**Frequently Asked Questions: Fairtrade Fortnight 2023**

*A selection of questions you may be asked when speaking about Fairtrade Fortnight. Please let us know if other questions you can’t answer come up by emailing* [*hello@fairtrade.org.uk*](mailto:hello@fairtrade.org.uk)

*You can also find more facts and figures that may help you answer questions in our* [*Key Facts for Fairtrade Fortnight document*](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources-library/fairtrade-fortnight-resources/key-facts-for-fairtrade-fortnight-2023/)*.*

**What is Fairtrade calling for this Fortnight?**

Choosing Fairtrade is a simple, yet powerful way to take direct action to support farmers during this difficult time - and it needn’t cost more. (Also see our [key messages document](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources-library/fairtrade-fortnight-resources/fairtrade-fortnight-key-messages/) for more detail)  
  
**Why are you campaigning on climate?**

Fairtrade is campaigning for climate action because the climate crisis is an immediate and ever-increasing threat to the livelihoods of farmers and workers across the world, from deforestation and changing weather patterns to rising temperatures, water scarcity and plant diseases. With growing harmful effects on land and agricultural production, Fairtrade farmers have told us that climate change is their biggest challenge right now (Globescan 2021). Despite contributing the least to the climate crisis, smallholders in low-income countries are disproportionately affected. Although farmers have the know-how and experience, they have fewer financial resources to adapt to changes in climate.

With the continuation of the global cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing impact of the war in Ukraine and the Covid-19 pandemic, the challenges that farmers face are now bigger than ever before. In many cases these challenges are combined with falling commodity prices (cocoa) and widespread shocks that continue to reverberate along our global supply chains. 

**How are farmers and workers affected by climate change?**

The number of climate-related disasters has tripled in the last 30 years. The last year alone has seen a series of devastating climate events hitting smallholders in low-income communities, such as deadly heatwaves across Africa and flooding in south-east Asia. From Mozambique to Bangladesh and Honduras, millions have already lost their homes, livelihoods and loved ones due to more dangerous and more frequent extreme weather.

Farmers are battling to reduce risks of crop failure and sustain or improve the productivity of their crops. Key challenges include changing rainfall patterns, temperature rises, sea-level rises. They are also facing more frequent and prolonged droughts, as well as irregular and more concentrated precipitation – this results in changing patterns in growing season, leading to crop failures or declines in yields. Rising temperatures are also creating more diseases and pests, for example in coffee, leading to a decline in crop yield and quality.

The future looks bleak. For instance, experts predict that:

1. Under certain emissions scenarios, as much as 50 percent of the global surface area currently used for coffee farming may no longer be suitable by 2050, due to the changing climate. (Bunn et al. 2015, [A bitter cup: climate change profile of global production of Arabica and Robusta coffee](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-014-1306-x?smid=nytcore-ios-share))
2. Many cocoa-growing regions in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire – who produce over half of the world’s cocoa – will likely become too hot to grow the crop by 2050 ([P Laderach et al, 2013](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257548214_Predicting_the_future_climatic_suitability_for_cocoa_farming_of_the_world%27s_leading_producer_countries_Ghana_and_Cote_d%27Ivoire).) These countries are also likely to experience challenging climatic changes, which include both more days with heavy precipitation, as well as increased risk of heatwaves and drought in some areas (Feurer et al. 2021- Fairtrade International Hotspots Report).

**How much income do farmers lose to climate change each year?**

It’s hard to put a figure on it, but in the case of Fairtrade farmers affected by climate events such as hurricane Eta and Iota, we’ve seen entire farms have been underwater and new crops washed away.   
  
