

Invitation to Tender

Research Consultancy

Fairtrade International e.V.

Project: Fairtrade COVID-19 Emergency Initiatives

**Funded by the federal ministry for economic cooperation and
development (BMZ)**

Fairtrade International is seeking expressions of interest from qualified consultants or research teams to undertake an evaluative study on the resilience of Fairtrade certified producer organisation to tackle shocks and stresses, focusing on the COVID19 Pandemic as a case study.

Tenders will be received, evaluated, and decided upon by Fairtrade International e.V.,
Bonner Talweg 177, 53129 Bonn, Germany

This is a public tender open to all interested and eligible applicants.

SUBMISSION METHOD

Applications must be received by Fairtrade International e.V. through the following email address:

tenders@fairtrade.net

Emails must bear the following subject title: COVID19 Fairtrade Research Consultancy

Deadline for submission: 7 March 2021

The evaluation will be conducted by an evaluation committee who will initiate the process on the 8th of March 2021 with shortlisted candidates to be informed no later than the 19 March 2021

Introduction

Fairtrade is an alternative approach to conventional trade and is based on a partnership between producers and consumers. When farmers can sell on Fairtrade terms, it provides them with a better deal and improved terms of trade. To achieve its goals and bring about change Fairtrade has several types of interventions:

- Set of **standards and tools**, which make up the 'rules' for fair trading practices and Fairtrade engagement, including, amongst others, Standards prescribing environmentally, socially and economically sustainable production practices, and a Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premium for producers.
- Set of **strategies and policies** which enable engagement with Fairtrade, among its member organisations, strategic partners and other external stakeholders.
- Fairtrade engagement on the ground – e.g. **producer programmes, capacity building, technical support and projects**.
- Fairtrade's **advocacy** work to tackle systemic change to support smallholder producers and workers' rights and living income, living wages in global value chains.

The COVID19 pandemic is having an unprecedented impact on farmers and agricultural workers. The pandemic impacts their health and wellbeing. It also affects their economic sustainability due to disruptions in supply chains.

Smallholder farmers and farm workers, including Fairtrade farmers, sourcing global food and clothing supply chains are at high risk of illness and mortality from COVID19. In the 75 countries where Fairtrade producer organisations are located, government authorities and producers face complex and far-reaching decisions, seeking to balance crucial public health measures and maintaining business continuity and local employment.

Fairtrade and its member organisations have worked hard over the last 25 years to establish sustainable trade relations and responsible supply chains with brands and traders. The COVID19 crisis has caused an unprecedented impact on Fairtrade supply chains and is threatening to turn back much of the progress that was very hard to achieve. In some sectors, Fairtrade producer organisations have already seen a rapid and severe drop in orders or have not been able to export due to restrictions of movement and lacking freight options. Production costs have risen due to prevention measures. In some regions and for certain products, seeds were not available for sowing at the right time and harvests could not be brought in fully due to lack of available labour given lockdown restrictions.

While on the one hand, a surge in job losses and/or income amongst groups who were already vulnerable is resulting in increased poverty. On the other hand, the pandemic has also brought to light the opportunity to 'witness' the real impact of Fairtrade certified producer organisations and to document and study whether being part of the Fairtrade system has enabled these organisations to better respond to the crisis and support action at household, producer organisation and wider community level to prevent the spread of the virus and tackle its negative economic impacts.

The Fairtrade response to COVID19

- 1) In response to the COVID19 crisis, Fairtrade has granted higher flexibility for the use of the **Fairtrade Premium funds** and many Fairtrade certified producer organisations have invested some of their Fairtrade Premium funds in preparedness and mitigation measures.¹

¹<https://www.fairtrade.net/news/new-guidance-from-fairtrade-boosts-action-to-protect-farmers-and-workers-during-covid-19-pandemic>; <https://www.fairtrade.net/about/fairtradetogether-covid-19-updates>

For example:

