



Reference Guide

FAIR TRADE AND WORKER JUSTICE PROGRAMS

Use this guide to differentiate program claims and help you match your purchasing practices to your values.

KEY CREDIBLE PROGRAM NOT CREDIBLE PROGRAM APPROACH WITH CAUTION NOT APPLICABLE

Fair trade is intended to benefit small-scale farmers and ensure fairness for producers. The principles of fair trade include*:

- Long-Term Direct Trading Relationships
- Prompt Payment of Fair Prices
- No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor
- Workplace Non-Discrimination, Gender Equity and Freedom of Association
- Democratic & Transparent Organizations
- Safe Working Conditions & Reasonable Work Hours
- Investment in Community Development Projects
- Environmental Sustainability
- Traceability and Transparency

FAIR TRADE AND SOLIDARITY LABELS








LABEL	FAIR TRADE PROGRAM	GLOBAL NORTH SOLIDARITY PROGRAM	ANALYSIS
	—		The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) sets standards for the “Food Justice Certified” label and includes strong requirements for the buyer/farmer relationship for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmers to negotiate with buyers on fair terms.
	—		The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America-based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice.
			Fair for Life (FFL) is a fair trade labeling program developed by the Institute for Marketecology (IMO) and now held by Ecocert. The program has strong eligibility requirements, with a focus on marginalized producers.
		—	The Fair Trade Federation (FTF) is a North America-based fair trade membership organization exclusively for brands and retailers dedicated to fair trade for all products and practices. Members may use the membership logo on products even though supply chains are not audited.
		—	Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) is a standard-setter that has attempted to expand the fair trade model into new areas (such as the U.S.) and new sectors (such as seafood).
		—	Fairtrade America is the U.S. fair trade labeling member of Fairtrade International (FTI), a strong standard-setter for organized small-scale producers in the Global South.
		—	The Small Producers' Symbol (SPP) is the only farmer-led fair trade certification. The program has strong requirements for eligibility and focuses on farmer empowerment.
		—	The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is a global fair trade membership organization requiring strong internal control systems, peer review and external audits to guarantee that members comply with fair trade standards. Members must be fully committed to fair trade principles in all of their trading practices and may use the “WFTO Guarantee” label.

*These fair trade principles apply to traditional South-to-North trading. A similar set of principles has been adopted for North-to-North trading in the U.S., and we refer to these North-to-North fair farmer programs as “Global North Solidarity Programs” in this guide.

Voluntary labor certifications allow companies to opt into following a set of standards to improve pay and working conditions for farm and factory workers. The principles of worker justice include:

- Inclusion of International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions
- Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining
- Improving Wages with the Goal of Living Wages
- No Child, Forced or Otherwise Exploited Labor
- Workplace Free of Discrimination, Abuse and Harassment
- Safe and Healthy Workplace
- Reasonable Working Hours
- Clear and Adequate Grievance Mechanisms with No Retaliation
- No Termination Without Just Cause

Though Fairtrade America, Fair for Life and Fair Trade USA may have different levels of credible farmworker and factory worker justice programs, they are misleadingly labeling products complying with their programs as “fair trade.” This guide evaluates the standards used for these programs, but does not address the misuse and co-option of the term “fair trade.”

LABEL	FACTORY (APPAREL)	DOMESTIC FARMS	INTER-NATIONAL FARMS	ANALYSIS
	—	✓	—	The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) sets standards for the “Food Justice Certified” label and includes strong requirements for the farmer/farmworker relationship for U.S. farms of all sizes, focusing on empowering farmworkers to negotiate fair wages and employment conditions.
	—	✓	—	The Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) is a North America-based solidarity membership organization that brings together all sectors of the domestic agriculture system to advocate for social justice.
	—	✓	⚠️*	The Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) sets standards for the “Responsible Grown - Farmworker Assured” label for food safety and farmworker justice. There is a strong leadership development component, but democratic worker committees and collective bargaining are not required.
	—	✓	—	The Fair Food Program (FFP) sets and oversees a legally-binding code of conduct for employment conditions on farms and a direct economic transfer from end buyer to farmworkers as part of their “penny a pound” program. Starting with farmworkers on tomato fields in Florida, FFP has developed a successful monitoring and accountability program to address abuses and increase wages.
	—	⚠️	⚠️	Fair for Life (FFL) focuses its farmworker justice program on marginalized workers and includes living wages and democratically administered premiums. These products would more accurately be labeled as “fair labor.” FFL is neither farmworker-led, nor includes farmworker representatives in formal governance positions and should therefore be approached with caution.
	✗	⚠️	⚠️	Fair Trade USA (FTUSA) includes health and safety requirements and democratically administered premiums in its hired labor standards but lacks collective bargaining and living wage requirements. Its apparel standards do not include all steps of the supply chain. FTUSA is not a farmworker-led program and should therefore be approached with caution.
	✓	—	✓	Fairtrade America and its international umbrella organization Fairtrade International (FTI) include collective bargaining and benchmarks for living wages in their worker justice standards, applicable to apparel factories and a limited number of agricultural commodities. These products would more accurately be labeled as “fair labor.”

*EFI was started by domestic farmworker organizations and it is not yet clear whether its international expansion will include collaboration with local farmworker organizations.

HOW TO CHOOSE AUTHENTIC FAIR TRADE PRODUCTS

Five steps to choose fair trade products in line with your values.



EVALUATE. Look for full company commitment, membership organizations and strong fair trade certifications to distinguish products made by dedicated fair trade brands.



AVOID BAD ACTORS. Do not buy from corporate bad actors who happen to have a few fair trade products.



LOOK BEYOND CERTIFICATIONS. Learn which brands positively impact the communities where they operate and source from.



READ LABELS. Determine which ingredients (and what percentage of those ingredients) in the product are certified fair trade.



BE AN ACTIVIST. Ask your local grocer to carry more authentic fair trade products and get involved to change policy.



PHOTO CREDIT: Fair World Project.