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Co-op Fairtrade Programmes 2023

Case studies of Co-op's Future of Food Sourcing Programmes within Fairtrade producer communities in 2023

Driven by our passionate members, Co-op have championed the Fairtrade movement for over 30 years, supporting trade justice through better prices, working conditions and terms of trade in addition to strengthening producer communities around the world through pioneering climate change resilience and international development programmes, as set out in our ['Future of Food'](#) sustainability commitments. At Co-op, we believe that the cornerstone of our Fairtrade legacy and difference is our commitment to producer engagement, demonstrated through the depth and authenticity of our relationships with our producers, some spanning decades.

In 2023, we remained committed to the Fairtrade movement and the producers we work with, delivering outcomes across four multi-year Co-op ['Future of Food'](#) sourcing projects, investing support for both improved livelihoods and resilience to climate change within Fairtrade producer communities. The following case studies present Co-op's Fairtrade programmes in 2023 and the impact of these projects within Fairtrade producer communities.

- **Cocoa:** Since 2017, Co-op have partnered with Fairtrade Africa in Côte d'Ivoire to support the Women's School of Leadership; a pioneering programme which supports women within cocoa co-operatives via training and coaching to tackle gender equality issues and embrace leadership roles within their communities to support better livelihoods. [Find out more about our support for the WSOL](#) or continue reading [here](#).
- **Tea, coffee, and flowers:** Since 2021, Co-op partnered with Fairtrade Africa to support the Producer Network's climate strategy in the Fairtrade Alliance for Climate Smart Supply Chains in Africa programme (FACSCA), a farmer-centric approach to support tea, coffee and flower producers in Kenya, Ethiopia and Rwanda to adapt to and mitigate against the detrimental impact of climate change on their livelihoods. Read more [here](#)
- **Bananas:** Since 2019, Co-op have partnered with the Latin American and Caribbean Fair Trade Producer Network (CLAC), Fairtrade Foundation and Fyffes to support banana smallholder resilience and livelihoods in Colombia and Dominican Republic through improving soil health and productivity. Watch this [video](#) to hear from banana farmers about this programme or read more [here](#).
- **Flowers:** Partnering with our supplier, Flamingo Horticulture to deliver the *Inua Dada* programme (*Inua Dada* translating to 'Uplift Women' in Swahili), a 2-year programme to improve female workers' earning potential through training and income diversification initiatives across flower communities in Kenya. Read more [here](#)

Read more about these projects in the following pages and in our [Co-operate Report 2023](#)

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

Since 2017, Co-op have been proud to have supported Fairtrade Africa's Women's School of Leadership (WSOL) and are delighted to see the success of this programme in the 6th year of operation, supporting a vital part of the West African cocoa farming. In Côte d'Ivoire alone, women represent 68% of the active cocoa farming workforce and are essential to the sustainability of the entire cocoa industry. However, women can have limited access to decision making forums and land rights, and additional household responsibilities can mean leadership roles are often out of reach. In order to strengthen *'women's participation and leadership in the management of their communities, organisations and households'*, the WSOL is a training, mentoring and coaching programme which supports participants to acquire knowledge of gender issues in their communities, in addition to skills of leadership, negotiation, financial management and entrepreneurship, equipping women with the confidence and skills to participate in membership and decision making activities within their producer organisations and communities.

Consolidating the success of 2022 and with the support of Co-op and other funding partners, in 2023 the WSOL has concluded the Equity 2 phase of the programme. Consisting of a 6-module training programme, the Equity 2 programme has been delivered to 143 WSOL students from 14 cocoa producer co-operatives in Côte d'Ivoire, building knowledge of Fairtrade principles and the importance of women within the economy, simultaneously with leadership, financial and project management skills. Additionally, WSOL graduates were selected to become WSOL ambassadors of knowledge and practices for gender equality within their own and neighbouring communities, delivering 75 public awareness sessions to 42 additional communities, equating to 7,137 indirect beneficiaries to date.

