

Fairtrade research for learning agenda – August 2021



The aim of the Fairtrade Research for Learning Agenda is to share topics and research questions of practical relevance for Fairtrade. You can find below the research priorities which are not yet covered by ongoing research we are aware of and for which Fairtrade International does not have the resources to invest.

If you are a researcher and you are working on, plan to work or have interest on the topics below, we are interested to hear from you, please get in touch at impact@fairtrade.net. If you are a student, kindly first consult our [student research policy](#).

We look forward to collaborating with academics on research for enhancing benefits to Fairtrade producers and workers!

Research topics	Research questions of interest to Fairtrade
Climate change 	1. What external regulation is being developed on environmental human rights and how do these affect Fairtrade? 2. Which strategic alliances can Fairtrade build to support farmers to adapt to climate change? 3. Which tools and projects support Fairtrade producers best to mitigate and adapt to climate change? 4. How does Fairtrade production impact biodiversity and forest cover and how to minimize negative impacts and enhance positive impacts of Fairtrade? 5. What is the carbon footprint of Fairtrade supply chains and of Fairtrade? 6. Is there a business case for climate finance towards SPOs; if so, under which conditions?
Impact minimum price and Premium on farmers 	7. How does the Fairtrade model (FMP and Premium) impact individual producers? 8. Are cooperatives paying fair prices to their members? 9. What about cooperatives whose members are non-landowners? 10. Are members being paid fairly for their assigned jobs and responsibilities? 11. How is Fairtrade assuring the model reaches farm level?
Distribution of value along the supply chain 	12. How are costs and values distributed along Fairtrade banana supply chains (from production level to main consumer markets) versus non-Fairtrade supply chains? 13. How have prices evolved over time, by banana origin? How has the distribution of value along the supply chain evolved over time? 14. What can be done to achieve a fair distribution of value (and costs) along the supply chain?
Reaching Living Incomes 	15. How big (quantified) are the in-kind benefits of Fairtrade (and cash payments of Premium) which contribute to closing the Living Income gaps for coffee, cocoa and banana? 16. What are the extra costs (quantified) for retailers to arrive at a living wages for workers/farmers for Fairtrade banana, coffee and cocoa? 17. How to come to Living Incomes (LI) for coffee producers? 18. How do Fairtrade Premium impact farmer households?

	19. Do farmers want to earn a living income (given what this implies in terms of for example increasing yields, considering the existing farm sizes)?
Digitization for traceability and transparency 	20. What is the current level of digitization amongst Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS)? 21. Which options of assuring traceability and transparency work best for the benefit of producers? 22. Which risks are to be considered? How can information be sharing work in all directions (upstream and downstream the supply chain)? 23. Which tools allow in practice for the full integration of smallholder farmers living in rural areas? 24. What transparency and traceability would enhance negotiation power for producers and under what conditions does this lead to fairer (higher) producer prices?
Impacts of Fairtrade versus other voluntary and in-house sustainability schemes 	25. How does Fairtrade compare to other Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) and to in-house sustainability schemes (on specific themes)? 26. What impacts can Fairtrade achieve in isolation on themes such as development of capacities for adaptation to climate change, economic development, empowerment and participation of women and vulnerable groups, development of organizational capacities, and social capital? 27. How do standards criteria and the implementation of the compliance criteria compare? How do the outcomes and impacts compare? How does the added value for commercial partners compare?
The next generation of farmers 	28. Do young people living in Fairtrade farmer communities see their future in continuing farming traditions? 29. If young people are leaving farming, what impact is this transition having on the wellbeing of young people and/or agriculture sustainability? 30. What factors are driving youth away from farming (per region or country)? 31. To what extent is Fairtrade supporting opportunities for young people (through the Premium or otherwise), either to remain and farm, or to leave and pursue other ambitions?
The impact of unfair trading practices 	32. What is the impact of (conventional) unfair trading practices (UTP) on producers (economic, social) and on value chains in general? 33. Which UTP are most common across (conventional) value chains and voluntary sustainability schemes (VSS)? 34. What can be done to avoid UTPs? 35. What is the role legislation can play and how and what other means are effective, under which conditions?
Fairtrade's benefits to workers 	36. What impact is Fairtrade having on empowerment of workers, both in the plantation and smallholder farm context? 37. What is the mechanisms by which Fairtrade is, or is not, having this impact? 38. What is the relationship between worker empowerment and the livelihoods of workers and their households? 39. What is the role of different types of worker organizations & trade unions in fostering collective empowerment/better conditions? 40. What are the concrete benefits of producers of being organized? 41. What impact is Fairtrade having on the wages and benefits for workers on plantations, with a focus on moving towards Living Wages (LW)? 42. What are the mechanisms by which Fairtrade is, or is not, having this impact? 43. How does Fairtrade's work coordinate or complement other work on wages/benefits being done by unions or through national legislation? 44. What impact can Fairtrade or trade unions have to negotiate a living wage when plantations are already bound by Collective Bargaining Agreements?

