FAIRTRADE AFRICA

Strategic Framework

2026-2028

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FOREWORD

The Board of Directors of Fairtrade Africa – FTA is pleased to present the proposed FTA Strategic Plan for 2026-2028 — a roadmap that reaffirms our commitment to empowering smallholder farmers and workers across Africa and the Middle East to achieve secure, sustainable livelihoods and to have a decisive voice in shaping their future.

This plan is the culmination of a multi-stakeholder participatory process, involving producers, staff, management, partners, and the Board. It reflects honest reflections on our achievements during the 2021-2025 strategy period, and the lessons learned from the challenges we faced. We celebrate the significant progress made — from expanding market access and strengthening advocacy, to deepening climate resilience and transforming producer organizations.

FTA operates in a dynamic and volatile context. Climate change, market shifts, rising compliance requirements, political instability, and socio-economic pressures present real and escalating challenges for our producers. Yet, within these challenges lie opportunities — to leverage technology, access new markets, mobilize climate finance, foster inclusive governance, and engage in evidence-driven advocacy at local, regional, and global levels.

The FTA 2026-2028 strategy is anchored on four strategic pillars:

1. Fairtrade Market Access and Commercialization – positioning Fairtrade as the preferred partner for sustainable and ethical sourcing.
2. Resilient and Sustainable Agroecological Systems – leading the transition to productive, climate-smart, and ecologically sound farming systems.
3. Innovative and Transformed Producer Organizations – building resilient, inclusive, and self-reliant producer entities.
4. Policy Advocacy and Stakeholder Mobilization – ensuring producer voices shape the policy environments that affect their livelihoods.

These strategic pillars are supported by a strong enabler — Corporate Governance and Organizational Development — to ensure we remain agile, transparent, financially sustainable, and people-centred.

As the Board of Directors, we are confident that this strategy positions Fairtrade Africa to respond with agility to the shifting realities of global trade while keeping producers at the heart of Fairtrade principles. It is a call to action — for our producers, Fairtrade System members and partners — to work with us in unlocking opportunities for African farmers and workers in a way that is fair, sustainable, and future-focused. Together, we will continue to champion fairness, equity, and sustainability in trade — transforming lives, strengthening communities, and contributing to a more just global economy.

The Board of Directors - Fairtrade Africa

FOREWORD

The next chapter for Fairtrade Africa is here — the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan. This new strategy is shaped by the realities of our producers and driven by our determination to respond with solutions that are relevant, impactful, and future-ready. We will implement a market-facing strategy — partnering with Fairtrade System members to turn opportunities into sales, and partnerships into enduring scalable impact.

Over the next three years, we will work concertedly with supply chain actors to unlock new markets, strengthen brand visibility, and support producers to be competitive and ready to thrive in a rapidly changing global trade landscape.

We will embrace innovation — rethinking, how compliance is achieved, and how financing works for producers. This includes integrating cutting-edge digital and traceability solutions, adapting to evolving compliance requirements, and opening new pathways through climate finance, impact investment, and value addition to increase income and resilience.

Our thematic initiatives will be the engine of change — driving measurable results in climate resilience, agroecological transformation, gender equity, youth inclusion, and strong governance in producer organizations. They will be designed and delivered with producers, ensuring they reflect real priorities and bring lasting benefits for smallholder farmers and workers.

Clear operational plans will guide each action, with performance tracked through robust monitoring and evaluation systems. We will communicate results openly, sharing stories of transformation that inspire trust, attract investment, and reinforce the Fairtrade difference in both African and international markets.

The next three years will demand agility, innovation, and shared commitment. With the dedication of our producers, the commitment of our partners, and the passion of our team, Fairtrade Africa will continue to transform livelihoods and shape a better future for smallholder farmers and workers.

Executive Director, Fairtrade Africa

1. Introduction

The Fairtrade Africa (FTA) 2026-2028 Strategic Plan is the product of a participatory process involving producers, staff, management, the Board, and other stakeholders. It draws on lessons from the 2021-2025 strategy period, during which FTA made significant progress in market access, advocacy, sustainable farming systems, and strengthening producer organizations. FTA is an independent, non-profit umbrella body representing 697 Fairtrade-certified producer organizations across 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East, with over 1.45 million smallholder farmers and workers. The Secretariat is based in Nairobi Kenya, with regional offices in West, Eastern and Central, and Southern Africa, and a Middle East and North Africa presence through partners.

