

Results of the Survey for Producer Clients to Assess Their Satisfaction with Fairtrade Liaison Officer Producer Services

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Executive Summary

The survey was well accepted by the Fairtrade producer organizations of the three world regions: Africa/Middle East, Asia and Latin America/The Caribbean. A total of 274 companies/organizations participated in the survey; the return rate of 22.7% represents a valid data base for the results analysis.

The **first part** of the survey reveals interesting information about the location and size of the organizations, their certification status, their producer type set up according to the Fairtrade standards and the services they received on behalf of the Liaison Officers.

The majority of surveyed organizations (234) are already **certified**, only 29 have an applicant status and 8 have been de-certified. Regarding the **producer type set up** in Africa and Latin America the biggest group is represented by Small Producer Organizations followed by Hired Labour Companies; Contract Production plays an inferior role or is not present at all (in LA). In Asia Contract Production plays a bigger role but as much as Small Producer Organizations and Hired Labour Companies which both share the same part.

In terms of the **organization/ company size** the picture is quite diverse all over the regions, having in Latin America a clear dominance of small organizations with below 50 employees, in Africa the biggest number of responses comes from middle sized organizations of 101 to 500 employees; whereas in Asia most responses come from organizations with more than 1001 employees and a considerable number of organizations with 501-1000 employees.

Regarding the **role of the responding persons within the organization/company** a high number of management or administrative staff within the Small Producer Organizations has responded, followed by a considerable number of Board members from Africa and LA. In LA a surprisingly high number of workers contracted by Small Producer Organizations answered the questionnaire.

In Africa an outstanding number of responding persons from the Hired Labour Company setting has the role of Fairtrade Officer. It is remarkable that a good number of company owners of the Hired Labour Companies have responded the survey – for Asia this is true as well for the Contract Production setting.

Eight questions of the questionnaire deal with the **support services** the producer organizations and companies received on behalf of Fairtrade Officers. They show a clear picture of the importance of the Fairtrade Liaison Officers and their services:

A majority of 83 % of the surveyed would contact the Fairtrade Liaison Officer in case he/she needs a Fairtrade service and they also know how to get in touch. The **contact is quite frequent**: In 35% of the cases it is more than 5 times a year, 27 % have 2-3 times contact and still 19% have 3-5 times contact with the Liaison Officer. On the other side up to a fifth part of all organizations throughout the regions had only one time or less contact.

An overwhelming group (86 % - in Asia about 90%) of organizations have received support by the Liaison Officers. **Communication technology** plays an important role **for the delivery of the support service**: The form of the support provided is predominantly by Email (76%) and Telephone or Skype (60%). Workshops also play a considerable role mainly in form of meetings in offices (46%) and also of workshop setting on site. Workshops settings off site are the minority (10%).

The support is mostly initiated **by request** on the producers' side (almost 70 %, in Africa 77%) - at 55% the Liaison Officers offer the support to the producers.

Regarding the **kind of support services** the organizations received, an outstanding number of more than 80% of services are qualified as "Training on Fairtrade Standards", followed by the "Orientation on Fairtrade premium use" (67%), "Overcoming non compliances identified in a FLO Cert audit" (57%), "Training to board members/ organizational strengthening" (51%) and "Understanding and meeting the compliance criteria as defined by the auditing organization (FLO-Cert)" (47%).

The **second part** presents the assessment of the Fairtrade Liaison Officers along 16 pre-established statements that could be assessed with values between 0 (fully disagree) and 5 (fully agree) and one free text comment. The results concerning the general satisfaction level are rather homogenous among the regions with interesting variations between regions in some aspects.

In general the Liaison Officers received a very good feedback by the surveyed organizations which is reflected in the value almost always being higher than 4. Four out of five organisations are highly satisfied with the Liaison Officers; at the same level (83%) they highly value their timely reaction, and their services are considered as important for the organizations. Furthermore, these three statements are highly correlated with the overall satisfaction with the Liaison Officers. Additionally they are mostly (86%) regarded as competent and professional service providers.

The ability to speak the local language (82% of positive feedback) is not correlated at the same high level – indicating that respondents obviously do not expect that the FTLO is able to speak their language for being satisfied with his/her service (although high dissatisfaction and high satisfaction both mentioned more frequently in this item than in most other statements indicate a certain polarization in valuing the language aspect which will be commented in more detail when distinguishing respondents' answers by regions).

The only statement that received quite low satisfaction rates and could be interpreted as the critical or weak point is related to market opportunities: a considerable group of organizations (33%) expressed that the LO did not support them in seizing a market opportunity (and 28% were undecided).

In their free text comments respondents also gave more positive than negative feedback; but they also made some interesting suggestions for improving the services and trainings.

Taking a closer look at the negative feedback we found there is very little direct critique to the Liaison Officer, his/her knowledge, skills, abilities or attitudes. Two kinds of problems are outstanding which are inter-related: about 10 statements from Africa and Latin America do complain contact problems or a lack of information about who is the Liaison officer. And a similar number of statements suggest that the frequency of visits or the contact intensity or even the number of responsible Liaison Officers should be increased.