Shivani Reddy, 34, is a policy manager at the Fairtrade Foundation. She lives on her own in Sydenham, south London. In 2011, while working for a sustainable development consultancy, I was sent on a trip to Bangladesh. There, I met a 13-year-old girl who had lost an arm working in a garment factory. She had no family, no money and she could no longer work. She would have been on the street had it not been for a local activist who took her in. Knowing this was, and still is, the reality for millions of people producing the clothes we wear in the UK had a huge effect on me. Now, at the Fairtrade Foundation, I fight this kind of injustice, to get fairer pay and conditions for producers of food, flowers and cotton in the developing world.

I wake up at 7am, shower and put on jeans and a jumper if I’m going to the office or a suit if I have a meeting at Westminster. I make a hot water with lemon, and eat porridge while listening to Radio 2.

I take the train to Whitechapel then walk 20 minutes to our office in Tower Hill. As soon as I arrive at 9am, I make myself an espresso, then read through a list of the ministers who are speaking in Parliament that day and what issues are up for debate. I’ll also look at our media round-up to check what coverage Fairtrade has had in the press and online.

As a policy manager, my job is to persuade governments and businesses to pass legislation or invest in initiatives that will improve conditions for farmers in developing countries such as Ethiopia and Bolivia. I have to be proactive, so I keep an eye out for opportunities to put Fairtrade on the agenda. I might spend the morning commissioning a report that highlights the plight of our producers, many of whom depend on farming as their main source of income and work tirelessly seven days a week. Recently, I managed a big report about gender equality in Kenya, India, the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic. While women do almost as much of the planting, picking and harvesting as the men, they’re often not able to take on leadership roles as they’re expected to go home and care for the children. In many of these countries women are not even allowed to have land registered in their name. We’ll use the findings to make recommendations to local governments or businesses on how they can support women working in their supply chains.

I break for lunch at 1pm. I make a big batch of noodles or lentils on a Sunday, which I’ll bring into work over the week. I generally eat at my desk, although I’m trying my hardest to take proper breaks.

To do my job I need to be a jack-of-all-trades. As well as managing research projects and talking to producers, I also organise events in Parliament. Recently, I arranged for a sugar cane farmer from Malawi to speak to MPs from all parties. He explained how, before Fairtrade gave workers a fair wage and money to reinvest into their farms, people had to walk six miles to get fresh water. Now, because of the extra income, they’ve built wells nearby, meaning he could feed his children and had fresh water – simple things we take for granted.

The best part of my job is meeting the farmers. I don’t get to do it as much as I’d like but I’m planning to visit banana growers in the Caribbean later this year. It’s a humbling experience to see how farmers’ lives have been transformed by Fairtrade. While it has paved the way for fairer trading, there’s still a lot to do to ensure global trade works for the people who grow the food we buy.

I leave work at 6pm. If I’m at home, I’ll make pasta or buy some dhal and eat it watching TV. Where possible, I buy Fairtrade food and drink – bananas, coffee, tea, spices and wine. But it’s also important to support UK farmers, so I buy locally produced bread, eggs and tomatoes. Otherwise, I’m always looking for new places to eat with friends, but Brindisa and Dishoom are old favourites. I’ll usually head to bed at 11pm.

fairtrade.org.uk

**SHIVANI REDDY**
Fairtrade Foundation Policy Manager

**PLAN B: ACTRESS**

If I didn’t work as a policy manager, I’d probably pursue a career in the performing arts. I was recently involved with a local theatre group, in the chorus of a musical called *Curtains*. I’ve always been drawn to the arts – I like the idea of being able to have fun and pretending I’m somebody else for a while.