The new strategy is designed to respond to a dynamic and challenging producer environment, aligning with the Fairtrade International Global Strategy while focusing on strategic pillars and enablers. Formulation of the strategy involved consultative regional reflections, surveys, interviews, and workshops, enabling consensus on priorities. On the other hand, during the strategic period 2021–2025, notable achievements included the following:

- **Market Access:** Growth in cocoa, wine, and sugar sales, with 35% growth in South-to-South license sales; and declines noted in flowers and bananas for 2021 - 2023.
- **Advocacy:** Conducting studies and Influencing policy at national, regional, and global levels, including contributions to EU regulations like EUDR and CSDDD, supported by capacity building advocacy training offered to producers and FTA staff.
- **Sustainable Farming:** Over € 43 million invested in 49+ projects promoting agroecology, diversification, and resilience.
- **Producer Organization Development:** Increased compliance, leadership inclusion, as well as youth and women empowerment initiatives.
- **Financial Performance:** Exceeded the planned budget, growing income from € 13.08M in 2021 to € 13.44M in 2024.

This new strategic plan sets a path for the next three years to strengthen resilience, market presence, advocacy, and organizational capacity, ensuring producers can achieve sustainable livelihoods and secure their future.

2. Context Analysis

Africa's agricultural sector is central to economic growth and livelihoods but is dominated by smallholder farmers who face vulnerabilities from climate change, low productivity, and limited market access. While agriculture contributes significantly to GDP, farming is rainfed and highly exposed to environmental and economic shocks. Fairtrade Africa operates as the continental representative of certified Fairtrade producers, advancing fair trade principles that promote justice, equity, and sustainability. Its work aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs, contributing to poverty reduction, gender equality, decent work, and climate action.

Fairtrade Africa's role in this context is to strengthen producer capacity, enable compliance with emerging regulations, promote sustainable farming systems, and position African products competitively in both local and global markets. Fairtrade Africa operates in a fast-changing African context shaped by political instability, economic volatility, social transformation, technological advances, environmental pressures, and stringent legal requirements.

Political: Governance fragility, policy volatility, coups, and refugee crises disrupt agricultural stability. While some governments support local consumption and regional trade, civic space is shrinking in most countries. FTA must tailor regional approaches, strengthen governance, and support safe advocacy.

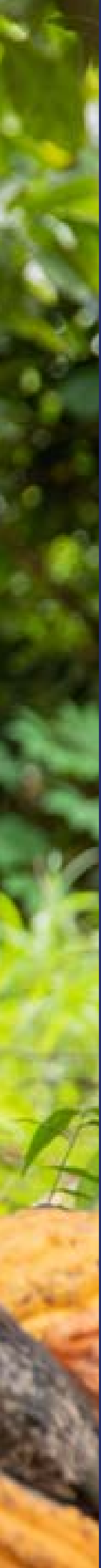
Economic: High inflation, heavy debt burdens, and high interest rates limit producer access to finance. Donor funding is shifting toward results-based and private sector-driven models, reducing traditional grant support. Producers increasingly rely on informal credit. FTA must enable access to ethical financing and diversify revenue streams.

Social: Africa's youthful population presents opportunities but faces disengagement from agriculture. Gender disparities remain widespread, while poverty persists. A growing middle class demands ethical products, opening new market opportunities.

Technological: Mobile-led e-commerce and Agri-Tech are expanding rapidly, offering opportunities for precision farming, traceability, and market access. However, rural digital exclusion limits adoption, requiring investments in digital literacy and infrastructure. Environmental: Climate change causes frequent extreme events, deforestation, and environmental degradation, threatening production. Compliance with environmental sustainability is becoming essential for market access.

Legal: Stricter global and national regulations—such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive and EU Deforestation Regulation—require traceability, geolocation, and sustainable production. Compliance presents both challenges and opportunities for market positioning.

Implication: FTA must navigate these interconnected dynamics by promoting resilience, leveraging technology, advocating for enabling policies, and supporting producers to remain competitive in sustainable and ethical trade.



3. Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Fairtrade Africa's operating environment combines unique internal strengths with pressing challenges and a shifting external landscape. FTA works across 29 countries, representing over 1.4 million farmers and workers, and must balance its mission-driven approach with the realities of global trade, climate change, and market competition. A clear understanding of its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will be essential to ensure that its strategy builds on its comparative advantages while addressing capacity gaps and mitigating risks.