Marking a further significant milestone of the programme in 2023, WSOL graduates have established gender committees across their cooperatives to advance the inclusion of women and gender equality. Furthermore, the programme has also supported WSOL graduates to diversify their income through activities such as chicken rearing and bee keeping; applying the skills they have learnt via the WSOL. Strikingly, at the conclusion of the Equity 2 phase of WSOL, 90% of graduates felt empowered to contribute to decisions within their cooperative and household, with 50% reporting that they now participate in the general meeting of their cooperative with a further 9 students now fulfilling leadership roles within decision making bodies. Looking ahead to 2024, Co-op look forward to seeing the continual impact of WSOL in cocoa communities.

Producer Voices on Women's School of Leadership



'Thanks to the module on self-confidence, I have the courage to speak in front of an authority to plead for the opening of an alpha school for women. And that was the case!'
– Marie Kabore, CAAM Co-operative (pictured above).



'I understand better the interest for women to be involved in cooperatives. Only then can we make our voices heard and make our cooperatives stronger.' – Mariam Kanzie, SOCAREBIA Co-operative (pictured above).

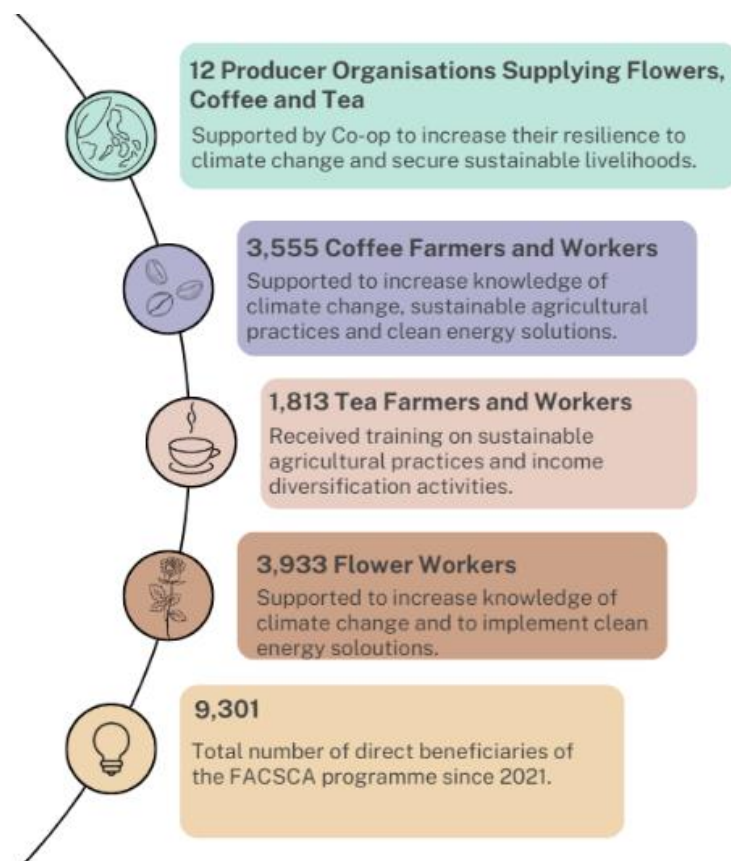
Find out more about [our support for the WSOL](#)

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

As one of the most detrimental and concerning issues facing farmers and workers in global supply chains, climate change has the potential of deepening the vulnerability and poverty context of

thousands of farmers and workers, increasingly faced with unpredictable climatic conditions, pests, and diseases which affect production, yields and subsequent livelihoods. In 2021, we announced our 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 to 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 worked with 12 at-risk producer organisations in tea, coffee, and flower supply chains in Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia 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.

In year one of FACSCA, the programme focussed on increasing awareness and resilience against climate change through the promotion of sustainable agricultural land management practices as well as the efficient use of natural resources and income diversification. Continuing the impact, in year two of the programme, farmers and workers were supported to implement initiatives including rainwater harvesting, sustainable energy solutions and additional income activities as well as the training of additional trainers to further the reach and impact of FACSCA within producer communities long after the initial programme has concluded. Significantly, since inception, FACSCA has produced the following outcomes for producer communities.



