

Bridging Policy and Practice:

Advancing Living Incomes & Living Wages in Agricultural Supply Chains

20 May (11:00-18:00) at the EESC (Rue Belliard 99, 1040 Brussels)
Organized by Fairtrade and the Fair Trade Advocacy Office in
partnership with the European Economic and Social Committee



Welcoming Words



Philippe Weiler
CEO, Fair Trade Belgium

Philippe explained that a worker in a non-Fairtrade farm earns 1.9 dollars per day, at a Fairtrade certified farm they earn 2.7 dollars. He asked the question: How can we ensure living income/living wage in every product consumed? Through strong companies embracing these strategies as part of their corporate strategy; working with strong governments in countries of origin to improve legal frameworks and tackle supply chain issues; and the EU Public Policy Roadmap.

His final remarks were that trade leads the world, so we must change the way we trade by integrating living income/living wage strategies.



Virginia Enssle
International and Institutional Relations Manager,
Fair Trade Advocacy Office

Virginia highlighted the urgency in ensuring that the people who grow our food earn a decent living. This also as a cornerstone to building resilient supply chains. Virginia shared the most important things for the Asunafo Cocoa Cooperative in Ghana:

- Better access to market for Fair Trade products
- Greater support for climate change adaptation
- Achievement of living income/living wage for all farmers and producers.

Virginia then concluded by indicating that trade can and must be a force for equity, where we also need to bring everyone to the table to commit.



Yeo Moussa
Director General, Yeyasso cooperative

Yeo spoke about producers and how they want concrete commitments and a shared responsibility in supply chains. He explained that producers are not victims, they are innovators who need to be supported. The policies and programmes created to do so must be designed with them, otherwise they fail.

Yeo highlighted the need to go beyond the discussion to propose stronger partnerships, because the cost of inaction is much higher.

Keynote Speech



Guillaume Delautre

Project Manager, International Labour Organization

Guillaume spoke about the troubling rise in working poverty which falls short of decent standard of living. Living income/living wage are critical in reducing inequality and poverty, every worker/household should earn a living wage for a decent and dignified life. Guillaume defined living wage as the wage level necessary for a decent standard of living for workers and families considering the countries and working hours.

Guillaume also highlighted the role of governments in achieving living income/living wage by investing in quality and accessibility of public services; strengthening public dialogue and wage setting processes. He also explained ILO's implementing projects on setting adequate wages.

Introduction to the Fairtrade Public Policy Roadmap



Matthias Altmann

Corporate Sustainability Expert and Co-Author of Public Policy Roadmap

Matthias referred to the [Public Policy Roadmap](#), which provides clear guidance to policymakers on policies and actions they can take to create an enabling environment for securing living income/living wage in global agricultural value chains. The structure consists of the following:

- What a living income and living wage is and why they matter for policymakers
- Governments as regulators for creating an enabling environment and coherent legal framework
- Harnessing role of governments as economic actors
- Governments as partners in stakeholder collaboration and support

Perspectives from Civil Society and from Companies



Solomon Boateng
Executive Secretary, Kuapa Kokoo Farmers Union

Solomon spoke about Kuapa Kokoo, the biggest cocoa organisation in Ghana. He asked the question: Why are Kuapa Kokoo farmers in Ghana not able to have net income for entire households for a decent standard of living? Solomon spoke about the gap in living income for cocoa farmers in Ghana which is 47%, and discussed the three key factors which are price, production, and cost of production

He also spoke about agroforestry, discussing introducing food crops, building resilience against climate change, and selling for additional income. Lastly, he mentioned the EU Deforestation Regulation, explaining he was in favour of it, if ample time to prepare was given.



Verena Aichele
CSR Manager, Human Rights and
Due Diligence, DM Germany

Verena discussed tackling issue of living income/living wage, which from the perspective of DM Germany should focus on four important elements to up-scale approach:

- Pre-competitive cooperation to create synergies and resources
- Incentives to pilot processes to identify mechanisms and scale-up.
- Enabling legislation in the form of due diligence regulation and anti-trust law
- Need to recognize that ensuring respect for Human Rights is a shared responsibility.



Francesca Monteverdi
Policy Advisor on Trade Justice, Oxfam

Francesca's insights focused on advocating for Unfair Trading Practices (UTP) directives, which regulate power imbalances between buyers and suppliers in agrifood chains. She explained how 60% of producers in Ghana live beyond the World Bank Poverty line.

Francesca discussed the UTP coalition and the ban to purchase below sustainable production costs. She also highlighted FTAO's research on UTP practices in global supply chains (non-EU farmers are submitted to unfair trading practices). She concluded by stating that the fight for fair price is a global fight, and European legislation can be an inspiration for other countries.

Panel 1: Governments as regulators for creating an enabling policy environment for a coherent legal framework for living incomes and living wages

Moderator: Heidi Hautala, FTAO Board Member, former Vice President of the European Parliament and MEP for the Greens.



Leonard Mizzi

Head of Unit, Sustainable Agri-Food Systems and Fisheries, DG INTPA

Leonard began by expressing that nothing is guaranteed in this turbulent moment in the EU. He spoke about hearing the realities of Africa and Latin America, especially in a context of political uncertainty. Leonard also mentioned the approaching moment of truth in terms of MFF. He referred to the need to put agrifood systems at the core of the agenda, and the issue with ODA shrinking which means financial institutions need to scale up transformation of cocoa/coffee value chains. Finally, Leonard spoke of the importance of trade integration in Africa, and the need for African countries to invest in strategic autonomy.