Strengths and Weaknesses: FTA's greatest assets lie in its membership within the global Fairtrade System, which provides strong brand recognition, international credibility, and access to wider fundraising channels.

Its inclusive approach integrates gender and youth into programming, supported by over two decades of experience engaging directly with smallholder farmers and workers. A wide geographical footprint, competent staff, strong governance rooted in producer ownership, and established advocacy capacity enhance its influence. However, weaknesses persist in data and information management, commercial orientation, and impact measurement. Heavy reliance on Fairtrade System funding (core funds), underinvestment in branding, and a weak presence in North Africa.

Opportunities and Threats: Externally, an opportunity to expand South-to-South trade under AfCFTA, tap into impact investment financing, and leverage regenerative agriculture and storytelling for premium market positioning. Technological tools can enhance transparency and traceability, while diversified income sources and new partnerships could strengthen producer resilience. Yet, rising compliance costs, complex certification requirements, and growing competition from other sustainability labels threaten market share. Climate change impacts, political instability, restrictive civic space, and shifting consumer preferences—particularly in Northern markets toward local sourcing—pose further risks, alongside potential producer attrition from certification fatigue.

To remain competitive and relevant, FTA must capitalize on its brand strength, regional networks, and advocacy influence while accelerating digital transformation, building commercial capabilities, and diversifying funding. By strategically investing in data systems, impact communication, and market-facing capacity, FTA can convert emerging opportunities into sustained value for producers.

At the same time, proactive risk management—addressing compliance burdens, climate challenges, and market volatility—will be critical to safeguarding Fairtrade Africa's role as a leading voice for smallholder farmers and workers.

4. Fairtrade Global Strategy

The Fairtrade Global Strategy 2026-2028 sets a unified direction for the entire Fairtrade system, anchored in a single, clear ambition—to enhance the relevance of Fairtrade globally through differentiation that delivers impact at scale. Building on a shared vision of secure and sustainable livelihoods for all producers, the strategy responds to an increasingly complex and competitive external environment marked by geopolitical instability, shifting trade regulations, climate change, and evolving buyer expectations. By aligning global and regional priorities under one framework, it seeks to strengthen Fairtrade's position as the partner of choice for producers, markets, and society, ensuring that the movement remains a powerful driver of equitable trade and meaningful change. Relevance is tailored to four stakeholder groups:

Producers – Clear Choice for Next-Generation Producers: Fairtrade will enhance its value to producers through the Standards Evolution Project (StEP), simplifying and updating standards to reduce costs and complexity. Sustainable Livelihoods will be the central lens, prioritizing living incomes and wages while integrating climate, gender, and youth.

A Holistic Value Chain Investments approach will track all contributions—Premiums, price differentials, and programme funds—to better show total impact and secure deeper commitments.

Market – Supply Chain Partner of Choice for Businesses: Fairtrade will strengthen its commercial appeal through Traceability systems in key commodities to meet compliance and transparency demands. It will reposition as a strategic supply chain partner, moving beyond certification to deliver tailored "One Fairtrade" offers that address partner needs, improve retention, and deepen market relationships.

Society – Clear Choice for Ethical Consumers: The focus will be on Global Advocacy, co-ordinated regionally and locally to amplify producer voices, with sustainable livelihoods as the unifying theme. Power of Our Global Voice will unify brand messaging while allowing local adaptation, and partnerships and influence will leverage alliances with NGOs, civil society, and climate agencies to extend reach and impact.

The Fairtrade System – Efficient, Effective, and Relevant: Key priorities include launching the Fairtrade Digital Hub by 2026 for market access, compliance, and data sharing; strengthening FLOCERT Coordination to align certification with system needs; and delivering Project Simple for governance reform. Other priorities are Global Fundraising, Product Portfolio Management for focused commodity investment, and Evolved Decision Making requiring robust business cases for global priorities.

5. The FTA 2026-2028 Strategic Direction

The 2026–2028 Strategic Plan builds on Fairtrade Africa's vision of a world in which all producers enjoy secure and sustainable livelihoods, fulfill their potential, and decide on their future. It reflects lessons learned from the past strategy cycle and is grounded in Fairness and Equity, Empowerment, Sustainability, Partnership, and Transparency. The mission is Transformative, Resilient, and Impact.

The 2026–2028 Strategy is anchored on four strategic pillars and one cross-cutting enabler pillar, designed to strengthen market access, promote sustainable farming systems, transform producer organizations, and amplify policy advocacy. These are supported by a robust governance and organizational development framework to ensure effective delivery, resilience, and long-term impact for farmers and workers across Africa.

