have equally embraced this issue for several years now, because advocating Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation also means adjusting the own business activities to those principles. Hence the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) has made numerous decisions regarding the so-called eco-fair procurement and has launched initiatives for a sustainable economic approach. The decision of the EKD synod in 2002 on fair trade has been groundbreaking in the process. Parishes and Protestant institutions including the Diaconia were asked to purchase fair traded products. This request has been confirmed on three further occasions: in 2006, in 2009 and in 2010. In 2005 the board of directors of the Social Service Agency (Diakonisches Werk) of the EKD declared within the scope of its environmental policy:

*“We prefer environmentally friendly products, procedures and services as well as Fairtrade goods.”*

### Despite many decisions merely a side issue?

Another significant step was the appeal made by the EKD synod in 2008, that in view of climate change Protestant parishes and institutions should reduce their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 25 percent until 2015 (compared to 2005). By now numerous regional and free churches

have also made resolutions regarding environmentally friendly economic activity and fair purchasing.

Yet, in most cases such decisions by synods, regional and free churches or the Diaconia are only recommendations for church and Diaconia organisations, but so far do not have a binding character. And thus – despite all positive examples and approaches – the subject of eco-fair procurement still remains a side issue. Numerous church and Diaconia institutions only hesitatingly adjust their purchasing behaviour – if at all.

This is the outcome of a study on “Eco-fair Procurement in Church and Diaconia“ (Ökofaire Beschaffungspraxis in Kirche und Diakonie) published by “Brot für die Welt“ and the Church Development Service (EED) in October 2011. The study conducted by the Südwind Institute shows: There is no want for paper printed with decisions on eco-fair procurement – it is the practical implementation of said decisions that is clearly lacking in many places. Institutions in the fields of education, nursing and geriatric care, disabled people, child and youth welfare as well as conference centres and parishes were interviewed. The survey was supplemented with further external data like, for instance, from the EnergyAgency.NRW, “GEPA – The Fair Trade Company” or the eco-management initiative “Grüner Hahn”.

ENGLISH VERSION



Photo: Christof Krackhardt

Most progress has been made in the field of energy. Over 600 parishes and church institutions practice systematic eco-management. Since 2009 the Protestant Church in Württemberg has been working on collecting data on electricity, heat and water.

In the Protestant-Lutheran Church Schaumburg-Lippe the energetic condition of church buildings was assessed with the assistance of the University of Hannover. An “Innovation Fund” has been set up to allow the instalment of new photovoltaic systems. In addition to that parishes and institutions nationwide participate in initiatives for church eco-management like the “Grüne Hahn/Grüne Gockel”. In numerous church buildings attention is given to energy-saving, for instance, by turning electronic devices off when they are not in use, thus avoiding the standby mode. Plus, more than half of the institutions surveyed in the study purchase green electricity.

The implementation of social criteria in procurement and purchasing, however, does not look so bright. One glance at Fairtrade illustrates that despite all church confessions the degree of implementation is strongly fluctuating. The residential institutions of the Diaconia, for instance, spend almost 766 million euros per year on food. Yet the share of organic or fairtraded products remains marginal – for over two thirds of these institutions it is assessed to be at less than ten percent.

### Pioneer fairtraded coffee

Only fairtraded coffee has taken a pioneering role – owing, among other things, to initiatives such as the action “Fair Coffee into the Churches“. The initiative dates from the German Protestant Kirchentag (church conference) in 2001 in Frankfurt. There the representatives of some regional churches determined that even at events hosted by the Church the catering did not follow fair criteria. Ever since the action “Fair Coffee into the Churches“ supports church bulk consumers with great success in adjusting their provisions to fairtraded coffee and other fair products like, for instance, sweets, tea or orange juice. In addition, the action „fair pleasures – 2,000 parishes drink fair“ promoted serving fairtraded coffee especially in parishes.

Still a drop of bitterness falls into the subject of Fairtrade. According to the Südwind study fairtraded coffee divides the church institutions into two extremes: either the coffee consumption has been completely adjusted to an eco-fair assortment — or not at all. The author of the study, Südwind board member Jiska Gojowczyk, suggests less objective barriers as causes for this than rather “routine, idleness and non-stated prejudices.“ Price differences between fairtraded and conventional coffee – a much-quoted argument against the adjustment – were “in practice almost insignificant,” writes Gojowczyk. Admittedly Fairtrade certified coffee was a bit more expensive per pound; but usually the quality and yield of the fairtraded product were considerably better than that of the conventional coffee.

And the study illustrates: Currently an estimated 2,000 tons of coffee are brewed in all residential Diaconia

institutions together. If in 2012 all Diaconia institutions would serve fairtraded coffee this would increase the sales of Fairtrade coffee by 28 percent compared to 2010. Coffee farmers in Mexico, Guatemala, Columbia, Ethiopia or Tanzania could thus benefit from an additional 390,000 euros more in Fairtrade premiums.

### Less tomato salad in November

The study comes up with further and equally impressive sample calculations. If, for example, all people who are accommodated in residential Diaconia institutions would only once do without an off-season tomato salad in November and eat cauliflower or arugula salad instead, that would save approximately nine tons of CO<sub>2</sub>. And obviously adjusting to organic food would be environmentally friendlier and healthier – but in many church institutions it is regarded as problematic given the fact that organic meat is considerably more expensive and its procurement more complicated.

