



Co-op Fairtrade Projects 2021

Case studies of Co-op Future of Food Sourcing Projects with Fairtrade producer communities in 2021

We're committed to building on our Fairtrade leadership and strengthening producer communities around the world, as set out in our Future of Food ambition.

The cornerstone of our Fairtrade difference is our commitment to producer engagement - the depth and authenticity of our relationships with producers, some spanning decades. Whilst we would normally be connecting with producers in-person, we have had to adapt the way we engage due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has shown us how fragile food supply chains are. Coupled with the increasingly devastating impacts of climate change, it's clear that farmers and workers on the front line need support to mitigate and adapt to climate change. At Co-op, we have a legacy of providing support over and above our Fairtrade sourcing to strengthen producer communities around the world through pioneering climate change resilience and international development projects that change lives.

In 2021 we continued to evolve our strategy to scale up our projects to deliver greater impact, delivering **5** Co-op Future of Food Sourcing Projects, investing in international development and climate change resilience of Fairtrade communities.

- **Cocoa:** women's empowerment and leadership - a third cohort of students graduated from Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership (WSOL), which we've funded in Côte d'Ivoire since 2017 and in 2021 reached over 4000 farmers and members of the community.
- **Tea, coffee and flowers:** partnering with Fairtrade Africa to support our producers in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Rwanda to adapt to climate change through the Fairtrade Alliance for Climate Smart Supply Chains in Africa programme (FACSCA)
- **Bananas:** improving soil health and productivity in Colombia and Dominican Republic to support smallholder resilience and livelihoods through the Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) Phase II
- **Tea, coffee and bananas:** our final report on our emergency response funding to protect farmer livelihoods impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic that reached 66,597 people across East Africa, Central & Latin America.
- **Sugar:** our final report on protecting workers' rights through Good Hiring Practices in the Cane Farming Sector, Belize

Read more about these projects in the following pages and in [our annual report](#).



Cocoa | Women's School of Leadership | Côte d'Ivoire

Women's empowerment

Co-op are proud to have supported Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership (WSOL) since 2017. Women are a vital part of West African cocoa farming. In Côte d'Ivoire, women represent 68% of the active cocoa farming workforce and are therefore essential to the sustainability of the entire cocoa industry, however they are often disempowered and marginalised.

WSOL is a training, mentoring and coaching programme that supports participants' gain basic skills in leadership, business skills, decision making, human rights and gender issues in their own environment. Through the training, women, and some men, are empowered to take control of their lives through increased confidence capacities to make decisions and act on themselves; take control and manage resources by being supported to actively participate and voluntarily assume leadership roles in their producer organisations and their communities. The emphasis is on "empowering" women by discovering their own potential, leading them to take initiative.

In 2021, 59 people (46 women and 13 men) from 7 Fairtrade cocoa co-operatives graduated from Year 3 of this pioneering programme. Co-op were proud to share our congratulations and celebrate the achievements of the Y3 graduates in the virtual graduation.

Participants, under the guidance of the WSOL project team, also conducted training within 42 communities from the participating co-operatives. A total of 3892 people were reached, 2716 women and 1176 men. These indirect beneficiaries received information and learning on WSOL annual curriculum. In addition, 147 members implemented income-generating activities in all 7 co-operatives.

"I used to be afraid to participate in cooperative and community meetings, not knowing what to say, but thanks to the Women's School of Leadership, I am no longer afraid to be in front of things, I am leading the women in my community." OUATTARA ANZATA, CAKF co-operative

"Most of the time we handle money, but with what we have learned, we realise that we are using it wrongly. Learning to manage money in the household and in our associations is the first step towards financial empowerment." ABENAN BADOU, CAKF co-operative

Co-op will continue to fund the WSOL, with other partners, as it enters its fourth phase in 2022. Between 2021 and 2024, a new phase of the programme plans to train a total of 144 women and men from 14 Fairtrade certified cocoa cooperatives in Côte d'Ivoire, who will, at the end of the course, be champions of good practices and will work to reduce gender inequalities through training for several thousand women in their respective communities. We look forward to seeing the results of the scaling up of this programme and hearing from the women who benefit.





CAKF Community Awareness Session on the 3rd Training Workshop



Eponon Adjoua Monique from CAMAYE during the third community awareness sessions in Zinzenou, CDI EAST ZONE

Tea, coffee and flowers | Fairtrade Alliance for Climate Smart Supply Chains in Africa | Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda

Climate resilience

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues facing farmers and workers in global supply chains and has the potential of deepening the vulnerability and poverty context of thousands of farmers and workers. Producers are already experiencing the ravaging impacts of changing weather patterns and emergence of pests and diseases that devastate crops and livestock.

In sub-Saharan Africa, tea, coffee and flower producers are highly sensitive to changing weather patterns which is affecting production, yields and incomes.