PILLAR 1 – FAIRTRADE MARKET ACCESS AND COMMERCIALIZATION

GOAL: To position Fairtrade as the preferred partner for sustainable and ethical sourcing, enabling increased sales under Fairtrade terms.

Actions:

- Strengthen trader relationships and develop supply chain partnerships.
- Implement sales enablement initiatives and direct business development.
- Innovate with new models, offers, and sales channels.
- Run integrated marketing communications across digital, trade, public relations, and media.
- Implement annual campaigns and foster producer–trader–licensee engagement.
- Provide commercial skill training, market insights, and value addition consultation.

Pillar 2 – Resilient and Sustainable Agroecological Systems

Goal: To lead the establishment of productive, climate-smart, and ecologically sustainable farming systems for long-term resilience.

Actions:

- Train farmers and establish field schools promoting agroecological principles.
- Facilitate access to organic resources, improved seed varieties, and extension services.
- Develop climate risk profiles and deliver adaptation training.
- Facilitate producers' access to climate finance.
- Support diversification and entrepreneurship training for alternative income streams.
- Provide access to investment capital for income-generating enterprises.

Pillar 3 – Innovative and Transformed Producer Organizations

Goal: To transform Producer Organizations into resilient, inclusive, and innovative organizations capable of leading their own sustainable development pathways.

Actions:

- Strengthen governance and leadership capacity in producer organizations.
- Increase participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups in leadership and decision-making.
- Support inclusive policies, mentorship, and member engagement.
- Build capacity for premium investment, partnership development, fundraising, and donor reporting.
- Support sustainable investment initiatives that generate tangible member benefits.
- Develop tailored support models, promote best practices, and leverage digital tools to improve compliance and operational efficiency.

Pillar 4 – Policy Advocacy and Stakeholder Mobilization

Goal: To empower producers to influence public policy, champion fair trade, and build coalitions that secure sustainable livelihoods.

Actions:

- Sustain producer-led country and product platforms.
- Equip producers to analyze policy, articulate positions, and engage in policy spaces at all levels.
- Generate research, data, and position papers reflecting producer priorities.
- Build alliances with government, civil society, and private sector actors.
- Develop farmer stories, impact documentaries, and high-visibility campaigns.
- Partner with media houses and Fairtrade ambassadors for advocacy amplification.

Enabler – Corporate Governance and Organization Development

Goal: To sustain a robust, transparent, and adaptive organization that effectively empowers producers and advocates for ethical trade.

Actions:

- Review and refine governance structures and conduct governance capacity-building.
- Improve HR systems, enhance staff welfare, and foster a culture of accountability and learning.
- Implement strategic fundraising and strengthen partnerships.
- Improve financial management for optimized resource utilization.
- Develop MEL frameworks, leverage digital tools, and build staff capacity for data-driven decisions.
- Support adoption and scaling of AI-driven and digital tools across programs and operations.

Implication: The strategy positions FTA to be more commercial, innovative, and impact-driven, ensuring producers are competitive, resilient, and influential in shaping trade and policy environments.

6. Country and Product Prioritization

The product and country prioritization is designed to ensure the highest potential for impact and return on effort.

Product Prioritization:

Of the 18 certified product categories, only 14 had earned premiums in the strategic period 2021-2025. These products were ranked using three weighted criteria: the number of Producer Organizations (POs) in production, the growth in Fairtrade sales proportion (CAGR), and the share of Fairtrade Premiums generated. Based on these criteria:

- Tier 1 products (priority focus) were identified as cocoa, coffee, tea, sugar, flowers, wine grapes, and bananas.
- Tier 2 products included oilseeds and oleaginous fruit, vegetables, fresh fruit, and herbs/herbal teas/spices.
- Tier 3 products comprised nuts, cotton, and dried fruits.

This prioritization aligns with globally led products such as cocoa, coffee, sugar, and flowers, alongside tea as a locally led product.

The Country Prioritization - Four weighted criteria was applied:

Growth in the number of POs (CAGR), share of POs, growth in premiums (CAGR), and share of premiums, with the latter receiving the highest weight. Additionally, rationalization was undertaken to ensure regional representation, including countries hosting regional offices, and prioritize those with significant PO numbers. This prioritization was based on the following criteria:

- Tier 1 countries comprised 14 countries: Ivory Coast, Ghana, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Mauritius, Uganda, Eswatini, Kenya, South Africa, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Egypt, Malawi, and Madagascar.
- Tier 2 countries included Burkina Faso, Morocco, Tunisia, Mozambique, Sao Tome & Principe, and Cameroon.
- Tier 3 countries were the DRC, Burundi, Togo, Zambia, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Benin, and Palestine.

