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Fairtrade's New Standards Framework Questions and Answers

1. What is the New Standards Framework?

The New Standards Framework (NSF) is a revamp of the Fairtrade Standards. It makes them easier to understand and more adaptable to the different situations of producers across the world.

2. Why was the NSF needed?

In its strategic review Fairtrade identified a need for a re-structuring of the Fairtrade Standards. Producers challenged Fairtrade International (FLO) to create Standards that are more adaptable to their local reality and which support them in their individual development.

The previous Standards, in particular the environmental requirements were technical in their wording, and difficult for producers to understand. They set high criteria without giving much guidance on how to actually achieve them. The revised requirements are much easier to understand and are focused on clear actions.

3. What are the key changes?

The NSF makes the Fairtrade Standards easier to understand, more adaptable to producers' local situation and introduces freedom for producers to determine their own development path.

4. Who do the changes apply to?

The changes apply to small producer organizations and contract production. The changes to the Generic Trade Standard apply to traders too. The Hired Labour Standard has not been changed by NSF, except for the revised environmental requirements.

5. Why don't the changes apply to Hired Labour organizations?

Fairtrade International is currently working on a new hired labour strategy and we will do a full review of the Fairtrade Hired Labour Standard after this strategy is complete. The Standards review should be completed by late 2012.

6. When do the changes come into force?

The new Standards come into effect on 1 July 2011. There is a transition period for existing producer groups, whereas new producer organizations will follow the new timelines for requirements as soon as they become certified



7. Which requirements does each chapter contain?

There are four distinct chapters covering the following topics:

- **Trade:** requirements for selling a Fairtrade product. The topics are common to existing industry trading standards e.g. flow of goods, traceability, contract rules.
- **Production:** requirements for ethical and sustainable production including labour conditions and environmental requirements. In these areas Fairtrade is comparable to other ethical / sustainable production standards.
- **Business and Development:** requirements that are unique to Fairtrade and are intended to lay the foundations for empowerment and development. It includes requirements around the Fairtrade Development Plan, the Fairtrade Premium, and democratic decision-making processes.
- **General requirements:** requirements that relate to the certification process and to the scope of the standards.

8. What is the difference between core and development requirements?

All producers must meet the “core” requirements, most of which upon entering Fairtrade, some after one year or three years of certification. Core requirements cover the aspects which are at the heart of Fairtrade and which build the basis for producer development and empowerment.

Producers then work towards meeting the “development” requirements within a clear timeline, which supports them to strengthen and invest in their businesses over time. Producers have to achieve an average score across all development requirements in order to comply. This allows them to invest first in areas which matter most to them while still progressing in other areas.

9. What is the Fairtrade Development Plan for?

The Fairtrade Development Plan is unique to Fairtrade. It is a way for producers to decide and monitor their own progress in development and to make plans for the future. In the plan, producers must record at least their Fairtrade Premium projects: what they plan to do and how they then carried it out. But in addition to this producers can extend the plan to cover all their development activities. It gives them a space to report on projects they are doing above and beyond the Fairtrade Premium.

There is a template producers can use to fill out the plan if they want. Find downloads of the plans here.

10. What are the key changes to Fairtrade’s environmental requirements under the NSF?

The key underlying principle is that with Fairtrade, people come first. The revised environmental Standards have strong core requirements which are strict on protecting producers’ health and safety, conserving nature and banning the use of GMOs and dangerous chemicals. Then, through the benefits received through Fairtrade, producers are encouraged to work on



development requirements of their choice which lead to even greater sustainability. The new requirements also give producer organizations the opportunity to report on the activities they are already doing to protect the environment.

11. What environmental standards can consumers be sure Fairtrade certified farmers are meeting?

Consumers can be certain that:

- Health protection for producers and workers is enforced, especially in terms of pesticides and hazardous waste.
- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are prohibited.
- Existing biodiversity in protected areas and in areas with high conservation values is respected. In addition, both small producer organizations and hired labour set-ups are expected to increase biodiversity over time as a way to make farms more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate.
- Small scale producers are trained in water protection, soil conservation, integrated pest management and safety in relation to handling pesticides.
- Hired labour set-ups have to implement safety measures that protect the workers, and implement good practices to make rationale use of pesticides and also of natural resources, such as water and soil.

12. Are the environmental requirements the same for all organizations?

The revised environmental requirements cover the same topics for all producer organizations. For small producer organizations there is less emphasis on filling out documents and more focus on taking actions, training farmers and promoting development.

The Hired Labour and Contract Production Standards focus on performance results. Strict requirements concerning safety and use of pesticides ensure the protection of farmers and workers. Organizations have to implement good agricultural practices to ensure minimal use of pesticides and good management of natural resources.

13. What has changed in the Generic Trade Standard?

The Generic Trade Standard (GTS) has been re-organized into the four new chapters and specific amendments in the GTS were made regarding labelling rules, composite products rules and the recently published rules on traceability.

14. What is SCORE and how does it relate to the NSF?

FLO-CERT uses the Fairtrade Standards to develop compliance criteria which producers are then certified against. In order to ensure that the changes in the Standards also translate to user-friendly compliance criteria for auditing on the ground, FLO-CERT is developing a new certification system called SCORE (“Strengthen the Core”). As in the NSF, SCORE splits requirements into “core” and “development”. Producers are “scored” on a scale of 1 to 5 according to their performance. The scoring system will make certification decisions more uniform and transparent.