In 2021 we announced our new partnership with Fairtrade Africa (FTA) – as a leading UK investor and partner in driving forward the Producer Network’s climate strategy over the next 3 years, ensuring a farmer-centric approach to adapting and mitigating the very worst effects of climate change and channelling funding to areas of greatest need.

As the first UK retailer to invest in FTA’s climate strategy, the Fairtrade Alliance for Climate Smart Supply Chains in Africa (FACSCA), we’ll be working with 12 at-risk producer organisations in tea,



coffee, and flower supply chains in sub-Saharan Africa to take meaningful action against climate change for the security of their own livelihoods, environments and protecting the futures of key commodities for the long-term benefit of us all. This partnership will support over 16,000 smallholder farmers and workers in Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia, as well as directly impacting over 67,000 beneficiaries between September 2021 and December 2023.

Bananas | Productivity Improvement Programme | Colombia and Dominican Republic

Smallholder resilience

Bananas are the 8th most important food crop in the world and the 4th most important food crop in developing countries. Due to high demand from international markets, some producers began to grow bananas using agrochemicals to increase production. Over time, this has generated a significant loss in soil fertility which has made it harder for farmers to obtain profitable, sustainable productivity levels.

The Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) was developed by CLAC (the Latin American and Caribbean producer network) to tackle these issues by increasing farm production following an organic production scheme, recuperating soil health, decreasing the use of agrochemicals and increasing productivity on farms to support better livelihoods.

By improving the fertility and productivity of banana farms in a sustainable way, the overall objective of PIP is to increase smallholder farmers' incomes, and at the same time reduce the environmental footprint of banana production.

Co-op and supplier Fyffes provided funding for 5 co-operatives to participate in the programme in the Dominican Republic. One of the main outcomes of this phase has been an average yield increase of +36% per hectare across all countries, combined with a reduction of the costs of production, which translated in a substantial increase in farmers' incomes. On top of this, the project contributed to the reduction of negative environmental externalities in banana production, in particular the water and carbon footprint, as well as an increase in soil biodiversity and a stronger resistance of soils against diseases. A study conducted in Colombia by CIAT (International Center for Tropical Agriculture) comparing PIP farms with non-PIP farms showed a more efficient use of water on PIP farms with a reduction by 12%, and a reduction of 29% in GHG emissions.

In light of very positive results, the Co-op, CLAC and Fyffes are currently funding Phase 2 of the programme, focusing on scaling up PIP in Colombia, providing technical assistance and capital for infrastructure for 220 farmers members from 6 organizations. In addition, the project also supports 200 farmers from 2 organizations in the Dominican Republic.

Following the success of phase 1, we are looking forward to the results of phase 2 in 2022.



Ruth Osias Pérez, Owner of Finca Marta Vanesa, COOBAFRIO, Colombia



“Personally, I can tell you that [the use of] bio-ferments has given me results on my farm, as it has been something that has changed our land, that has improved my production. I was afraid to buy bio-ferments, first of all because of the cost, as I was only packing 70 boxes per week on 4 hectares. But one day I saw my neighbour who was doing well with bio-ferments, and I thought: “if it is the same land and she is packing more than me”. So, I started the applications following the recommendations of the technicians and today on my farm I am packing 200 boxes per week. The change was excellent both in the condition of the plantation, disease control and production. I am very happy with this product and now I recommend it to anyone.”

Tea, coffee and bananas | Global Wellbeing Charter | East Africa, Central and Latin America

COVID-19 relief

We launched our Global Wellbeing Charter in 2020, providing close to £1 million to take immediate action to help support global projects and people in our supply chain through the Covid-19 emergency.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on producers around the world; farmers and workers that were already struggling to earn a decent income were faced with further uncertainty in the global markets, job losses, higher costs of production and severe health risks. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, Fairtrade International set up a Fairtrade Covid-19 Fund (Fairtrade Covid Relief and Resilience Fund) implemented through its Producer Networks. The Fund was aimed at taking immediate action to save lives and livelihoods, maintain the productive base to prevent future aid needs, and build resilience to future shocks and stresses.

In 2020, Co-op and suppliers Fyffes and Finlays donated money as part of the Global Wellbeing Charter to a Fairtrade Covid-19 Relief Fund to support the development of local initiatives and projects to aid economic recovery and build resilience to the pandemic. These projects were implemented by two Fairtrade Producer Networks: the Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fairtrade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC), and Fairtrade Africa, with support from the Fairtrade Foundation.

With the projects completed, they have reached 59,987 coffee, tea, and banana producers across 10 producer organisations in East Africa, and 26 coffee and banana producer groups in Latin America.

With the funds, farmers in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda) started different income diversification projects in 10 producer groups (8 tea POs and 2 coffee POs) such as beekeeping, tree nurseries, and avocado seedling programmes – as well as purchasing machinery to help improve the quality of their products and providing extra income. These initiatives impacted mostly women and youths to help support their livelihoods.

