

10 March 2006

Dear Max,

Thank you for the information on the British Buy Nothing Day initiative you sent me last week. Although I quite agree with the ideas behind it, such as heightened consumer awareness, stronger emphasis on fair trade and more reasonable environmental policies on behalf of the big supermarket chains, I still believe that a single Buy Nothing Day won't have that great an impact on either consumer behaviour or companies' attitudes.

Keeping yourself from spending money on consumer goods may sound like a radical measure, but what good will it do if you hit the shops the next day to compensate for what you missed? Buy Nothing Day will remain a superficial, symbolic act, nothing but an activist carnival unless it moves people to change their consumer habits, which, in my opinion, is highly unlikely.

It may be easy to refrain from spending money temporarily, as part of an excited crowd, and feel good about yourself but it is much harder to act as a responsible consumer in everyday life. So I think that rather than dressing up as a "shopping sheep" for one single day I will concentrate on buying regional, organic products at stores that obey the rules of fairness and environmental concern for the rest of the year.

Best wishes,

Maria