**What have Fairtrade farmers themselves said on climate?**

At the COP27 conference in November 2022, many Fairtrade producers spoke about their experiences of climate change. Ines Zairi from Tunisiatalked about the fragility of the ecosystem and water conflicts, saying: “*Water scarcity has restricted agricultural investment and local authorities have also limited the digging of any additional wells which means a reduction in new agricultural investments. Moreover, social tensions are increasing due to water conflicts… We are all accountable for climate change, but decision-makers must take action in guaranteeing a better world for next generations and for preserving the environment.”*

Many farmers say they don’t see a future in farming. As Guatemalan coffee producer Submi Granados reports: “*For us in Guatemala, climate change means new generations are not seeing a viable future in agriculture. This is worrying since small-scale producers feed a large portion of the world. Appropriate finance and fair conditions are imperative to make agriculture attractive to younger generations, so they see value in it and a future.****”***

**ENDANGERED AISLE QUESTIONS**

*Questions you may be asked about why we are focusing on ‘endangered’ foods this uear.*

**What are you trying to show through your Endangered Aisle campaign?**

Our focus on endangered crops shows the urgent threat to the future of British shopping basket staples produced overseas. Take cocoa, for example: farmers have been telling us they don’t see a future in the crop because it’s so difficult to grow, while research shows that many cocoa-growing regions in Ghana and Côte d’Ivoire will likely become too hot to grow the crop by 2050 ([P Laderach et al, 2013](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257548214_Predicting_the_future_climatic_suitability_for_cocoa_farming_of_the_world%27s_leading_producer_countries_Ghana_and_Cote_d%27Ivoire).) *(Use KMs*)

Without our support for fairer prices today, farmers will find it even harder to tackle the climate and economic challenges of the future.  There is a huge amount we can all do. Fairtrade is asking shoppers to act now and choose Fairtrade so farmers can keep going through this crisis. Choosing Fairtrade is a simple, yet powerful way to take direct action to support farmers during this difficult time – and it needn’t cost more.   
  
**Which products are endangered?**

Many shopping basket staples we take for granted are facing challenges caused by climate crisis. For instance cocoa, coffee, bananas, cotton and tea.  
  
Does this mean that foods like bananas and cocoa will become extinct?

Bananas are the world’s most popular fruit. And with an estimated global export value of $7bn dollars per year, the banana trade remains the cornerstone of many countries’ economy. For more than 450 million people around the world, bananas and plantains are vital staple crops, particularly in lower-income nations. But amid the impact of climate change and the resulting threats posed by plant diseases like Fusarium TR4, the future of bananas is increasingly at risk, according to Fairtrade International’s [Fairtrade and Climate Change](https://files.fairtrade.net/publications/Fairtrade-and-climate-change_October2021.pdf) study. It warns that dramatic weather patterns spurred by climate change will likely deliver severe blows to agricultural production in key regions around the world, from Latin America to the Asia-Pacific. Banana producers in the Caribbean and in Central America, for instance, are expected to experience less rainfall and more extreme temperatures, while those in Southeast Asia and Oceania will see an increased risk of tropical cyclones.

Fairtrade’s Endangered Aisle warns that if farmers and workers aren’t getting a fair price to cover their costs at this critical time, they risk not being able to grow food in the future. A fair income for farmers and workers is vital now, not only so they can keep farming, but also so that they can afford to invest in making changes to adapt to the worsening climate and economic crises. It’s simply not fair to expect them to do both without our support.

**Are you warning that the cost of Fairtrade products will skyrocket? Will I have to pay more for Fairtrade products in the future?**

In the future there could be a scarcity of some shopping basket staples that we take for granted today, such as cocoa, coffee and bananas. Or they could become a luxury rather than an everyday treat.

Fairtrade is warning that the cost of many of the foods we take for granted that are grown overseas could become a luxury rather than an everyday treat if things continue as they are. if farmers and workers aren’t getting a fair price to cover their costs at this critical time, it means they won’t be able to grow food in the future. A fair income for farmers and workers is vital now, not only so they can keep farming, but so they can afford to invest in making changes to adapt to the worsening climate and economic crises. It’s simply not fair to expect them to do both without our support. Choosing Fairtrade is a simple, yet powerful way to take direct action to support farmers during this difficult time – and it needn’t cost more.  
  