Charlotte Bernhard

Senior Policy Advisor of the department on Sustainable Economic Development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Charlotte discussed the new development aid policy in the Netherlands focused on trade, security and migration, water, food security and health. On trade, she highlighted continuing strengthening value chains with local and Dutch companies, and the opportunity to work on sustainable value chains. Charlotte stated that living income/living wage are a stepping stone to tackle human rights violations. She suggested a smart mix of measures as guidance and support for companies in Europe. She also stressed the importance of accompanying measures, available in the Netherlands.



Pamela Rocha

Diplomat, Culture, Trade and Sustainable Development, Embassy of Ecuador to Belgium and Luxembourg

Pamela discussed the Ecuador banana sector and the improvements regarding social sustainability. She discussed the process of investing more in products and exports, with some improvements even recognized by independent institutions. She spoke of the need to establish a democratically elected workers committee. Furthermore, Pamela highlighted the EU as the first market for exports, which makes it essential to have a positive agenda together. Need to strengthen international cooperation, and acknowledgment for their investments.



Michael Ekow Amoah
Deputy Director of Research and
Development, Ghana Cocoa Board

Michael stated that the lack of living income is a human rights issue, critical to address sustainability issues in cocoa production. He discussed ensuring transparency by moving from net to gross earnings; the minimum wage policy in Ghana; and the cost of production which can be reduced by providing subsidies.

Michael highlighted the importance of not excluding any farmers from the EU market because of lack of capacity or resources. He discussed adaptive, cost-effective climate resilient measures. He concluded by talking about mapping all living income interventions, engaging with partners and seeing where and how they can bridge that gap.

Panel 2: Governments as partners in stakeholder collaboration and support

Moderator: Honore Johnson, Senior Living Wage Specialist, IDH



Philipp Wagnitz
Director Quality and Sustainability
at Lidl International

Philipp discussed Lidl's investment in fair wages and Fairtrade, in 2019 in all Lidl countries you can buy Fair Trade certified chocolate, coffee, nuts and fruits. He spoke of trading food and non-food products; living income/living wages in textiles; and enhancing living wages in countries of production.

He highlighted Lidl's work with bananas, and spoke of the risk analysis and human rights impact assessment: in 2023 Lidl closed the linked living wage gap (first retailer).

Philipp also shared that every year Lidl pays extra during the banana negotiations as a voluntary measure, and the importance of collective bargaining. He believes there is room for improvement in the living wage gap, to have a level playing field in all countries.



Benjamin Akane
Lidl Project Officer at Kukuom AGL Cocoa
Cooperative Farmers & Marketing Union

Benjamin highlighted various partnership for cooperatives and Fairtrade implementation in Ghana. He discussed the issue of farmers not being able to contact retailers.

He spoke of Lidl's 'Way To Go!' project, where they work with Fairtrade to ensure that farmers receive the Fairtrade minimum purchase price for their products, as well as an extra Lidl premium. This helps farmers strengthen their position on the market, and promotes gender equality.



Miguel Zamora
Coffee Public-Private Task Force Coordinator,
International Coffee Organization

Miguel spoke about the goal of countries closing the living income gap by 2030, where the role of the government is necessary to be able to do so. A roadmap based on evidence supported by the government can close this living income gap.

He highlighted again the importance of the government, stating that no matter how big the supply chain is, without the government it is very difficult to have an impact.

Miguel expressed how rather than there being more initiatives for coffee like 'Beyond Chocolate', it is important to do more work around the goal. He also spoke of the EUDR and the importance of providing space for conversations with the governments.



Charles Snoeck
Senior Program Manager Beyond Chocolate at IDH

Charles spoke about 'Beyond Chocolate', the Belgian initiative for sustainable chocolate (2018). He discussed the reputation of the chocolate and economic weight (600,000 tonnes of chocolate per year). It is an important sector that is export-oriented, and there is space for collaboration to empower all stakeholders within their function. By 2030, farmers supplying will be able to make a living income.

Charles spoke of certification and welcomed legislation under discussion while stressing the need to have legislation which works for all stakeholders in the supply chains.

He highlighted the need to go where there is energy and willingness of stakeholders (chocolate) and use it to implement the same in other commodities.

Closing Remarks



Philipp Wagnitz (Director Quality and Sustainability at Lidl International)

Philippe closed the event leaving us with two main messages:

- Let's think about how new multi-stakeholder initiatives can be organized to be most effective: sectoral VS cross-sectoral, national VS cross-national.
- We need to scale up at the government level – it is time for government to create a coherent regulatory framework.



Klaas Johan Osinga Member of the EESC International Trade Follow-up Committee

Klaas emphasized that the discussion throughout the day was aligned with the EESC's positions. He then brought attention back to the current political climate, highlighting the growing challenges in Europe and the rest of the world, as right-wing movements gain momentum and global food security declines.

Klaas posed us the question: 'What does fair income mean?', and pointed to the importance of fair pricing and competition policies, highlighting the need for retailers to work together horizontally. He spoke about the need to support farmers in forming cooperatives, which could enhance sustainability and strengthen their position in negotiating better prices.



Jean-Luc Crucke Minister of Mobility, Climate and Environmental Transition

Jean-Luc Crucke asked: How can we hope for a decent life without a decent income? Cocoa producers earn less than 1 euro per day, while a chocolate tablet is sold for 3.5 euros. He stressed the need to push for dignity rather than economy; defending and stimulating sustainable consumption; and leveraging fair wage to economically make people aware and reduce precariousness.

He highlighted the importance of creating wealth without putting it in the hands of a few.

'Fairtrade is not a luxury, but a human right'