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## **The B Corp Standard is at Risk: Fair World Project and Certified B Corp Brands Call On B Lab Global to Strengthen Standards**

### ***Concerns Over the Integrity and Relevance of B Corp Certification Alarm the Certified B Corp Community After Nespresso Given Certification***

PORTLAND, OR – Leading fair trade advocacy organization and certification watchdog, Fair World Project, along with a growing number of Certified B Corp brands, have signed on to an open letter to B Lab Global calling on the organization to strengthen standards to maintain integrity and relevance of the certification. This comes in response to B Lab Global recognizing Nespresso, a subsidiary of Nestlé producing single serve coffee capsules, as B Corp certified in May 2022, despite a recent history of human rights violations on farms that grow their coffee including child labor, wage theft, and abuse of factory workers. B Lab, a non-profit organization, created and awards the B Corp certification to for-profit companies that voluntarily meet certain standards of transparency, accountability, sustainability, and performance, with an aim to “Be a Force for Good” in the business community and create value for society beyond shareholder profits. Alarmed by Nespresso’s certification, Fair World Project and the concerned Certified B Corp brands want greater accountability and higher standards to avoid “greenwashing” by the certification and are calling on the greater Certified B Corp community to demand the same. Brands who have initially signed on to the letter with Fair World Project include Certified B Corp coffee companies such as Cooperative Coffees, Exilior Coffee, Peace Coffee, and Thanksgiving Coffee Company, as well as other top scoring Certified B Corps including All Good Products, Dr. Bronner’s, Grove Collaborative, LAUDE the Label, and Lotus Foods, Inc.

The letter states, in part:

“The fact that Nespresso can achieve a score that allows them to be Certified as a B Corp and use the Certification to greenwash its business model and practices demonstrates that **the B Impact Assessment scoring system and certification process is in serious need of repair.**”

“Summarized here are key areas where we believe the B Impact Assessment and Certification process must improve if B Corp Certification is to maintain integrity and relevance going forward:

- Rather than a minimum total score, there must be minimum scores per Impact Business Model and per applicable Score Area.

- The B Corp Standard must center human rights in the Supply Chain Impact Business Model and reference the [UN Guiding Principles on Business Human Rights](#) framework, including a company's responsibility to respect human rights and provide remedy and remediation for harms.
- Unless there is demonstrated evidence of remedy and remediation for harms, and course correction to prevent future harm, human rights abuses should be a non-negotiable Disqualification Factor preventing certification.
- Sourcing a majority of raw materials from non-fair trade certified supply chains, CAFOs, or industrial farming systems should be added as a Risk Factors for consumer goods companies, requiring documented improvement over time.
- Risk Factors must be reflected in scores, monitored closely over time for required improvement, and re-certification should be contingent on demonstrated improvement. If Risk Factors are not corrected over time, re-certification should be withheld."

The full letter can be found here: <https://fairworldproject.org/the-b-corp-standard-is-at-risk>

"There's a long history of certifications getting co-opted by corporations as they reach the mainstream," says Dana Geffner, Executive Director of Fair World Project. "We've seen it with fair trade certification as well as with organics. Unfortunately, Nespresso's certification suggests that B Corp Certification is heading that way as well."

Dr. Bronner's, the top-selling natural brand of soap in North America, is the second-highest scoring Certified B Corp overall and the highest-scoring Certified B Corp in 'home & personal care' as well as 'consumer product & services'. Dr. Bronner's has also received the "Best for the World" designation by B Lab Global. The company has signed on to the open letter.

"B Corp certification should take account of historically exploitative companies who do not take care of the people and communities impacted by their supply chains," says David Bronner, CEO of Dr. Bronner's. "The fair trade movement was born to address inequities and exploitation in the coffee supply chains of major CPGs like Nestle, Nespresso's parent. Given Nespresso's recent and egregious track record of sourcing from coffee farms engaging in documented human rights abuses, it is disappointing that the brand was granted B Corp status."

In 2018, Peace Coffee was named among B Lab's "Best For Community" list, which includes businesses that earned a Community score in the top 10 percent on the B Impact Assessment. Peace Coffee has also signed on to the open letter.

"We take the commitment to be 'In it for Good' seriously," said Lee Wallace, CEO of Peace Coffee. "It shapes every aspect of our business, from the way we reinvest profits with the farmer cooperatives who grow our coffee to our commitment to bike delivery and giving back to our local community. That's not been the norm in a coffee industry historically defined by the likes of Nestlé's Nespresso—but we think it should be."

After the announcement was made that Nespresso received B Corp Certification, Fair World Project published "Nespresso: Known for Human Rights Violations, Now B Corp Certified," an article further detailing the issues surrounding the company's dismal track record on human rights and the environment, authored by Anna Canning, Campaigns Manager of Fair World Project. To read the article for further background, please visit: <https://fairworldproject.org/b-corp-nespresso-human-rights/>

“We’re seeing a grim trend of B Corp certified companies engaging in union-busting and other violations of working people’s fundamental rights,” says Canning. “Is B Lab going to take action, or is their certification going to become yet another way for companies to rebrand the exploitative status quo as ethical?”

Certified B Corps interested in signing onto the open letter are encouraged to contact Fair World Project through their website here: <https://fairworldproject.org/the-b-corp-standard-is-at-risk/>

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The **Fair World Project (FWP)** 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 produces the podcast, *For a Better World*.

For further information, please visit: <https://www.fairworldproject.org>