Producer Voices on FACSCA



FACSCA producers: Mary Warau (top left), Lilian Wangu (bottom left), Emily Chepngenoh Rotich (centre) and Reuben Njuki Julius (right).

'Through FACSCA, we have been taught about how to plant indigenous trees, indigenous vegetables, use of organic fertilizers and how to place drainage in the farm. Now when I go to the farm, I get good yields and thus I have money for food, children's clothes and a few things in the house. There is a huge difference.' - Emily Chepngenoh Rotich, Fintea Growers Co-operative Union Ltd (pictured above).

'FACSCA is a project that teaches us how to deal with climate changes. Like the use of tanks, using manure, terraces, and mulching. We have been taught to place manure in between two plants and to cover them. And that conserves the water. Here, people are buying water tanks, installing gutters, and harvesting rainwater.' - Lilian Wangu, Mutira Farmers Co-operative (pictured above).

Find out more about [our support for the FACSCA programme](#)

Bananas | Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) | Colombia | Smallholder Resilience

As one of the most important food crops globally, the historical demand for bananas from international markets has led to agrochemicals being deployed on soils to increase banana yields. However, over time, these chemicals have significantly reduced soil fertility and presented difficulty for banana farmers attempting to achieve profitable and sustainable production without factoring in the existing threat of pests and diseases such as Tropical Race 4 (TR4) which present a significant threat to yields and subsequent farmer and worker livelihoods.

In response, the Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) was developed by CLAC (the Latin American and Caribbean Fair Trade Producer Network) with proof-of-concept funding from Co-op, to support smallholder Fairtrade banana farmers in Colombia and the Dominican Republic to recuperate the health of depleted soils, deploying organic fertilisers derivative of banana harvest residue and low-cost organic materials, whilst reducing the use of agrochemicals in-line with Fairtrade standards. This change in agricultural practice aims to not only increase the production potential of banana farms and the subsequent income of farmers and workers through improved soil biodiversity and resilience, but also aims to reduce the environmental impact of banana production on water usage and carbon emissions. In 2023, Co-op and our supplier Fyffes have continued to fund this programme into Phase 3, deepening our impact in the Magdalena region of Colombia through the provision of technical assistance and infrastructure to farmers to produce and apply bio-fertilisers, across 7 producer organisations, equating to 463 banana producers.

To date, the PIP programme has delivered the following productivity and environmental impacts for participating Fairtrade banana producers:

- After 5 years of PIP, producers with an average production of 35 boxes per-hectare have increased their productivity to up to 77 boxes per-hectare, with some cases of up to 84-90 boxes per-hectare, with PIP farms generating a gross income 15% higher than non-PIP farms.
 - Physiological impacts including increase in height (up to 24%) and stem thickness (6%) compared to plants that did not apply the bioproduct.
 - When the PIP programme began 5 years ago, only 7% of banana smallholders involved in the programme applied bioproducts - now that figure is close to 42%.
 - Reduction of fixed production costs by over 25% for PIP farms.
 - A study conducted in Colombia by CIAT (International Centre for Tropical Agriculture), comparing PIP farms with non-PIP farms, indicated a more efficient use of water on PIP farms with a reduction of water usage of 12% and an overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 29%.
 - PIP farms demonstrated a reduction in agrochemical usage of 30%.
- Looking ahead to 2024, Co-op looks forward to seeing the continual positive impact of the PIP programme on farmer and worker livelihoods in banana producing communities.

Producer Voices on PIP



'The climate has definitely changed, today we can't predict the climate as we used to before, like our elders did. Today we have a lot of rain in certain parts of the year and severe drought in others...Thanks to being with Fairtrade, today we have the tools to fight the effects of climate change.' Albeiro Alfonso Cantillo, Fairtrade banana farmer, Manager and Member of COOBAFRIO Co-operative in Colombia (pictured above).