In conclusion, the representation check affirms that Tier 1 countries form the core of Fairtrade Africa's operations and impact, accounting for 93.9% of all farmers and workers, 91.2% of all POs, and 96.3% of all Fairtrade Premiums generated. This strong concentration demonstrates that the prioritization approach is well aligned with FTA's membership base, primary revenue streams, and strategic focus for the 2026-2028 period, ensuring that resources and efforts are directed where they can deliver the greatest value and impact.

7. The FTA 2026-2028 Strategy Budget

The 2026-2028 Strategic Plan is anchored on a balanced budget of circa € 49.5 million in total projected income and expenditure over three years — an 11% increase compared to the previous strategy period, reflecting expanded ambition and programmatic focus.

Projected Income Growth:

Project Funding (Donor-Financed):

+19% growth, driven by deeper engagement with institutional donors and new funding partnerships.

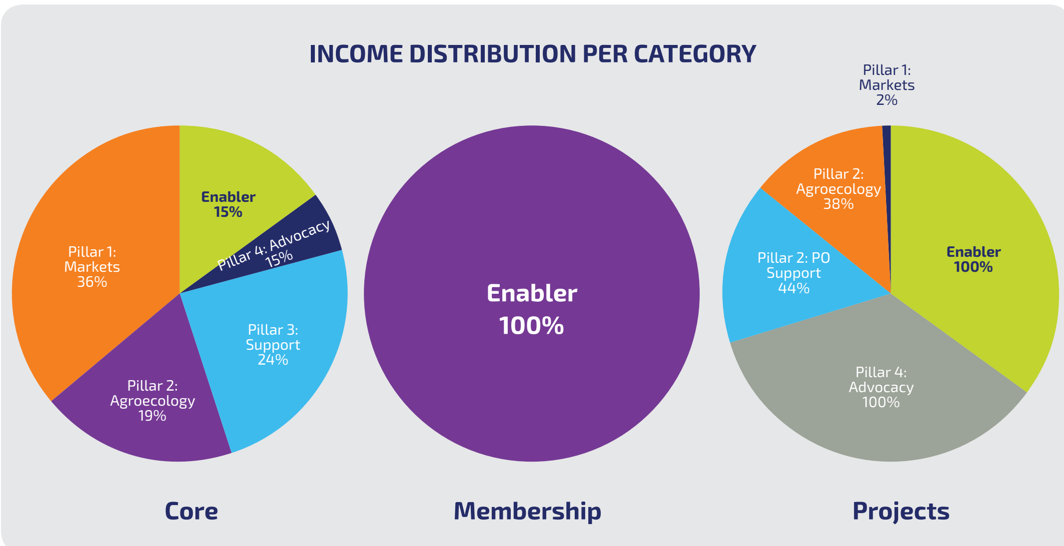
Membership Contributions (Producer-Financed):

+35% growth, reflecting stronger producer ownership and sustainability at the regional level.

Core Funding (Fairtrade International-Financed):

+16% growth through strengthened system collaboration.

Allocation by Pillar



Implication: The budget reflects FTA's commitment to diversifying income sources, enhancing financial sustainability, and ensuring resources are aligned to deliver impact across market access, agroecology resilience, producer organization transformation, and advocacy.

8. Strategy Implementation, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)

The 2026–2028 Strategic Plan will be delivered through a coordinated implementation framework, supported by a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) system to ensure accountability, adaptive management, and continuous improvement.

Oversight and Accountability

- Board of Directors – Approves the implementation plan and provides strategic oversight.
- Strategy Implementation Committee and the Leadership Team (LT) – Oversees implementation and ensures integration of the four Strategic Pillars and the Enabler.
- Strategy and Impact Directorate – Leads MEL co-ordination, progress tracking, and strategic reviews. M&E Unit – Manages reporting templates, collects and analyzes data, conducts mid-term and end-term evaluations, and provides feedback to improve service quality and impact.

