Fair World Project Publishes New Report on Fair Trade Certification Labels
Evaluating Fairness Claims for Farmers and Farmworkers

Group Calls on Costco to Leverage Power to Better Support Farming Communities Who Produce Cocoa

PORTLAND, OR – As leading fair trade advocacy organization Fair World Project (FWP) releases a new report providing an in-depth analysis of existing fair trade standards, the group is calling on major retailer, Costco, to evaluate its buying practices for its private label cocoa products. Costco is the nation’s leader in organic product sales and is renowned for its treatment of its domestic workforce, with fair wages and generous benefits. The company has also made significant sustainability and sourcing commitments to reflect its social and environmental values. Given these commitments, FWP is calling on Costco to leverage its powerful supply chain to address the impacts of the climate crisis and a historically volatile market by sourcing cocoa using the certifications recommended in the new report.

“Around 2 million cocoa farmers in West Africa face the loss of their livelihoods as low prices and climate change threaten their survival,” says Ryan Zinn, Political Director of Fair World Project. “As one of the largest private label buyers of cocoa in the country, Costco can have a meaningful impact on the livelihoods of cocoa communities and the environment by sourcing from farmer organizations that use Fair World Project’s recommended third-party fair trade standards. We hope the global community will join us in asking Costco to use transparent, accountable, third-party fair trade certification to ensure the integrity of its social and environmental impacts.”

The report, titled Fairness for Farmers: A Report Assessing the Fair Trade Movement and the Role of Certification, details the role that fair trade certification and verification programs can play within the larger fair trade movement of ensuring fairness to farmers. It also compares the details of six certification labels used by consumer brands to provide a level of transparency on the social impact of their supply chain. Of the six certification labels evaluated in the report, Fair World Project recommends: Fair for Life, the Fairtrade System, Naturland Fair, and the Small Producer Symbol.

To read the full Fairness for Farmers report, go to: https://fairworldproject.org/choose-fair/certifier-analysis/fair-trade-report/


To sign-on to Fair World Project’s letter to Costco regarding its private label cocoa: https://fairworldproject.salsalabs.org/Costco
“Small-scale farmers face unique challenges not experienced by large-scale industrial agriculture operations. This includes lack of access to resources, lack of access to buyers and markets, and policies that marginalize these producers,” says FWP Executive Director Dana Geffner. “As we advocate for fair policies for all small-scale producers, we also see that certification and labels can have an impact for those who participate and it is important that consumer-facing labels are backed by strong and credible standards.”

Though multiple definitions and programs for “fair trade” certification exist, FWP works to educate brands and consumers about the standards reflected in various certification schemes, and how to keep eco-social terms and certifications meaningful and effective. The report’s findings focus on several key fair trade principles and standards, including: Prioritization of Small-Scale Production and Product Labeling, Auditing and Traceability, Economic Opportunities for Marginalized Producers, Long-term Trading Relationships, Commitment to Workers, Environmental Protection, Democratic Organization, and Capacity Building.

Key areas where the certifications vary include:

- Requirements for democratic structures (including cooperatives and other farmer-led associations)
- Prioritization of most marginalized producers
- Policies to prevent “fairwashing,” such as use of the label by companies with active human rights abuses
- Involvement of intended beneficiaries in defining what constitutes “fair” and setting minimum prices

“Fair trade is a global social movement with the goal of shifting power in supply chains. Fair trade can also describe specific products that meet specific standards related to fair trade principles including fair payments, safe working conditions, transparency, and environmental stewardship,” says FWP Communications Manager Anna Canning. “Consumers, retailers, and institutions that wish to engage in the fair trade movement can support the strongest labeling initiatives as well as advocacy campaigns that benefit small-scale farmers.”

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**Fair World Project (FWP)** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the use of the term “fair trade” in the marketplace, expand markets for authentic fair trade, educate consumers about key issues in trade and agriculture, advocate for policies leading to a just economy, and facilitate collaborative relationships to create true system change. FWP also publishes a bi-annual publication, *For A Better World*. For more information, visit: [http://www.fairworldproject.org](http://www.fairworldproject.org).