**Does this mean Fairtrade is endangered?**

No, Fairtrade continues to play a vital role in campaigning for social justice for producers overseas. A fair income for farmers and workers is more vital now than ever, not only so they can keep farming, but also so they can afford to invest in making changes to adapt to the worsening climate and economic crises. It’s simply not fair to expect them to do both without our support. Choosing Fairtrade is a simple, yet powerful way to take direct action to support farmers during this difficult time – and it needn’t cost more. Choosing Fairtrade also supports biodiversity, environmentally friendly farming and helps farmers adapt to and mitigate against the effects of climate change.  
  
**What is needed now? What are you asking consumers to do?**

We appreciate the people who produce our everyday staples are not always front of mind for shoppers. We understand that UK shoppers are under financial pressure too, and that people are thinking first and foremost about how to feed themselves and their families, which is getting harder in this cost of living crisis. However, Fairtrade believes that if we don’t consider the producers behind our best loved products, then all our costs will go up in the long term, and we might have to get used to having fewer bananas, chocolate bars and coffee on our supermarket shelves. Unless we pay fair prices now to support producers to adapt to the climate crisis, our favourite foods will become more endangered in future.

There are so many things we have to think about – not least price – but we cannot leave smallholder farmers and agricultural workers behind. Unless we all do our bit now to support producers through climate change by choosing Fairtrade, we’ll either pay more inflated prices for everyday shopping basket staples like chocolate, bananas, tea and coffee or forgo them entirely.  
  
**Isn’t that a big ask for the public? There’s only so much individuals can do. Is it really just down to consumers or do the government or businesses have a role to play?**

No, it’s not just down to consumers. That’s why, at COP27, the international Fairtrade movement called on leaders of government and the private sector to immediately deliver on climate targets. We asked them to do this by: meeting the $100bn climate aid commitment promised by the end of 2022; ensuring climate finance delivers for smallholder farmers and workers by including them in the design of climate programmes; supporting farmers, and workers with the costs of adaptation and mitigation; and agreeing on regulations that tackle the root causes of environmental degradation, such as deforestation, by penalising non-compliance. In addition, at COP27 we reiterated our long-standing call for businesses to pay fair prices to smallholder farmers and workers.

(In the first year the campaign urged leaders of richer nations to keep their promise to provide at least $100bn in annual climate finance for lower income nations on the frontline of the climate crisis. These funds have still not materialised, nor reached those who are on the frontline of climate change). Climate finance must be equitable and must therefore reach smallholder farmers and producers who are best placed to invest in ways to adapt to the widespread effects of a changing climate, including low-carbon solutions.

More widely, Fairtrade’s global Climate Strategy and COP27 action plan gives recommendations for a more sustainable future by: restoring degraded ecosystems; implementing solutions and land-management activities such as ‘dynamic agroforestry’; enabling sustainable purchases from consumers; and global advocacy to drive fair and sustainable supply chains.

**FAIRTRADE AND CLIMATE**

**What do you mean by ‘climate justice’?**

Fairtrade is about social justice. A root cause of farmers’ inability to adapt and mitigate to climate change is poverty. We cannot expect – and it is not fair to expect – producers to absorb the costs of more sustainable methods of farming when they’re often not even able to earn a living income or living wage, because the price they receive for their produce is far too low. This needs to change fast. Better incomes mean more climate resilience in future.    
  
**Is Fairtrade really that sustainable: shouldn’t we be telling consumers to eat locally grown foods instead of buying food flown in from overseas?**

Ultimately this is a choice for all of us to make. We all need to better understand what we consume and the purchasing decisions we make. Fairtrade is working on understanding supply chain carbon footprints, and by working with businesses too, we hope to improve transparency in this area. We’ve been piloting a partnership with CarbonCloud to better understand and reduce the carbon footprint of four locations in our core commodities. Other external research has shown, however, that on-farm emissions can be a relatively small contribution to the emissions from Fairtrade products; for example, Azapagic et al (2016) demonstrated that around 85% of the emissions from a cup of Kenyan tea come from the electricity used to boil the kettle in the U.K., while only around 10% come from on-farm production, and around 4% come from transport.