	45. What is the impact of new base wage and Fairtrade Premium on worker incomes and livelihoods after 3 - 5 years (e.g. in banana, flowers)?
Due diligence for (commercial) partners 	46. How are different voluntary sustainability schemes (VSS) and development NGOs today doing due diligence on their commercial- and other partners? 47. What tools and frameworks do they use for that due diligence? 48. How often is such due diligence repeated and what are the challenges to assuring a meaningful exercise? 49. Which tools or framework would suit Fairtrade best?
Gender 	50. What is Fairtrade's impact on different groups of women (e.g. female producers, female household heads, female workers, etc.) in small producer organizations and hired labor organizations? 51. What is the impact of Fairtrade certification on aspects related to gender equity and women's empowerment in smallholder and worker organizations? 52. What role do female workers and members play in Fairtrade certified organizations, including the management of those organizations?
The exact functioning of the Minimum Price for farmers 	53. Has the Fairtrade Minimum Price functioned as a safety net for coffee farmers during periods of low market prices in different countries/geographies and for different coffee varieties and coffee qualities? 54. What has been the precise impact of the Fairtrade Minimum Price during these periods on coffee farmers' incomes and expenses (in different countries, for different varieties and qualities)? 55. How has this impacted coffee farmer livelihoods?
Making trade fair 	56. To what extent does Fairtrade contribute to fairness & sustainability in business practices? 57. Are values & principles of Fair Trade increasingly mainstreamed in business practices & policy frameworks? 58. Can a broad coalition of actors (including producers, workers, policy-makers & citizen- consumers) driving change in way trade is structured & practiced? Is this already happening? What role does and can Fairtrade play in this? 59. What is and can be the role of multi-stakeholder initiatives to make trade fairer? 60. What role does and shall Fairtrade play? 61. To what extent does the development of alliances contribute to generating greater impacts on organizations and small producers? 62. What strategies are most effective for building impactful and sustainable alliances? 63. To what extent has Fairtrade certification enabled the adoption of fairer business practices within the different value chains? 64. To what extent has certification achieved the internalization of Fair Trade principles and values in organizations?
Deforestation 	65. How to best address and stop deforestation in Fairtrade supply chains? 66. What criteria shall Fairtrade meet to assure 'free of deforestation' for different products? 67. How can be efficiently monitor deforestation? 68. What are the best practices for reforestation and conservation of natural resources that organizations have carried out? 69. What factors have influenced decisions to adopt reforestation? 70. What variables influence these decisions and what implications do they have for organizations?

Inclusion vulnerable groups 	71. How does Fairtrade enable vulnerable groups (temporary/casual workers, youth, women, at risk migrants) involved in the production of Fairtrade products to be heard and what is needed to enable their decision making and contributions to the Fairtrade system? 72. What Strategies is Fairtrade applying to ensure inclusion of vulnerable persons (Persons with Disabilities, youth, women, migrant workers etc.) and what more can be done?
Necessary (pre-) conditions of Theory of Change outcomes 	73. What are the necessary conditions and underlying assumptions to reach (different / specific) outcomes set out in the Fairtrade Theory of Change? 74. How are interventions implemented on the ground and how these impact outcomes under different (empirical) conditions? What works under which circumstances?
Follow-up studies on (2012-2018) baselines commissioned for coffee, cocoa, cotton and banana 	75. Follow-up studies on 4 baseline studies conducted a few years ago for cotton, coffee, cocoa small producer organizations and hired labor banana set-ups: 75.a What are the impacts of Fairtrade certification on coffee producers (compared to the baseline)? 75.b What impact has Fairtrade had on certified cocoa producers in West-Africa in recent years? 75.c What are the impacts of Fairtrade certification on cotton producers in West-Africa and India? 75.d How has Fairtrade impacted banana workers in Latin America and West-Africa in recent years? 75.e What difference has Fairtrade made for coffee, cocoa and cotton farming families and banana workers since the baseline?
Regional and south-to-south trade 	76. How does regional and south-to-south trade influence Fairtrade and certified producers? 77. Are special standards or adaptations needed to make the south-to-south model work and if so, which ones? 78. To what extent is Fairtrade certification contributing to the opening of new business opportunities within and between different producer countries? 79. What strategies are most effective to encourage greater insertion of organizations in national and regional markets?

*The symbols refer to the [Fairtrade strategy](#) (2021-2025) pillars:  Farmers & workers empowerment  Growth & innovation



Advocacy & citizen engagement



Digitalization for fairer supply chains



Launchpad for the future