- Fairtrade certified tea estates in Asia have been proactive with regards to introducing health and safety measures, through the provision of face masks, sanitizer and training on handwashing and physical distancing for workers.
 - In Vietnam, Fairtrade certified Robusta coffee producer Eatu Fair Services and Agricultural Co-operative has carried out an awareness training to educate their farmers on the safety and health precautions to be observed during the pandemic. The Fairtrade Premium supported the creation of informative posters that are displayed in and around the surrounding areas.
 - In Tanzania, Fairtrade certified producer KADERES is collaborating with Red Cross Tanzania to use community radio to raise awareness among farmers of COVID19 causes, symptoms and prevention measures.
 - In Latin America / Caribbean, 48% of 242 producer organisations surveyed in May 2020 stated to have used the Fairtrade Premium funds for relief and emergency measures.
- 2) **Fairtrade Relief & Economic Recovery Funds:** Given the scale of the COVID19 crisis, the Fairtrade Premium funds alone cannot address the pressing needs and mid to long-term work of supporting the business continuity of supply chains and supporting further resilience building within producer organisations. Therefore, Fairtrade has secured internal and external funds from different partners across the system to support Fairtrade producers through immediate emergency and relief measures as well as economic recovery measures. These funds are being managed and distributed to the producer organisations by the Fairtrade Producer Networks.²
- 3) **Advocating for Producer's needs:** Fairtrade member organisations have called for greater support to smallholder producer organisations to ensure that COVID19 response plans prioritise 'Building Back Fairer'. Included in Fairtrade's advocacy targeted stakeholders are: G20 nations³, donors, policy makers and the private sector.⁴

1. Research aim

The research should build on previous research studies commissioned by Fairtrade International. These include: "[5 years later – Fairtrade's contribution to rural development](#)" and "[Impact of Fairtrade on Poverty Reduction through Rural Development](#)" (CEval 2013) and forthcoming work aligning with the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's [Sustainability Assessment of Food and Agriculture \(SAFA\) systems indicators for resilience](#) (covering Economic, Social, Environmental and Governance indicators).

The overall aim of the research is to assess whether and how being Fairtrade certified contributes to the resilience⁵ of Fairtrade members, using the COVID19 pandemic as a case study to understand the impact

² <https://www.fairtrade.net/news/fairtrade-partnerships-secure-more-than-15-million-in-covid-19-relief-and-recovery-funding-for-producers>

Fairtrade Africa Guideline for Applications: https://fairtradeafrica.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Fairtrade-Africa-Producer-Relief-Fund_Application-Guidelines.pdf; CLAC Relief Fund Information and Application: <http://clac-comerciojusto.org/en/fondo-de-alivio/>

³ <https://www.fairtrade.net/news/-call-for-g20-support-for-developing-country-producers-fight-covid-19>

⁴ <https://fairtrade-advocacy.org/ftao-publications/build-back-fairer/>

⁵ Fairtrade International's Theory of Change includes the following indicators for measuring producer resilience: 1. "good governance" (i.e. organizational development), 2. "economic resilience" (i.e. FT Minimum Price, FT Premium, participatory decision-making on investments, etc), 3. "environmental integrity" (Fairtrade standards prescribing biodiversity), and "4. Social Well-being" (i.e. participation, no discrimination, gender equality, child & forced labour, workers' rights, living income, education & capacity building, investments in these areas).

of the pandemic on Fairtrade certified producer organisations, and document and learn from their coping mechanisms, enabled by Fairtrade's interventions. In particular, the research should:

- 1) Assess whether and how producer organisations have benefitted from being Fairtrade certified and whether/how this enables them to better respond to shocks and stresses. This includes identifying key factors that create a positive impact for producers' livelihoods and resilience. In particular, identifying the role Fairtrade standards have in: driving inclusive governance/ strengthened governance structures, democratic and transparent decision making and allocation of resources generated from the Fairtrade Premium, increased economic resilience and social well-being, inclusive and transparent action planning as part of the development plan criteria, community solidarity, among others.
- 2) Assess whether and how new additional resources generated for COVID19 relief and economic recovery have strengthened producer organisations to tackle future shocks and stresses.
- 3) Assess whether and how the support producer organisations have received from the Fairtrade Producer Networks, including awareness raising materials (e.g. CLAC/FTA/NAPP IEC materials, webinars, WhatsApp Public Service Announcements etc) have contributed to prevention and protection from the spread of COVID19.
- 4) Assess whether and how the support provided by Fairtrade traders and buyers to producer organisations in response to the pandemic demonstrates the value of Fairtrade supply chains and the long term commitment of Fairtrade certified sourcing relationships.

