



Call for Tender

Sustainable Agriculture under Fairtrade Terms

12th May 2021

1. Context and background

Fairtrade is an alternative approach to conventional trade and is based on a partnership between small producers and consumers. When small producers can sell on Fairtrade terms, it provides them with a better deal and improved terms of trade. Fairtrade's vision is **a world in which all producers can enjoy secure and sustainable livelihoods, fulfil their potential and decide on their future**. Fairtrade therefore works to provide small farmers from producing countries with fairer trade conditions that allow them to combat poverty, strengthen their position and take control over their lives.

Historically, Fairtrade's standards and producer support has been associated with social and economic aspects of development. Along the years, Fairtrade standard system have been adding stricter criteria in recognition of the negative impact of agricultural production on the environment. These additions have addressed particular environmental risks – e.g. by increasing the number of prohibited pesticides and rejecting the use of GMOs – nonetheless, conventional agriculture has not been questioned per se.

While Fairtrade standards & capacity building activities have addressed more agricultural and environmental aspects, the three continental Fairtrade Producer Networks are continuing to be engaged in supporting producers to increase their climate resilience.

At the same time, new concepts have emerged in recent years, providing wider comprehension on sustainable agriculture. As such, the interlinks between agriculture, environment and climate change, on the one side, with social development on the other (aka Living Income – LI –, Living Wage – LW – and Human & Environmental Right Due Diligence –HERDD–) and economic viability as third dimension, are fundamental for Fairtrade's mission and vision.

However, in the Fairtrade system there has not been a more systematic assessment nor an internal debate, with the goal of building a more accentuated Fairtrade's policy position on sustainable agriculture.

Fairtrade lacks a reference on what exactly it understands as sustainable agriculture, and is repeatedly struggling to agree whether or not it can support calls, initiatives, programs etc. calling for a more sustainable approach to agriculture, in light of the need to fight e.g. deforestation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and other concerning negative trends.

At the same time the international debate on sustainable agricultural approaches, such as agro-ecology, organic, permaculture, agro-ecological intensification, climate smart agriculture or the many other practices ways is advancing.



Moreover, closing in political frameworks – e.g. in the UK, the EU and its member states - such as new or upcoming laws on deforestation-free supply chains, on HERDD, looming carbon-taxation, need to be taken into consideration as defining external conditions, under which Fairtrade has to operate.

Considering the above factors there is a growing need to conceptualize Fairtrade’s perspective on sustainability in agricultural production which is predominantly but not exclusively characterized by small holder production.

2. Purpose of the consultancy

The new Fairtrade Strategy 2021-26 provides a clear mandate to develop this position paper:

Fairtrade aspires to become a hub for knowledge sharing on agriculture²: “...Fairtrade will enter into strategic partnerships to create a clear model for sustainable agriculture differentiated by region and product, harvesting the knowledge and best practice across contexts... This strategy calls for building producer resilience and developing a producer-led model for sustainable agriculture that focuses on both adaptation and mitigation”.

Fairtrade ambitions to be a leading scheme in the Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) sector and to position itself as thought leader in sustainability debates. Hence Fairtrade needs to develop a clear definition and approach of how sustainability is understood not only in social and economic terms but also in regard to the environment and climate. In Fairtrade’s context of mostly agricultural production, sustainability can be best supported by sustainable agriculture.

By providing clarity on Fairtrade’s position towards sustainable agriculture, our programmatic and advocacy work would be better able to guide internal operations in other fields such as monitoring, evaluation and learning, producer support partnership building and, strategic alliances for policy influencing. This positioning is also key to improve our business development work and relations with economic actors.

In this sense, the commission of this consultancy aims to contribute strengthening Fairtrade’s advocacy work by providing guidance and perspective for decision making to take positions towards international policies, corporate sustainability schemes and other corporate responsibility projects, coalitions and external positions.

3. Goals and expected outcomes

The ultimate goal of this project is to define a policy position on Sustainable Agriculture in context of a Fairtrade certified production. In order to achieve this goal, Fairtrade International is commissioning a consultancy to help concretize Fairtrade’s perspective of sustainable agriculture.