The future of sustainable farming needs to be local and fair, but if or when we move away from communities where we’ve traditionally sourced products from, we must do so in a way that doesn’t leave them in the lurch. Look at the case of sugar – when rules changed to make it cheaper to source beet sugar from Europe, producers in the Caribbean were left even more marginalised and lost sales overnight.

Fairtrade is highlighting this issue to support climate-vulnerable communities that produce the world’s goods. As Fairtrade Fortnight gets under way now is the time to have conversations on supply chain and a global just transition – issues that will be critical in shaping the long term resilience of ALL farmers and workers in low income nations.  
  
**Do Fairtrade products have a higher carbon footprint than most?**

Fairtrade focuses mainly on products such as coffee and bananas that can’t be grown in temperate climates, or products that can’t be grown in sufficient quantities in the EU. These products are mainly shipped to the UK, rather than flown.  
  
**So how does buying or sourcing Fairtrade products contribute towards making food supply chains more sustainable?**

When businesses and consumers choose Fairtrade, farmers and workers on the front line of the climate crisis have a fighting chance of caring for themselves, their families and our shared planet. We believe there can be no climate justice without trade justice.

Crucially, Fairtrade sales and support from shoppers means higher incomes for farmers and workers across the world, offering them vital protection from price crashes, market volatility and climate extremes. Through Fairtrade, farmers and producers have the security of the Fairtrade Minimum Price, which provides a safety net when market prices fall. They are also protected by the Fairtrade Premium, an additional sum of money that farmers and workers can invest in projects of their choice, including climate friendly activities aimed at restoring natural areas or reforestation.

Environmental protection is ingrained in our Fairtrade Standards. One in three (for plantations) or one in four (for small farms) of our Fairtrade Standards is concerned with environmental issues. To sell Fairtrade products, producer organisations sign up to these rigorous Standards, which are specifically designed to protect the natural and human environment against exploitation. They include criteria on improving soil and water quality, managing pests, avoiding using harmful chemicals, reducing emissions and protecting biodiversity.

Fairtrade’s environmental requirements aim to support producers to progressively measure and reduce their carbon emissions. Fairtrade makes training available to producers so that they can learn how to grow in harmony with the local environment, avoid creating monocultures and use the latest agricultural methods, such as intercropping and shade-grown coffee to adapt to changing conditions. We also invest in climate friendly programmes and research and offer a framework for companies to co-design programmes with us to reduce their climate impact.

All these additional benefits go above and beyond any other certification system, and sets Fairtrade apart. They mean Fairtrade farmers and workers are in a materially stronger position than they would otherwise be, leaving them better equipped to face the climate crisis. Read more at [www.fairtrade.net/programmes/climate-change.html](http://www.fairtrade.net/programmes/climate-change.html)**Can you provide some examples of the impact of Fairtrade on climate change?**

Fairtrade can’t single-handedly solve climate change. But Fairtrade enables producers to adapt to climate change and supports them to combat climate impacts while promoting sustainable development practices. We’re already having an impact through some of the programmes we’re supporting in different parts of the world. Here are just a few examples:

* Coffee farmers in Ethiopia are swapping their wood stoves for more energy efficient models. This reduces deforestation, means women no longer have to spend so much time searching for firewood, and also greatly improves their health as they no longer breathe in smoke while cooking.
* Spice producers in Kerala, India, have used Fairtrade Premium money to install solar panels to reduce the amount of energy needed for drying crops, and rainwater tanks to see them through increasingly frequent droughts.
* A major tree-planting project in the Andes in Peru is helping to stabilise rainfall patterns providing shade for the crops and protecting against soil erosion, plus producing carbon credits in the process.