2. Research hypothesis and research questions

The research hypothesis is that:

- Producer organisations are more resilient to shocks and stresses (such as the COVID19 pandemic) due to the benefits gained from being Fairtrade certified, in particular:
 - Abiding to Fairtrade standards that promote inclusive and transparent decision making - e.g. strong democratic governance & decision making structures, advanced organisational development levels, etc
 - Access to Fairtrade Premium funds that enables investment in members and communities' priorities and urgent needs
 - Secured commercial relations that provide better terms of trade – e.g. long-term sourcing commitments and mitigation of unfair trading practices such as “cut and run”
 - Technical support from Fairtrade Producer networks including rapid and relevant/ accessible COVID19 prevention awareness raising messaging – e.g. IEC materials, WhatsApp messages, videos, radio programmes, other
 - Access to resources from the Fairtrade system and partner organisation including through the Fairtrade COVID19 Relief and Economic Recovery Funds and donor funded projects

Research questions, to investigate the hypothesis, should be refined during the inception phase of the research, but could include:

Proposed main research question:

How does being Fairtrade certified contribute to the resilience of Fairtrade members (ensuring sex-and-age disaggregated analysis)?

Proposed Sub-questions:

- 1 What is the impact of the pandemic on Fairtrade certified producer organisations?

- 2 What are the key benefits for Fairtrade members deriving from being Fairtrade certified?
- 3 How have additional resources generated by Fairtrade for COVID 19 relief and economic recovery affected the ability of Producer Organisations to tackle future shocks and stresses?
- 4 How have Producer Organisations been supported by the Fairtrade producer networks in relation to COVID19?
- 5 To what extent is the support provided by traders and buyers to Producer Organisations a result of the value of Fairtrade supply chains and the long term commitment of Fairtrade certified sourcing relationships?
- 6 To what extent have Fairtrade's relief and economic recovery funds enabled producers to address their needs in terms of human health, safety and well-being and decent/resilient livelihoods?

3. Scope of Work

Building on prior work undertaken by CEval in 2013/18 assessing the impact of Fairtrade on poverty reduction, as well as on monitoring data collected for current Fairtrade COVID19 response projects, this study focuses on the COVID19 pandemic as a case study. The purpose is to generate practical evidence and learnings to inform the wider work of Fairtrade in making trade fair and enabling producer organisation to achieve sustainable livelihoods in an increasingly volatile operating environment – be it the climate crisis or COVID19 and future pandemics.

The study is expected to cover case studies in the 3 different Fairtrade regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific). Specific countries/ producer organisations need to be selected, using an appropriate sampling method, as case studies in consultation with Fairtrade International and the Producer Networks. The research should also use an innovative method for (remote) data collection and for counterfactuals to control for results, given the challenges caused by COVID19, such as lockdowns and travel restrictions.

4. Proposed Methodology

The study will use desk-based research to analyse existing data available within Fairtrade as well as externally (a concise literature review), including the review of existing monitoring data and materials on Fairtrade's COVID19 relief and economic recovery interventions. This includes: CLAC's producer needs assessment monthly survey carried out from May to September 2010, relevant donor funded project reports and other existing [reports](#).

Fairtrade welcomes proposals from research teams with innovative approaches for this assessment. Our expectation is that the researchers will adopt a mixed method approach to ensure robust findings, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods to ensure that data collected can be communicated, explained and contextualized. The use of participatory approaches is expected to contribute to a richer picture and ensure involvement of different stakeholders, including youth and women producers, groups of different ages, product categories and geographic locations.

The research team shall, using an appropriate sampling method, select at least 6 case studies (2 per region covering Fairtrade's different product categories – e.g. coffee, cocoa, banana, other). The case studies should be used to assess the producer organisations' resilience to COVID19. Survey and/or interviews of producer organisations as well as other stakeholders (wider community members, traders/buyers) should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of Fairtrade support to producers. It is expected that this includes interviews and focus group discussions with household members of different ages and gender, as well as other stakeholders from Fairtrade International, NGOs, local government bodies/service providers, Producer Networks and Producer Organisations.

