



FAIRTRADE
INTERNATIONAL



Study At-a-Glance

Evaluative study on the contributions of Fairtrade towards driving change in the Mauritian sugar cane sector

Introduction

Fairtrade commissioned **Agricane Consulting Ltd** to conduct an evaluation of the impacts of Fairtrade on the Mauritian sugar cane sector. In 2021, researchers collected data through mixed methods, comparing Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade producers. The study included:

- 15 key informant interviews
- 6 focus group discussions with 10 individuals per group
- 210 household surveys, as well as interviews with buyers of Fairtrade sugar

“The results of the impact assessment provided the reassurance that Fairtrade is a proven sustainability vehicle.”



Mr Chetanand Dookhony, Head of Compliance and Producers' Services, Mauritius Sugar Syndicate (MSS), (sole and non-profit exporter of Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade sugars)

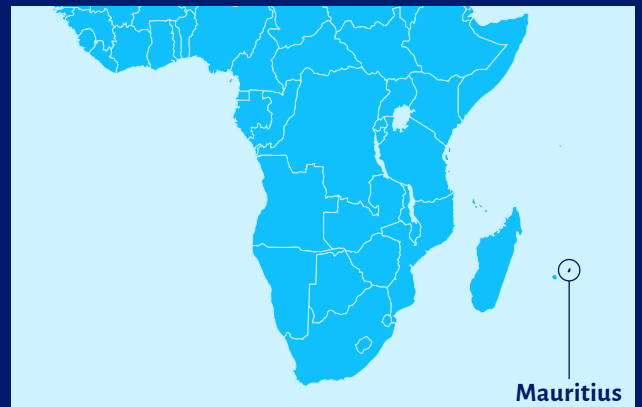
Fairtrade sugar cane producers in Mauritius (2021)

20
certified producer organisations

2,295
farmers

10,891
metric tonnes of sugar produced

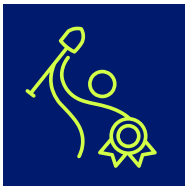
2,616
hectares under Fairtrade certified production
(on average 1.17 hectares/farmer)



Mauritius

Key study findings

Fairtrade interventions show positive impacts on economic, environmental, and social resilience and sustainability of sugar cane small-scale producer organisations and their members.



Fairtrade is recognised to have positively influenced the Mauritius sugar cane industry in multiple ways.

Industry stakeholders interviewed, including the Farmer Services Agency (FSA) extension officers, Mauritius Sugar Syndicate (MSS) non-profit sugar exporter, and the Cooperatives Division of the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, recognise that Fairtrade played a role in raising the awareness of climate change and the actions that can be taken by members of producer organisations to adapt and mitigate further negative environmental impacts. Furthermore, Fairtrade has encouraged millers and contractors working beyond the certified producer organisations to adopt better labour practices and management of chemicals, in line with the Fairtrade labour standards.



Where other stakeholders have been resource constrained, such as government agencies and the Mauritian Cane Sugar Authority, Fairtrade has provided an additional

boost to influence positive change among members of producer organisations, and as an additional source of financial and technical support. The Fairtrade Standards align closely to the agronomic and environmental standards pushed within the local sugar industry and are perceived by stakeholders to have enabled more rapid adoption of key practices among certified producer organisations. This in turn is enabling faster adoption across the island.



The Fairtrade Premium is seen as a vital injection of cash directly into farming communities, which has enabled small-scale farmers to keep farming sugar cane during challenging

times. The Premium plays a critical role as a “lifeline” for farmers and the sustainability of the industry. The Premium entices the producer organisation members to join Fairtrade, as a positive incentive and enables them to align their practices to the Fairtrade Standards. Related to productivity, subsidy of fertilisers and bio-fertilisers (75%), followed by provision of personal protective equipment and other field equipment (67%) were seen as among the most effective Fairtrade Premium uses.

97%

of Fairtrade farmers report more efficient use of fertiliser

99%

report less use of harmful chemicals



Fairtrade has acted as an accelerator for the adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), which improve productivity, environmental impact of operations, and resilience to

climatic shocks. The combined influence of the Fairtrade Standards, technical trainings, and Fairtrade Premium has enabled positive agriculture and environmental behaviour change across the certified producers. Over 80 percent of certified respondents report an understanding of integrated pest management. The survey also showed that certified producers are significantly more likely to have thought ahead and consider implementing strategies to adapt to climate change and they are significantly more optimistic about the future.



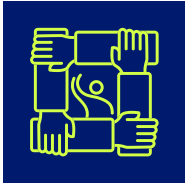
Fairtrade contributed to higher

yields. Fifty-six percent of the certified producer organisation members reported improved crop yields as a result of implementing Fairtrade practices, and

38 percent have experienced improved sugar content of their cane since becoming Fairtrade certified. However, the yield improvements are not reported by all farmers. Changes to rainfall patterns, droughts, labour shortages, and major spikes in input prices have outweighed the benefits of Fairtrade for some farmers. The study recommends the need for an industry-wide small-scale producer mechanisation and labour transition plan based on environmental and economic shocks.

56%

of the certified producer organisation members reported improved crop yields as a result of implementing Fairtrade practices



Fairtrade has led to positive outcomes regarding labour conditions on producers' farms. In the last 10 years nearly all (93%) of members of certified producer organisations

reported an improvement in the conditions for workers as opposed to just 40 percent of the non-certified farmers. This difference was highly significant. Workers on certified farms report greater improvement in their jobs than before Fairtrade was introduced.



Fairtrade supports good governance.

Ninety-six percent of producer organisations reported an improvement in the overall governance and leadership of their boards because of the Fairtrade

interventions, from enhanced organisational capabilities to service provision and communication with members. Fairtrade projects provided an additional avenue through which wider positive impacts have been enabled. Slightly larger¹ producer organisations can offer more robust services and support, which has led to increasing membership among these producer organisations. For non-certified organisations, there is significant interest among members to be Fairtrade certified, in particular due to the Premium, but agronomic practices and hope for better yields also play a role.

¹ Research revealed land size of Fairtrade certified producer organisations from 0.5 to 3 hectares in size

Ongoing challenges

- **Volatility of certification (suspensions and decertifications especially in recent years) has been almost universally raised as both a threat to the future success of Fairtrade in Mauritius, and as a major barrier to realising the maximal impact among the producer organisations.**
- **The researchers observed that women in producer organisations are often still overpowered by the male voices and that some of the existing organisational practices lead to unintended exclusion of women.**
- **Most farmers (84%), both certified and non-certified, report that young people show no interest in farming due to the low income it offers, and the hard manual labour it requires.**
- **Impact of climate change and other external factors pose a risk to future production.**

Fairtrade's response

Fairtrade welcomes the study and is pleased to gain detailed insights into the positive impacts that have been achieved in the Mauritian sugar cane sector. We also welcome the suggestions for improvement. We have already started to work on the clarification of Fairtrade Standards, in collaboration with our independent certifier FLOCERT and producer network Fairtrade Africa to achieve a common understanding of the challenges and determine whether interpretation guidance for certain standards needs to be drafted.

Furthermore, Fairtrade Africa intensified its support to Mauritian producer organisations. Fairtrade recognises the external challenges faced by producers, such as climate change, labour shortages, rising input costs and a perceived low Fairtrade Premium for sugar. We echo the call for a broader coalition and partnerships with commercial (and other) partners supported by the Fairtrade system. Building projects based on the **results of a recent carbon and water footprint study** are one opportunity for partnering.



For more information, please contact: **Monika Berresheim, Fairtrade International Senior Advisor for Sugar, m.berresheim@fairtrade.net.**