5 YEARS LATER: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY BY CEVAL

The CEval follow-up study from 2018 was able to collect data on fair trade that hadn’t been available before: the long-term rural development of small producer organisations and plantations.

Over a period of 5 years the researchers were able to prove that Fairtrade supports farmers by stabilising their economic situation and by raising awareness of environmentally friendly cultivation. The study also shows that climate change is a threat to small-scale farming.

METHODOLOGY:

The CEval research team chose a comparative design: Fairtrade producer organisations were contrasted against counterfactual setups. Findings were based primarily on qualitative data and participatory observations:

- 89 Focus Group Discussions
- 70 key informant interviews with representatives at management level
- 57 key informant interviews with community representatives
- 19 interviews with workers or farmer representatives
- 8 explorative interviews with national and international staff of Fairtrade
- 12 participatory observations

A new element of the follow up study is the integration of participatory observations with farmers and workers, to record ratings of their economic, social, and environmental perceptions.

fairetrade.net/impact-research.html

RESEARCH AREAS:

ECONOMIC
- INCOME
- INCOME DIVERSIFICATION
- ACCESS TO FINANCIAL SERVICES
- VULNERABILITY
- INFRASTRUCTURE

SOCIAL
- WORKERS’ RIGHTS
- EDUCATION
- GENDER EQUALITY
- HEALTH AND SAFETY
- PARTICIPATION

ENVIRONMENT
- RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
- SOIL AND WATER PROTECTION
- MAINTAINING BIODIVERSITY

6 CASE STUDIES ON 3 CONTINENTS

The case studies were chosen so that representative statements about typical producer organisations in the Fairtrade system could be made:

- **Plantations** are large operations with employees. Flower farms in Kenya and tea plantations in India were chosen.
- **Cooperatives** are democratic organisations of small scale farmers who work their own land. Banana and coffee cooperatives in Peru were chosen, in addition to a cocoa cooperative in Ghana.
- **Contract Producer Organisation** refers to small scale producers who are not yet organised in a cooperative, but who supply a long-term contractual partner. The Fairtrade case study analysed farmers in India who were about to transform their organisation into a cooperative.
FLOWERS IN KENYA

- After 5 years the Fairtrade-certified flower farm still invests the majority of its Fairtrade premium into education projects.
- Workers’ wages at the flower farm have increased and are above the national minimum wage. However, employees still find it difficult to cover their costs of living.
- Workers of the Fairtrade flower farm are well informed about their rights and the majority are union members. Employees value the influence of unions to improve industrial relations and workers’ rights.

COFFEE IN PERU

- In 2012/2013 the “La Roya” fungus destroyed 50-80% of the coffee plants in the research area and led to a significant amount of debt for the farmers.
- The Fairtrade cooperative was additionally weakened by a decrease in price on the coffee market, among other factors.
- The Fairtrade cooperative seems to overcome the crisis, though.
- Conventional producers suffered bigger economic harm, and migration to the cities has risen sharply. Many non-Fairtrade-certified cooperatives didn’t survive the crisis or disintegrated.
- Non-Fairtrade-certified producers increasingly used cultivation methods harmful to the environment.

BANANAS IN PERU

- Through Fairtrade, 2 of 4 Fairtrade cooperatives have developed into strong, resilient organisations.
- Cooperatives without Fairtrade certification lack the capacities to support their members in emergency situations. They rely on help from the authorities, which reaches them only sporadically.
- Fairtrade cooperatives are developing into important actors to kick-start rural development, and increasingly enter partnerships with other stakeholders.
- Children of Fairtrade producers strive for university degrees and turn away from agriculture.
- The effects of climate change are evident and will increasingly affect farmers’ harvests.

COTTON IN INDIA

- Within the last five years, the economic situation improved more for Fairtrade producers than for the comparison group.
- The Fairtrade-certified organisation dedicated itself to organic production from the beginning, which enabled higher prices for its members, and kept them independent from genetically modified seeds from multinational companies.
- Conventional producers complained about exploitation and price volatility when selling on local markets.
- They also stated that exploitative child labour is common throughout harvest season. This was not the case with the Fairtrade-certified producer organisation.
- The Fairtrade cooperative invests in improved water management.

TEA IN INDIA

Tea is the only case study without a non-Fairtrade-certified plantation as a comparison group. Due to political instability in the region and scepticism towards the researchers, it was impossible to find a counterfactual plantation with Fairtrade certification.

- The result of the case study confirms the well-known issue that pickers receive insufficient income because of legal frameworks and other factors. Fairtrade is not able to make a sufficient impact to address this.
- Participation and influence of tea workers in Fairtrade committees have increased further. Women are represented in equal numbers as men.

FAIRTRADE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

CONCLUSION