¹ Fairtrade International, December 2020: FAIRTRADE GLOBAL STRATEGY 2021-2025

In that sense, it is expected that the consultancy delivers a report with robust arguments, conclusion and recommendations for a policy position. The final deliverable is expected to cover:

- Review of the most important existing literature² on sustainable agriculture practices, as far as relevant for Fairtrade regions of work (mainly tropical geographical zones)
- Review the former position papers and documents that were used or published by the system to define its vision of sustainable agriculture.
- Document existing sustainable agriculture practices and frame them under Fairtrade terms, its vision, mission and theory of change
- Document unsustainable agricultural practices that cannot be accepted by Fairtrade or that contradicts its mission, vision and theory of change.
- Reference national and international laws that refer to Fair Trade³ and suggest boundaries with regards to agricultural developments.
- Identify options for and priorities of partnering with international organizations and movements that promotes sustainable agriculture.
- Provide deeper understand among trade-offs with climate change as a way to increase resilience of smallholder farmers and their capacity to act in the markets
- Suggest a glossary and terminology to be adopted by Fairtrade in order to be understood in policy debate and equally by commercial partners as well as Fairtrade producers
- Criteria to assess sustainable agricultural practices based on: (1) Farmer's empowerment, (2) cultural acceptance, (3) gender equity, (4) climate resilience, and (5) environmental benefits.
- Options and recommendation while incorporating new or revise existing criteria during standard setting, capacity building, training & programmatic work, and Fairtrade price/premiums setting.
- Particular attention to products categorized as globally led producer (Coffee, Cocoa, Bananas, Sugar, Flowers & Plants).

4. Methodology

This study will have four phases.

The first phase of the study will use desk-based research to analyze literature on sustainable agriculture. Most of this exploration will touch around concepts of sustainable agriculture such as agroecology, permaculture, agroforestry, climate-friendly farming, organic, conservation and agro-industrial agriculture, inter alia.⁴ It is to be considered that a large part of Fairtrade products is certified organic as well.

² Particular attention will be paid to that literature mostly used by commercial partners or applied by producer organizations and international development agencies, such as UICN, FAO and UNEP.

³ E.g. the French Fair Trade law, <https://www.ethiquable.coop/page-rubrique-qui-somme-nous/commerce-equitable-loi-reglementation-france>

⁴ For a wider classification see Oberč, B.P. & Arroyo Schnell, A. (2020). Approaches to sustainable agriculture. Exploring the pathways towards the future of farming. Brussels, Belgium: IUCN EURO.



The second phase will consist in contrasting the literature revision with the Fairtrade strategy towards 2026 and its historical responsibility vis-à-vis with producers in the global south. For that purpose, the consultant will identify agricultural approaches practiced by members/the workforce of Fairtrade-certified producer organizations

The third phase will be to characterize sustainable agricultural practices along economic, sociocultural and, environmental sustainability criteria. Potential criteria could e.g. be:

- Ecological/social/cultural/economic dimensions and impacts of conventional, organic and other agricultural practices applied by members of Fairtrade POs
- Dependency on external inputs (fertilizers, pesticides, fuel, hired labour) agricultural approaches practiced by members of Fairtrade POs
- Biodiversity impact of agricultural approaches practiced by members of Fairtrade POs
- Impact on soil fertility and water retention capacity of agricultural approaches practiced by members of Fairtrade POs
- Economic viability of agricultural approaches practiced by members of Fairtrade POs, particular attention to benchmarks of Living Income and Living Wage
- Cultural importance of agricultural approaches practiced by members of Fairtrade POs, namely in indigenous communities

The fourth phase will involve selecting scientific papers to extract key recommendations, principles and structures to serve as foundations for Fairtrade's policy paper on Sustainable Agriculture under Fairtrade terms.

The consultancy's findings will be presented by the consultant team to a select working group conformed by members of Fairtrade International (GPPP, Standard Unit, External Relations), FLOCERT, National Fairtrade Organizations and Producer Networks.

