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International Guide to Fair Trade Labels Released by Global Coalition of Advocacy and Education Groups

Unprecedented International Collaboration Provides Insights on Criteria of Prominent Fair Trade Labels to Support Responsible Consumption, and Production

PORTLAND, OR– The fifth edition of the International Guide to Fair Trade Labels has been released by a coalition of advocacy groups and academics from around the world, led by Commerce Equitable France. It includes the collaborative efforts of Fair World Project (USA), FAIRNESS FR, and Forum Fairer Handel (Germany) as contributors, considerably expanding the scope of analysis covered by earlier editions of the guide. The International Guide to Fair Trade Labels is unique as it is the only publication analyzing the criteria and monitoring systems of the main fair trade labels at an international level.

What are the major differences between fair trade, sustainable development labels and voluntary corporate sustainability initiatives? How useful are labels in ensuring fair trade practices? How do they address compliance? The International Guide to Fair Trade Labels spells out the differences between the most common labels and highlights strengths, as well as areas for improvement, for each standard. The guide also analyzes some of the more prominent corporate social responsibility initiatives and the labels they have created, including Starbucks’ C.A.F.E. Practices, Mondelez’ CocoaLife, and general sustainability labels such as Rainforest Alliance. It provides a definition of domestic fair trade, an overview of the main domestic fair trade initiatives and emerging labels seen around the world, and outlines the main debates surrounding these growing initiatives.

To view the guide online, please visit: https://fairworldproject.org/choose-fair/certifier-analysis/international-guide.

“The latest edition of the International Guide reflects the trends we are seeing in ethical labeling. There are many labels out there, each reflecting different criteria and different theories of change,” explains Dana Geffner, Executive Director of Fair World Project. “But all labels are not created equal. Through our side-by-side comparison and analysis, by identifying key criteria that creates strong, high-bar labels, companies, governments, organizations and consumers can make purchasing decisions that can have real impact in fair trade supply chains.”
Notable conclusions from the guide point to several developments:

- Certain labels have revised their standards since the last edition, including the Association for Sustainable and Trade Tourism (ATES), Small Producers Symbol (SPP), and Fairtrade International.
- The idea of “local” or “domestic” fair trade has re-emerged within the North and the South, generating important debates between having a strictly North-South version of fair trade versus having a more universal one.
- Fair trade standards are increasingly demanding in terms of economic, social, governance and environmental criteria required for fair trade certification.
- Sustainable development initiatives and labels that lack transparency and are less demanding in terms of criteria are spreading, thus weakening the principles of fair trade.

This update to the guide comes at a time when companies are being pressured to address sustainability issues in their supply chains. Companies are choosing to do so by either using existing sustainable development labels or implementing their own programs that focus more on their own goals rather than the input of and impact on farmers and workers.

“We’re seeing a growing trend of companies creating their own ethical labels and continuing to sow confusion in the marketplace,” says Anna Canning, Campaign Manager for Fair World Project. “This guide highlights the difference between weaker corporate-led standards and those that have strong stakeholder processes and are led by the farmers and workers they are intended to benefit. Labeling fatigue and confusion benefits those corporations, but there are tools available for people to match their purchasing decisions to their values.”

Fair World Project also recently updated their own reference guide to consumer-facing labels, which consists of a single page visual for consumers to quickly review the pros and cons of the most common fair trade and labor justice certifications. To view Fair World Project’s Reference Guide to Fair Trade and Labor Justice Programs, please visit: https://fairworldproject.org/choose-fair/certifier-analysis/reference-guide-to-fair-trade-and-worker-welfare-programs-2.

“It is imperative to accelerate the socio-ecological transition of our production patterns to make small-producers more resilient to the effects of climate change,” says Julie Stoll, Executive Director of Commerce Equitable France. “Today they are the ones who pay the highest price for the consequences of unbalances of power and climate change within the global value chains. Fair trade is an economic tool to support these transitions and this guide is intended to help differentiate between the various fair trade labels. When we call for economic justice we must include climate justice!”

In an era when major corporations are taking stances on global politics and social issues, fair trade is a business model in which action to support small-scale farmer movements and fair supply chains results in rewarding returns, job creation, and sustainable communities. The global fair trade movement urges policy-makers, business leaders, citizens and consumers to embrace creating a global economic system populated by fair supply chains and models of business that leave no one behind.

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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 further information, visit: [http://www.fairworldproject.org](http://www.fairworldproject.org).

**Commerce Equitable France** is the national platform of the fair trade sector in France, bringing together companies, main fair trade labels in the French market, retailer networks, NGOs working on awareness raising or on support for small farmers’ organizations. Commerce Équitable France’s mission is to promote fair trade and trade justice in public institutions, the private sector and consumers alike. For further information, visit: [https://www.commercequitable.org/](https://www.commercequitable.org/).

**FAIRNESS FR**
FairNESS (NESS: Network of Exchanges on Social Sciences) is a multidisciplinary network of researchers working on fair trade. FairNESS France, created in 2006 after the 2nd Fair Trade International Symposium (FTIS) in Montreal, brings together about 30 researchers from France, Belgium, Canada and Switzerland. For further information, visit: [https://fairnessfrancophone.wordpress.com/](https://fairnessfrancophone.wordpress.com/).

**Forum Fairer Handel**
The Forum Fairer Handel is the association for fair trade in Germany. Its goal is to raise awareness of fair trade, to see its shared demands on trade and politics met, and to achieve a stronger expansion of fair trade. The Forum Fairer Handel views itself as the political voice of the fair trade movement in Germany and promotes fair basic conditions for trade and agriculture worldwide. It is active in the areas of publicity, education, and campaign and advocacy work. The Forum Fairer Handel organizes the annual Fair Trade Fortnight in Germany. The members of the Forum Fairer Handel are organizations that work exclusively in fair trade as well as organizations that see the promotion of fair trade as one of the main points of their work. A broad network of partner organizations participating in the Forum Fairer Handel's working groups. For further information, visit: [http://www.forum-fairer-handel.de/](http://www.forum-fairer-handel.de/).