The alternative, to reduce meat consumption and generally offer more vegetarian food, also causes problems in many places. According to the study residents of retirement homes are particularly unwilling to get accustomed to that. But an example from the neighbouring country Austria proves that it is nevertheless possible to provide social enterprises with both, organic as well as fairtraded dishes: The Hospital of the Brothers of Mercy (Krankenhaus der Barmherzigen Brüder) in Vienna once a week offers a Fairtrade menu that is savoured by everyone.

Regarding office supplies there cannot be a uniform picture presented here either. While the surveyed church parishes, hospitals and institutions of child and youth welfare as well as elderly care hardly use any recycling paper, the proportion of administration and conference centres is, however, quite large. The staff of several institutions complained that concerning office supplies they often did not know who offers sustainable products. At the same time a conscious procurement of office equipment would definitely pay off. For instance, if in the purchase of printers attention would not exclusively be given to the purchase price, but also to power usage,



Photo: Christof Krackhardt

toner system and ink consumption of the device, this could considerably reduce costs in the long run.

Yet still some office products can indeed only be procured with difficulty according to eco-fair criteria, if at all: There is no fairtraded computer – because by the time a PC arrives at the desktop his components have already travelled around the whole world. So far it seems difficult to control exactly which labour conditions prevail where. But transparency is an urgent matter here – because it is no secret that, for instance, the ore coltan, which is used in many mobile phones and computers, is mined under inhumane conditions in Africa.

Looking into the churches' mobility shows that in this area – just as in the afore-mentioned areas – much more sustainable action is required. The outcome of the Südwind study in this regard is: The staff in twelve of the surveyed institutions is frequently making business trips by air – an average of 20.6 times annually per institution. Only five of these institutions offset their air-travel carbon emissions. In particular employees of administration, training centres and educational institutions are frequent flyers.

Here much improvement is needed, like occasionally switching to alternative and more climate-friendly transports or at least by carbon offsets. In the same way the

purchase of vehicles with good fuel efficiency or switching to a bicycle could be “enormously extended“. Good examples and assistance already exist: The Westphalian Church decided in 2008 to develop ecological standards for business trips, and likewise the EED (in 2009) and the Social Service Agency of the EKD (in 2010) adopted guidelines for climate-friendly business travels of their staff. The bike-friendly Kirchentage in 2009 in Bremen and in 2011 in Dresden set the benchmark for mobility on bicycles.

### Adjustment is necessary – and feasible

There still is considerable need for action to achieve a purchasing behaviour that meets the ecological and social requirements of the Church. This includes enhanced data so as to allow an even more thorough analysis of the present situation, as well as increased training of the staff in parishes and institutions.

Moreover church bulk consumers must be advised and assisted by experts even better than before in their adjustment to eco-fair procurement. And finally well-aimed political campaigning is suggested. That is (according to the study) the only way for the Church to maintain credibility in the long run and “to use its market power in terms of justice and the integrity of creation“.

Positive in the process is that there already exists support facilitating eco-fair procurement in the churches. The Wirtschaftsgesellschaft der Kirchen in Deutschland

(WGKD) has agreed a framework contract with “GEPA – The Fair Trade Company“. It allows church and Diaconia institutions to purchase Fairtrade products like, for instance, fairtraded coffee, at special conditions. Moreover the WGKD provides framework agreements with green electricity suppliers via the project “Zukunft Einkaufen“ (Purchasing the Future).

In addition it may be interesting for church parishes to start their own energy cooperative, so as to actively promote the development of renewable energies. How that is done can be studied in Horb and Bad Boll. The guideline “Energiesparen in Kirchengemeinden“ (Saving Energy in Parishes) of the EnergyAgency.NRW also contains valuable information and practical suggestions. The ecumenical project “Zukunft Einkaufen“ offers an already field-tested and approved management system for eco-fair purchases in institutions and parishes. It reveals how and where one can procure energy, office supplies, food as well as textiles according to ecological and fair criteria.

For Reverend Cornelia Füllkrug-Weitzel, Director of “Brot für die Welt,“ and Tilman Henke from the EED Board of Executive Directors there is no doubt that it is necessary to rethink procurement, because:

*“The call of the churches for fair and just economic activities and a sustainable way of living is not only addressed to the others but also to them.“*

Published by Diakonisches Werk der EKD e.V. for “Brot für die Welt“, Stafflenbergstraße 76, D-70184 Stuttgart, Germany, Phone: ++49 711/2159-568, E-Mail: [info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de](mailto:info@brot-fuer-die-welt.de), [www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de)  
Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst EED, Ulrich-von Hassell-Str. 76, D-53123 Bonn, Germany, Phone: ++49 228/8101-0, E-Mail: [eed@eed.de](mailto:eed@eed.de), [www.eed.de](http://www.eed.de)

Author: Monika Hoegen

Translation: Birgit Kolboske

Editorial Staff: Dr. Thorsten Göbel, Jörg Jenrich, Christine Lottje, Dr. Margarita Sigle

Layout: Jörg Jenrich

Responsible: Thomas Sandner

Art.Nr.: 129 501 300

04/2012

**The study „Ökofaire Beschaffungspraxis in Kirche und Diaconie“ (Eco-fair Procurement in Church and Diaconia) is available at [www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fachinformationen/](http://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fachinformationen/) in German language.**