**If climate change endangers certain crops why don’t farmers grow something else?**

Firstly, there are very few other employment opportunities in rural areas, where most of the world’s coffee, cocoa and bananas are grown. It’s simply not possible for producers to stop growing a particular commodity: they might be living below the poverty line and have no access to capital to invest. This may be exacerbated by longstanding low and declining market prices that have left them unable to invest in education or build up vibrant and resilient local economies.

Secondly, in the case of cocoa: cocoa trees take 3-5 years to reach maturity, and live for 30 years or more, which means your investment in establishing a farm is realised over many years. It’s a very difficult decision to stop doing what you have done for years, possibly what your parents did too, when you have no other savings and can’t capitalise the only asset you do have – cocoa trees on a small plot of land.

Thirdly, notwithstanding the previous two points, earning income from other sources has to be a major part of the solution. Fairtrade Premium is used by cooperatives to invest in diversifying income, which is increasingly a key component of climate programmes.

**How is Fairtrade Premium used to support climate action?**

Around £131m of Fairtrade Premium was spent by Fairtrade producers in 2020/21. Of this, around 0.5% was spent on categories with a direct environmental impact, such as community environmental programmes, recycling and waste management and tree-planting/forestation. If we include activities with an indirect environmental impact1, we can see that around 9% (£11.9m) was spent on projects with a direct or indirect environmental impact in 2020/2021 (FairLens Premium Expenditure data 2020).

Between 2015 and 2021, over £49.5 million (8.6% of total premium expenditure) of Fairtrade Premium was spent on projects with a direct or indirect environmental impact (FairLens Premium Expenditure data, 2021)

**How is Fairtrade responding to the dangers facing cocoa production?**

We invest in climate programmes, such as agroforestry projects. For instance, in Ghana, climate change is making it harder to grow cocoa, plants are struggling to survive, pests and diseases are spreading and the impact on farmer incomes is making communities vulnerable to poverty. Common practices such as ‘slash and burn' and chemical-use has damaged soil and crops people rely on for food. With smaller harvests of cocoa, farmers can't make a profit and won't survive unless they change farming methods and diversify.

That’s why dynamic agroforestry (DAF) is needed and was established, exclusively offered to Fairtrade-certified cocoa co-operative KKFU. For the members who took part it offers farmers the opportunity to learn a new way of farming that manages even the smallest plots of land to mimic a forest, providing shade, improving soil health and introducing a variety of crops that help plants to grow and attract biodiversity. It has achieved great success with participants able to make an income from new crops that grow in-between their cocoa and who see healthier, less disease prone plants in their cash crop.

Research shows that Fairtrade’s top three products in terms of number of farmers (coffee, tea and cocoa) can all be produced in agroforestry systems, where shade trees can contribute to climate change mitigation. Tropical agroforestry systems can store up to 228 Mt ha-1 of carbon (Albrecht and Kandji 2003), which is comparable to some secondary forests. At the same time, agroforestry systems are more resilient towards pests, diseases and climatic stress (Mbow et al. 2014). The promotion of such shaded systems, if well managed, is thus a good example of a measure which contributes to both mitigation and adaptation. Considering these synergies, the systematic use of shade trees is recommended more and more, for example in West African cocoa farms (Schroth et al. 2016).  
  
**How is Fairtrade supporting banana producers facing challenges to their livelihoods?**

Life for banana producers remains tough. The cost of producing bananas is soaring, yet farmers’ crop yields are declining and market prices remain painfully low, placing a heavy burden on smallholder farmers and workers. For those without the financial safety nets and benefits that Fairtrade certification offers, the prospects can be dire – particularly as the climate crisis and cost of living crises continue to bite. Plant diseases such as TR4 are one of the harmful effects of climate change.