The consultant team will provide a schedule indicating a moment when preliminary findings and recommendations will be discussed, same as when it is expected that respective Fairtrade working groups have to provide inputs and, a moment to discuss the final findings before completing the deliverables. Finally, the consultant team will conclude and align the product specific results in a short summary/synopsis.

5. Geographic Scope of the Study

At the end of 2020 there were approximately 1800 producer organizations holding Fairtrade certification in more than 70 countries across three regions, namely Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East, and Asia and the Pacific. Due to travel restrictions, propelling from the global Covid-19 pandemic, no international travelling is foreseen. Nonetheless, the consultancy team will be capable to request statistics collected by Fairtrade's system – e.g. CODImpact, FLOCERT data based, FairLens – down to the level that the process respects privacy and follows the general norms of GDPR.



6. Research Team Selection Criteria

The project will be awarded to a research team meeting the following criteria:

Essential

- Fluency in Spanish and English both written and spoken,
- Experience in desk research related to sustainable agricultural production, policy papers and build advocacy plans,
- Scientific background on tropical agriculture, climate change, social compliance, HERDD and sustainable development,
- Research experience or strong understanding of producer livelihoods and/or certification systems,
- Ability to present data concisely and clearly,
- Demonstrable policy on research ethics, and a willingness to adhere to Fairtrade research and ethics policies,
- Demonstrated understanding of Fairtrade principles, key tools and approaches, including the Fairtrade Strategy, Theory of Change, standards and producer support, and Fairtrade structures

Highly Desirable

- As additional language requirements may emerge depending on the cases selected, fluency in French (and perhaps German) would be advantageous,
- Existing research experience, research networks, and partnerships in all of the three Fairtrade regions (Latin America, Africa, Asia & Pacific),
- Demonstrated experiences in similar tasks,
- Research experience with gender issues, in particular in the context of agriculture

7. Financial aspects

Consultancy fee: Please note that the offer submitted should include a mandatory 19% VAT payable in Germany (as this is where Fairtrade is headquartered).

Other expenses: details are to be specified and agreed upon between Fairtrade International and the contracted consultant.

The study is commissioned by Fairtrade International, under a contract project with the European Commission to strengthening Fairtrade's Policy & Advocacy work.

8. Expected Deliverables

The expected deliverables to be submitted to Fairtrade will be:

- Brief report of literature review with list of relevant papers & publications.
- A document that may not exceed 50 pages, including recommendations, findings and, principles, as well as a draft policy paper on Sustainable Agriculture under Fairtrade terms.



- A PowerPoint presentation summarizing the main findings and key recommendations, and presentation of the same to relevant Fairtrade stakeholder.
- All raw data collected through the research process.

9. Eligibility

The consultancy (or company) should be based in the European Union or in a developing country according to EU regulations. Please check:

<https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/prag/document.do?nodeNumber=2.13 - Annex 2a>

10. Working Language

The working language in Fairtrade International is English and reports must be written in English.

11. Additional notes on visibility

Deliverables for this project need to follow EU visibility rules. An annex listing all these visibility rules is available upon request, but are summarized as ensuring that the European Union is visibly recognized as the donor in all workshops, publications, and communications.

12. Confidentiality and ownership

All information gathered and documents produced in the course of the assignment are the property of Fairtrade International. Consultants have to comply with confidentiality regulations.

13. Application Process

If you are interested in being considered for this tender, please send a short proposal (5-10 pages max) detailing (1) how your research team meets the selection criteria (including links to past relevant work) (2) describing the approach you would take to the research, (3) a project timeline, and (4) a budget. Please include your team's CVs as an appendix (not counted towards the page limit).

Call published: **12th May 2021**

Tender Deadline: **04th June 2021**

We aim to have this research started by July 2021 and ending, with all outputs delivered, no later than November 2021. Early findings should be available in Q4 2021. All deliverables and final invoice should be submitted not later than 15th December 2021.

Please send your application to the following email address sustainableagriculture@fairtrade.net.