In addition, surveys and/or remote interviews with Fairtrade producer network staff, commercial partners and other relevant stakeholders involved in supporting the Fairtrade system during the COVID19 response are to be included.

The research team shall, in the research proposal explain how it will deal with the counterfactual situation in each research context, to maximize comparability between the cases, and to the non-Fairtrade certified contexts (with the overall focus being on generating learnings from and for Fairtrade certified organizations). In order to be able to compare the research offers received, we also expect quantitative information on sample sizes in the research proposal, e.g. the number of qualitative interviews (including focus group discussions) and quantitative surveys that is foreseen to be covered in this study.

5. Timelines

Activity	Approximate Timeline
Research duration	April/May 2021- July/August 2022
Preparation phase: - literature review - finalisation of research plan, including research questions, methodology and sampling frame - deliverable: Inception report	April - May 2021
Develop Data collections tools (including virtual data collection options due to COVID19 lockdown) and a detailed sampling plan (with selected Producer Organisations names) based on the agreed detailed research plan	June 2021
Primary data collection: COVID19 travel lockdown restrictions permitting, whereby detailed timelines have to be agreed with each of the Fairtrade Producer Networks and selected Producer Organisations upon their agreement to take part in the study.	July- October/November 2021 2021
Data analysis and draft of findings	October/November 2021-December 2021
Producer data validation and learning workshops: These are expected to validate the data at Producer Organisation level to assure a correct understanding and provide Producer Organisations with the opportunity to respond to research findings. The learning workshops should allow for discussions around key findings and learnings at Producer Organisations level to enable local stakeholders to formulate actions to address findings and build on the report for a continuous	quarter 1 of 2022 (validation) – quarter 2 (learning workshops), 2022

improvement of their work in the field of producer organisation strengthening and making trade fair.	
Report and other outputs (e.g. presentations) development, submission of draft reports with at least 2 3-week review rounds for both the first draft and the final draft report	quarter 2 and 3 2022.
Presentation of results at Fairtrade International's internal Working Group meetings 2022	quarter 3 2022

6. Expected outputs

The expected project outputs to be submitted to Fairtrade International are:

1. Inception report including research plan, research ethics policy and protocols (agreed by Fairtrade in advance of fieldwork).
2. Validation and learning workshop reports from the field where the data collection takes place.
3. Back to office report (to be shared with the project team members) after each fieldwork.
4. Monthly one-page progress report.
5. Draft report with executive summary, introduction, methodology, literature review, analysis/discussion, findings, recommendations and conclusion.
6. Final research report that is a good balance of narrative explanation and data representation through clear graphs and tables; innovative representation of qualitative data. The report should follow a structure agreed between the research team and Fairtrade International meeting the objectives of the research and answering the guiding research questions that have been articulated in this ToR.
7. A presentation at internal Working Groups and Fairtrade's leadership team in Bonn/virtually (tbc) summarizing the main findings and key recommendations.
8. Photographs generated from the field research to include in external communications/reports (these must follow Fairtrade guidelines, Protection Policy and consent forms).
9. All raw data collected through the research process.
10. Summary report of research findings and PowerPoint for external audience.

6.1 Summary of Deliverables and expected timeline

Deliverables	Approximate Due Date
Inception Report: with a refined methodology and research questions, milestones, timelines, Research ethics and protocols (agreed by Fairtrade in advance of fieldwork). etc. To be approved by Fairtrade International	May 2021
Interim report: providing an overview of the literature review and specifying the contribution of this research	June 2021

Revision of research plan/inception report based on findings in the literature review if needed	
One-page monthly Progress Report	Monthly
Draft report with executive summary, introduction, methodology, literature review, analysis/discussion, findings, conclusion The draft report is subject to 2 rounds of review by Fairtrade International	Quarter 2 and 3 2022
Final report (maximum 50-75 pages, excluding appendices) including: an executive summary (max 3 pages), description of methodology, data analysis, results and recommendations	Quarter 3 2022
A shortened, professionally edited and designed version of the report of approximately 10 pages summarizing the key findings for external use	Quarter 3 2022
Two presentations of the methods and results in PowerPoint, presented at Fairtrade International in Bonn (for internal working groups and Fairtrade's leadership and key stakeholders).	Quarter 3 2022

7. Intended audience

The report will inform the work of Fairtrade International, Producer Networks and national Fairtrade Organisations. In addition, to Fairtrade internal stakeholders, the report is also intended for other practitioners, donors and academics, amongst others. Fairtrade foresees, but does not guarantee, external publication of the study results.