Every Fairtrade banana bought in the UK makes a significant difference to the 36,000 Fairtrade farmers and workers who grow them – and their communities. The Fairtrade Foundation recently [commissioned a study](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources-library/researching/monitoring-and-impact-resources/banana-supply-chain/) into how the Fairtrade Premium helps to bring banana workers in Ghana and Colombia closer to earning a living wage. Preliminary findings from the research reveal the critical role that Fairtrade Premium plays in supporting living wages. As well as contributing to increased cash benefits, the study shows that the Fairtrade Premium adds value in ways relevant to the local and regional living wage infrastructure. This includes investment in workers’ housing, subsidised meals for workers, transport infrastructure and construction of schools and health centres.

Elsewhere, CLAC is running a Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) to support banana producers across Latin America and the Caribbean. Run with funding from UK businesses, PIP aims to tackle the triple threat of low incomes, low productivity and the climate crisis. With a focus on climate-friendly fertilisation and improving soil health, the PIP programme has increased farmers’ productivity, climate resilience and in turn incomes. So far, the programme has supported over 40 farms, across seven countries, to increase their yields by an average of 36%. Last year, farmers’ incomes actually rose by an average of 10% compared to non-participating farms. At the same time, the programme also reduces the environmental footprint of banana production. Through PIP, farmers have managed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 29% and reduce water use by 12%.  
  
**Are you helping coffee farmers whose livelihoods are being endangered?**

Yes we are. A [Fairtrade study](https://www.fairtrade.net/library/assessing-the-impact-of-fairtrade-on-poverty-reduction-and-economic-resilience-through-rural-development) published in June 2022 shows that in times of global crisis, farmers who are part of Fairtrade-certified producer organisations benefit from more robust and sustainable farming households, specifically in the areas of economic resilience, social wellbeing, environmental sustainability, and good governance of their cooperatives. This includes coffee farmers.

The study (*Assessing the Impact of Fairtrade on Poverty Reduction and Economic Resilience through Rural Development*) finds that Fairtrade Standards, Fairtrade pricing and producer support programmes positively impact certified farmers and their communities when compared to non-Fairtrade certified farmers, particularly in times of difficulty and distress.

During the study, researchers examined the same producer organisations – including a coffee coop from Peru – three times over the past decade, gaining valuable insights into the changing conditions and perspectives of Fairtrade farmers. The research finds improvements in farming households’ financial situations, such as increased earnings, stronger safety nets, and boosted savings. In one specific instance, coffee farmer members of the Fairtrade certified La Florida cooperative in Peru reported earning incomes 50 percent higher than those of non-Fairtrade farmers.

**Other**

**Traidcraft have just went into administration – does this mean the end of Fairtrade?**

No, thousands of Fairtrade products will continue to be available across many different retailers, online companies and other brands across the UK and beyond. And the work of the Fairtrade Foundation to promote Fairtrade and campaign for a fairer future will continue.

But the news that Traidcraft is going into administration is a sad moment for anyone aware of the history of the fair trade movement. They have been a pioneer of that movement here in the UK, a founding member of the Fairtrade Foundation and have been a champion for trade justice for over 40 years.

Our thoughts are with all the staff, producers, suppliers and supporters who are impacted by this news. We will continue to build on their incredible legacy, supporting producers and working towards a world with fairer trade alongside Transform Trade.

Traidcraft have shared on their [website](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.traidcraftshop.co.uk%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cstefan.donnelly%40fairtrade.org.uk%7C25caba32746540d96b6908db04654b44%7C2cdd2414d03b4d28bcab551ebb489a59%7C0%7C0%7C638108605313129548%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=FCXL2wbVANNYyTUbZfwS9NgPM6vnlDVy4aBwhh8uOoU%3D&reserved=0) their direct suppliers, and if you would like to continue to support those producers who sold to Traidcraft, please check that list. If you would like to find alternatives places to buy Fairtrade goods in future, please check the [Buying Fairtrade section of the Fairtrade Foundation](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/buying-fairtrade/) website or consult the [National Purchasing Guide,](https://www.fairtrade.org.uk/resources-library/general-campaigning-materials/national-fairtrade-purchasing-guide/) which the Fairtrade Foundation produces every year.