Implementation Approach

- Integrated Delivery – All pillars and the Enabler will be implemented in a coordinated manner, recognizing interlinkages between commercial, programme, and advocacy actions.
- Directorate Leadership – Each pillar is led by a designated directorate:
  - **Pillar 1:** Commercial Directorate
  - **Pillar 2:** Programs Directorate
  - **Pillar 3:** Programs Directorate
  - **Pillar 4:** Strategy and Impact Directorate
  - **Enabler:** Shared by Finance & Admin Directorate, Executive Director's Office, and Strategy and Impact Directorate
- Operational Planning – An implementation matrix will set annual targets, cascade objectives to regional, product, and country levels, and allocate responsibilities across directorates.
- Stakeholder Engagement – The strategy will be shared with partners, donors, alumni, and allies to identify opportunities for collaboration and co-investment.

Key Activities and Timelines

- September–October 2025 – Develop a detailed implementation plan with clear targets and a Year 1 (2026) operational plan; and submit both to the Board for approval.
- Annual Strategic Review – Board-led and Strategy Implementation Committee-led assessment of achievements, challenges, and lessons learned.
- Progress Reviews – Monthly (programme teams), quarterly (Leadership Team), bi-annual (Board).
- Quarterly Resource Mobilization Tracking – Review funding progress and gaps.
- Half-Year Regional and Continental Reviews – Joint reflection and adaptive planning sessions.
- Annual Operational Planning and Budgeting – Informed by prior-year performance.
- External Audits – Annual, plus mid-term and end-term evaluations to measure progress against strategic objectives.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework

- Performance Management System – Tracks delivery of targets against operational plans.
- Indicator Tracking Tools – Measure progress towards Key Result Areas (KRAs) and strategic outcomes.
- Quarterly Review Meetings – Facilitate accountability and collaborative problem-solving.
- Feedback Mechanisms – Capture perspectives from producers, partners, and staff to inform adaptive management.
- Learning and Knowledge Sharing – Document lessons learned, publish a bi-annual newsletter, and foster continuous improvement across teams.

Change and Transition Management

Strategic shifts will require strong staff ownership of the vision and alignment with the new strategic direction. The Change management will focus on the following:

- **Awareness –** Clear communication of priorities and expected outcomes.
- **Engagement –** Involving staff and stakeholders in co-creating solutions.
- **Empowerment –** Providing the tools, skills, and resources needed for adoption.

Critical Success Factors

- Strong policies, systems, and structures to support implementation.
- Clear ownership of the vision across all levels, reinforced through the Staff Ways of Working Workshop.
- Adequate staffing in both capacity and skills, with focus on retention and development.
- Diversified and stable resource base.
- Consistent, high-quality MEL processes to measure, demonstrate, and communicate results.

Implication: Effective delivery of the Strategic Plan will rely on leadership commitment, co-ordinated departmental action, robust systems, and strong partnerships to translate strategic intent into measurable impact for Fairtrade producers

9. Risk Analysis Plan

Fairtrade Africa's risk analysis identifies potential challenges across financial, socio-political, operational, technological, and environmental areas, with corresponding mitigation measures and assigned responsibilities.

Risks	Key Threats	Mitigation
Financial Risks	High inflation, currency fluctuations, rising compliance costs (e.g., EUDR, HREDD, ESG), market access barriers, competition from other labels, funding declines, and voluntary decertification by POs.	Strategic marketing of Fairtrade products strengthened internal controls, forex monitoring, online payment adoption, accurate forecasting, timely delivery of activities, and improved partner fund recovery.
Socio-Political Risks	Child labour incidents, worker rights violations, political unrest, electoral violence, restrictive regulations, non-compliance with local employment laws.	Mitigate risks through training, stronger policies, gender empowerment, safe working conditions, and sustainable farming practices, supported by continuous monitoring, grievance channels, and stakeholder partnerships
Operational Risks	Project delays, donor compliance challenges, limited capacity, succession planning gaps	Staff capacity building, motivation initiatives, adaptable systems, adherence to security protocols, and succession planning.
Technological Risks	Cybercrime and inadequate data protection compliance.	Strengthening system security, compliance with data protection laws, and continuous IT risk monitoring.
Environmental Risks	Droughts, floods, climate variations, and inadequate disaster recovery planning.	Early warning systems, disaster preparedness, climate adaptation measures, and compliance with environmental standards.

Implication: Addressing these risks requires proactive monitoring, integrated risk management into operations, and strong coordination across leadership, program, finance, and governance teams to safeguard the achievement of strategic objectives.

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