'Through the PIP program and the new organic fermented soil we are using, we have seen the soil's health improve, the production has increased. ... The project on increasing productivity came at a crucial time for us because the input prices have increased, so with the use of organically fermented soil, they [the Fairtrade PIP programme] have guaranteed the sustainability of the production and the health not only from the soil, but also of the producers and workers on the farm.' - Ana Anjelica Lopez, Fairtrade banana farmer and Member of EMPREBANCOOP Co-operative, Colombia (pictured above).

Find out more about [our Fairtrade banana producers](#)

Flowers | 'Inua Dada' Programme | Kenya | Women's empowerment

In 2022, Co-op partnered with our Fairtrade flower supplier Flamingo Horticulture to address gender inequality in the Kenyan cut flower industry - reflective of a wider endemic issue of gender inequality experienced by women in East Africa. Although the cut-flower industry presents opportunities for women to work as farmers, producers and workers and in other roles, the invaluable skills and contributions of women are often underutilised and therefore women rarely fulfil higher skilled technical and managerial roles that are traditionally held by men. In order to promote and progress equitable gender relations and empower women within workplace and community, Inua Dada or 'Uplift Women' in Swahili was a 2-year programme, concluding in 2023, which aimed to economically empower, upskill, and improve the socio-economic and health status of female horticulture workers across Fairtrade flower farms operated by our supplier Flamingo Horticulture.

To achieve this, the Inua Dada programme provided training and educational opportunities for female flower workers to improve their economic health, supporting participants to improve their financial literacy and also acquire the necessary skills to carry out additional income generating activities such as textile making and poultry rearing. Furthermore, Inua Dada participants also received training in a range of vocational courses/were upskilled via courses ranging from welding and fabrication to motor vehicle mechanics, with some participants supported to achieve diplomas in agriculture to further their career opportunities. Crucially, a range of health interventions to promote women's wellness were also funded via Inua Dada, including cancer screening, women's health talks and the provision of menstrual products, benefitting a total of 6,000 women. Additionally, through the Inua Dada programme, training and leadership hubs for female workers were established at farms to support female workers to build leadership and financial skills in addition to supplementary income projects.

Significantly, over the course of the programme and beyond, extensive 'Training of Trainers' occurred, equipping direct beneficiaries with the skills to share their newly acquired knowledge within their communities, extending the reach and impact of the programme to a further 2571 beneficiaries. To date, almost 9,000 women have benefited from the Inua Dada programme, with this number likely to increase through Training of Trainers. Co-op are proud to support Inua Dada and look forward to seeing the lasting benefits of this programme into 2024.

Producer Voices on Inua Dada



'My life has undergone a positive change, while other workmates await their salaries... I still have income from my tie and-dye business I can save for emergencies. When I received payment for my initial designs, my mother was unwell, and I used some of that money to assist her. I didn't have to wait for my salary or resort to taking a loan.' - Violet Amakobe, General Worker at Flamingo Horticulture (pictured above, left).

'Before Inua Dada, I worked as a general worker... I had an interest in operating machines, and the farm management provided me with a three-day training on how to operate tractors and farm implements... the new position came with an increased salary, significantly assisting me in meeting my basic needs and supporting my other siblings. With my previous salary, saving was a challenge after covering my bills. Now, I can save more money. In the company, I am the only woman operating a tractor among 21 tractor drivers.' - Anne Wangare, Tractor Operator Flamingo Horticulture (pictured above, centre).

'One of the most important takeaways for me was the importance of being in control of money rather than letting money control me... I decided to venture into selling vegetables. Since starting this business, my life has improved. I have a child in college, and I no longer face financial constraints for his needs. In the past, even small requests of 30 shillings would pose a challenge and I would have to borrow from someone. With my business, I earn a daily profit, allowing me to save a little every day. I reinvest my profit into my business and use some for household expenses.' - Joyce Waweru, Grower at Bigot Flowers (pictured above, right).

Find out more about [our support for Inua Dada on our website](#)



Find out more about [Co-op's commitment to Fairtrade](#)

Co-operative Group Limited

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