8. Required profile of the research consultancy

The research assignment will be awarded to a research team that can meet the following criteria:

Essential:

- Demonstrable experience in understanding global value chains, smallholder producers and hired labour organisations research (including experience of sex and age disaggregated analysis), producer/cooperative management systems, as well as thorough knowledge of relevant international, national trading and development context, sustainable rural development, and the work of Voluntary Sustainability Schemes.
- Demonstrable knowledge of research around resilience in the sustainable agricultural sector, focusing on smallholder farmer organisation.
- Understanding of Fairtrade principles, key tools and approaches, including the Fairtrade Theory of Change, standards, certification, producer support, programmatic and advocacy interventions and its application in at least one country
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- Fluency in English and Spanish both written and spoken. Additional language requirements may emerge from selected organizations. Hence, the organization must have strong networks in all three regions (Latin America and the Caribbean, African and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific)
- Existing research experience, either directly or through research networks and partnerships in the three regions
- Focus on evaluation techniques and rights-based participatory research methods
- Ability to present data concisely and clearly
- Demonstrable policy on research ethics and willingness to abide by EU GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation)
- Willingness to abide with relevant Fairtrade policies, including ethics policy, protection policy.

Desirable

- Experience of using remote data collection methodology
- Knowledge of FAO SAFA indicators or comparable, relevant indicators
- Understanding of the Fairtrade system and its membership model

The services provided under this tender are part of a BMZ-funded project. Accordingly, this tender process follows BMZ regulation on procurement by grant Beneficiaries in the context of BMZ funded external actions.

9. Budget

The available budget for this study is approximately EUR135,000, inclusive of 19% VAT. 19% VAT is applicable to all organizations from outside Germany. Offers without 19% VAT (on all costs) will not be considered.

This implies that the net budget shall not exceed EUR109,000.

9.1. Payment terms

Fairtrade International e.V. effects payment through normal banking channels in Euros, within 30 days against invoice.

Tranches	Deliverable
20%	Paid upon signing of contract
20%	Paid upon receipt of finalised inception report
30%	Paid upon receipt of draft research report
30%	Paid upon final reports and submission of all deliverables

10. Application process

Interested parties are invited to send their research proposal, including budget breakdown, for this research study (preferably not exceeding 5 pages) as well as the below listed accompanying documents to tenders@fairtrade.net. The deadline for submission is **7 March, 2021**.

Required documents:

- Research proposal including first thoughts on research questions and methodology etc (maximum of 5 pages)
- Detailed budget in Euro, inclusive of 19% VAT

- CVs of all members of the research team and partners (if applicable) in relevant countries where Fairtrade operates, with a list of publications and including a description of foreseen roles and responsibilities for each involved partner
- Evidence of writing skills through the submission of at least 1 recent report from the lead researcher (as the main author) responsible for composing the final reports
- At least 2 references from relevant previous research assignments

Successful applications will be shortlisted and invited for an interview, upon which a final decision will be made.

11. Evaluation

Fairtrade International e.V. will evaluate the offers received for this tender based on the following criteria and weighting:

Criteria	Weighting
Provision of all requested documents	Exclusion criterion – Tenders that miss any of the documents requested under point 12 may be excluded.
Quality of proposal	25%
Relevant experience and meeting of specifications e.g. expertise in Fairtrade global value chains	50%
Price	25%

The tender opening ceremony will take place on the 8th of March 2021, through an online meeting platform. A tender committee will manage the event and after the opening of all tenders received within the deadline, the committee will evaluate their content behind closed doors. Candidates will be shortlisted and will be invited to an interview, after which the winning candidate will be selected.

Tender applicants will be informed via email about whether they are shortlisted for an interview, no later than 19 March 2021. Tenders who have not received an email by that date have not been considered successful.