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Exploratory study into Climate Change Adaptation Plans and measures in the Fairtrade system

Study At-a-Glance

Introduction

Climate change poses a serious threat to agricultural production and to many farmers growing crops that Fairtrade certifies, through changes in temperature and rainfall, extreme weather events, and increases in pests and plant disease.¹ For instance, the area suitable for growing coffee is predicted to shrink by 50 percent by 2050 according to some estimates.²

The Fairtrade Standard for Coffee requires producer organisations to develop climate change adaptation plans, and some other producers have developed such plans voluntarily. This exploratory study aimed to identify the different climate change adaptations that Fairtrade producer organisations are identifying and implementing as part of their plans. The study authors also identified recommendations to accelerate adaptation efforts, as well as facilitate deeper analysis.



Study areas of focus



Fairtrade producer organisations in Latin America and Africa regions, mainly coffee but including other products.

Methodology

Beginning in May 2024

Online survey completed by 37 producer organisations (10 percent response rate)

"Systemisation" interviews with 8 producer organisations

- 4 producer organisations in Latin America and the Caribbean (3 coffee, 1 pineapples)
- 4 producer organisations in Africa (3 coffee, 1 tea)

Consultations with Fairtrade staff

Literature / document review

Because of the limited sample of plans available for review, the study should be considered "exploratory."

Key study findings



An increasing number of Fairtrade producer organisations have been developing climate change adaptation plans.

The majority are by coffee producers, since adaptation plans were introduced as a core compliance criterion in the **Fairtrade Coffee Standard** in 2022. By the end of 2022, **502 Fairtrade producer organisations** (just over a quarter of all certified producers) had created adaptation plans, 54 percent of which were from coffee producer organisations, 18 percent from cocoa, 7.8 percent from tea, and 5 percent from bananas.



The adaptation planning process is building farmer knowledge and leading to initial measures to strengthen their production.

The most common adaptation measures in the plans include **planting disease resistant varieties, pruning and shade management, improving soil health, efficient water use, and integrated pest management**. Farmers reported they have seen improvements in soil quality and soil health, reduced use of chemical fertilisers, increased crop yields, and enhanced resistance of crops to pests and disease. Better data collection and monitoring systems are needed to track these improvements over time.



96 percent of plans are being implemented.

Take-up among individual farmers varies between 30 percent and 100 percent.

Factors that most supported implementation were:

- training for farmers on adaptation measures;
- sensitisation of farmers to the importance of climate change;
- access to technical and financial capacity;
- the ability to invest in more expensive technologies or infrastructure, such as installation of solar panels; and
- peer support and model farms or demonstration plots to show effectiveness of various methods.



Fairtrade producer networks' support is highly valued, and varies by region, with interesting innovations emerging.

For instance, Fairtrade Africa developed a simplified climate risk assessment tool that producer organisation staff and farmers could use as part of their planning process. In Latin America and the Caribbean, CLAC coordinated plan development in clusters of producers farming the same product and in the same agro-climatic zones. CLAC also created a guide, engaged external experts for hands-on help, and set up a Climate Eventuality Fund to support producer organisations with grants or low-interest loans to implement their plans.



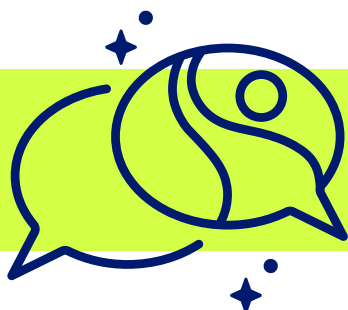
Highlights of innovative measures included in adaptation plans

- An African coffee cooperative trained youth extension officers who then oversaw the training of farmers on climate change and adaptation plan development.
- A pineapple cooperative in Latin America set up a demonstration plot showing the results of soil fertilisers.
- Another Latin American cooperative built a meteorological station to provide information on local conditions to members.
- Many producer organisations have set up nurseries to cultivate seedlings of more climate-resistant varieties, or shade trees.

Conclusions & recommendations

- The researchers made several recommendations related to **improving the quality of the plans and measuring their impact** on farmers' resilience. These include consolidating producer networks' best practices into a standardised Fairtrade approach including a single set of guidelines and supporting producers to make clear links between their specific risks and their selected adaptation measures; collecting and analysing producer organisations' plans more routinely; and setting up baseline and ongoing data collection so that adaptation improvements can be measured.
- **Including adaptation planning as a core compliance criterion in more Fairtrade Standards** would drive uptake across a wider range of producer organisations. Priority products as identified in a 2021 Fairtrade study include cocoa, bananas, tea, cotton and sugar cane.
- Fairtrade should consider **facilitating access to finance for producer organisations, such as grants and/or low-interest loans**, possibly through investment from international donors, commercial partners, and other sources.
- Fairtrade should support **a continuous programme of training and guidance, including peer learning mechanisms and model farms** to showcase and share good practices.
- Given that climate change impacts are expected to become more significant in the future, Fairtrade should **support producers to plan for and implement more "transformational" adaptation measures that look beyond farm level and support wider systemic changes**. For example, producer organisations could work collectively in a landscape or national approach to influence sector and value chain planning; improve knowledge sharing; strengthen risk management and organisational structures; realign policy and legislation to support smallholders; and develop new markets.

- 1 Fairtrade International (2021). Fairtrade and climate change: Systematic review, hotspot analysis and survey.
- 2 Grüter R et al (2022). Expected global suitability of coffee, cashew and avocado due to climate change. *PLoS One*. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261976>



For more information, please visit www.fairtrade.net or contact your national Fairtrade organisation.

Fairtrade response

This study is a valuable confirmation – for Fairtrade and beyond – that climate change adaptation plans are a beneficial tool for producer organisations and farmers, especially when there is appropriate technical and financial support for implementation. While the overarching Fairtrade Standard for Small-scale Producer Organisations has included a development requirement on climate change adaptation (meaning one that organisations can choose in future years of certification to deepen their sustainability), it is clear the inclusion in the Coffee Standard of the requirement to develop adaptation plans has driven progress more quickly. In addition to building climate resilience for farmers, activities such as those included in producers' adaptation plans are urgently needed for compliance with regulations like the European Union Deforestation Regulation and Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive. We are looking into how we can more consistently collect data and evaluate progress and impact of these plans, which we will continue to report in future.



"Climate change adaptation plans are vital tools for building resilience and minimising the impacts of a changing climate on society and the environment. By prioritising proactive, inclusive and innovative approaches, we can better prepare for the challenges ahead and create a more sustainable future for all."

Manager, coffee producer organisation, Kenya



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