In Central and Latin America, 19 coffee producer groups were supported with funds for food security and productive diversification for self-consumption, funds for market diversification and organic inputs for agriculture. This work improved food security through crop and income diversification initiatives.

In Latin America, 7 banana producer groups were supported with funds to grow alternative crops for self-consumption and to invest in organic inputs for agriculture



Additionally, 30 producer organisations in Ecuador received personal protective equipment (PPE) packs that were distributed to farmers and their families to ensure they were protected against the virus without using their own resources. and built a bio-garden to ensure they have food to sustain themselves in the future.

“The funds came at a time when livelihoods were severely disrupted if not destroyed. The funding is such a boost to the community. It has helped in picking up from the losses and serves as a model that farmers themselves can adapt to compensate and hopefully recover from the losses”. MR. Benson NGUGI, Factory unit manager, Momul Tea Factory Company Limited

“If these funds had not arrived, it would have been very difficult for the associates to continue with the production because it was very difficult for families to assume the costs of buying masks. Incomes dropped and many people were getting infected, and we had to stop the work [...]many people did not even have enough money to buy a single mask, that's why the funds gave us some much-appreciated breath and we were able to continue and not stop’. Producer in Ecuador who received PPE packs

Sugar | Good Hiring Practices in the Cane Farming Sector | Belize

Workers and human rights

We were the first retailer to sell Fairtrade sugar back in 2005 and converted our entire own brand range in 2008. In 2016 we made a commitment that all the bagged sugar (own label and branded) we sold would be Fairtrade certified to support small holder associations in Belize, achieved in collaboration with Tate & Lyle Sugars and Fairtrade.

Cane farming in Northern Belize employs large numbers of seasonal workers, particularly during the sugar cane harvest. These workers are employed by smallholder farmers, typically without written contracts, training or systematic provision for their safety at work. Cane-cutting is a physically strenuous task in often very hot conditions. The cane is typically cut by hand using machetes which presents further occupational hazards for workers.

In 2019-2021 Co-op supported Tate & Lyle Sugars to implement a new initiative to address informal employment in Belize and to improve working practices for cane cutters in the Belizean sugar industry. The project provided a standard method to improve hiring and working practices in the smallholder cane farming sector during harvesting to reduce the risk of forced labour, among other risks, by enabling employers and employees in cane farms to replace word of mouth contracts with written contracts, and training on implementation. An approach was developed with stakeholders including the sugar cane associations (Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association, Progressive Sugar Cane Producers Association, Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association, and Northern Sugar Cane Growers Association), Fairtrade, Belize Labour Department and Social Security Board, and piloted to regularise current informal employment practices in the cane fields through the introduction of cost neutral or low-cost changes to hiring workers. The long-term objective of changing working practices was to support smallholders in ensuring compliance with Fairtrade standards and other international norms.

The contracts booklet developed contains a simple pro forma contract outlining payment terms and conditions and information on procedures, training, working hours and health and safety protocol. Protocols for the use of the contracts were developed in consultation with field workers and harvest group leaders through a second series of workshops. Before the start of the crop, a series of “train the trainer” sessions for the cane farmers associations’ directors on Belize labour law, Fairtrade and



international standards regarding hiring and managing employees. The directors, in turn, hosted their own workshops with harvest group leaders and field workers.

Despite the project taking place during the pandemic, the contracts were developed, piloted and rolled-out to the industry, in partnership with, and with the support of the industry. The contracts developed are a primary tool in improving workers' understanding of all of their obligations. Contracts with workers is now mandatory under Fairtrade standards, which will underpin their ongoing one and is a huge success. Feedback has been very positive, and insights were gained which will improve and strengthen further initiatives in the future.

Approximately 2,640 cane cutters and 264 reaping group leaders across the industry have benefitted from this project across 4 different associations. We were also pleased to donate PPE, including shin guards and goggles, to help keep fieldworkers safe during the harvest.

"In the past, there weren't contracts and we cut anyway but now that there are contracts it's a good benefit for all of us." Lauranio Rosado, Cane Cutter, NSCGA

Valentino Shal, CEO of the Labour Department of the Belize Government gave his endorsement of the project:

"Having a written agreement such as this one helps to protect the worker, but it also helps to protect the employer and it encourages a harmonious relationship between the two. This cane cutters agreement formalizes the informal and safeguards the rights of workers. This is very important; it is something we encourage and we would like to see more of".

Sarah Singer, Senior Supply Chain Manager for Sugar at Fairtrade Foundation:

"This project is an amazing example of what can be achieved through Fairtrade, and through true collaboration between farmers and industry at one end of the supply chain and traders and retailers at the other. The Fairtrade Premium and long-term contracts encouraged by Fairtrade Standards both go a long way in helping farmers gain stability in a challenging industry, however it takes significant time and investment for cane farmers to gain Fairtrade certification. That's why projects such as this, which goes beyond the minimum requirements of Fairtrade and invest additional time and funds into supply chains, are so vital in bringing about even greater impact and change."

