

31 March 2025

Certifying under '*special circumstances*'

Fairtrade has been piloting approaches for Fairtrade certification under the challenges imposed by severe conflicts in a country or regions. Pilots took place in Democratic Republic of Congo. The insights from these pilots lead to new Standard project (with the aim to adapt requirements and assurance approach to the given challenges). While mentioned new Standard is developed, the "special circumstances" approach will allow organizations in Democratic Republic of Congo to participate in Fairtrade until the new Standard and assurance approach are in place, but no longer than 31 December 2026.

'Special circumstance' means that only a limited scope of the respective Fairtrade Standards for Small-scale Producers, the Fairtrade Standard for Traders and Fairtrade Standard for Coffee applies to a limited group of Fairtrade certified customers as specified below:

1. Applicability

The "special circumstance" approach is in general open to Small-scale Producer Organizations and Traders in DRC that were Fairtrade certified at the time of the decision for certification under "special circumstances" on 2nd December 2024, subject to the following conditions:

- Decertification due to non-compliance / non-provision of Corrective Measures or Objective Evidence will exclude current customers from this approach.
- Previously certified customers in DRC that have already been affected by contract cancellation as a result of the pilot phase-out are eligible.
- Any open audit evaluation workflow need to be closed successfully.
- In case there is still any open non-conformity at the time of contract cancellation become effective due to the pilot phase, objective evidence for compliance with the affected requirements that are also in scope of the "special circumstance" approach is a prerequisite for eligibility.

2. Scope of Standard requirements

The scope is determined by the feasibility of being assessed in a remote audit that mainly focuses on document checks and basic triangulation of information on documents with the main contact person:

Applicable Requirements for SPOs:

- In general, only Core requirements
- Requirements in chapters 1,2, 3, 4 of the SPO and Coffee Standard will be conducted on document checks only (unless listed as out of scope below).

Additional transparency requirement

- Fairtrade products need to be identified as “special circumstance” in sales documentation. This applies to all actors in the supply chain

Out of scope are the following requirements or complete sub-chapters:

Requirements

Fairtrade Standard for Small-scale Producer Organizations (SPO)

- All Developmental requirements
- All requirements applicable only to 2nd and 3rd grade organizations
- 1. General Requirements: 1.1.5 – 1.1.8.
- 2. Trade: 2.2.1
- 3. Production:
 - 3.1.1
 - 3.2.2 – 3.2.5, 3.2.7 – 3.2.14, 3.2.16, 3.2.17, 3.2.19
 - 3.1.1
 - 3.3.8 – 3.3.10, 3.3.12
 - 3.3.20, 3.3.23 – 3.3.27
- 4. Business & Development:
 - 4.1.3, 4.1.5,
 - 4.3.2 – 4.3.5

(Sub)chapters

Fairtrade Standard for Small-scale Producer Organizations (SPO)

- 1.2 Definition of a small-scale producer organization,
- Subchapters within Environmental Management: Soil & Water, Waste, GMO, Biodiversity, Climate Change Adaptation,

Subchapters within Labour Conditions: Freedom from Discrimination, Freedom from forced or compulsory labour, Freedom of association and collective bargaining, Occupational health and safety

Fairtrade Standard for Coffee

- 1. General Requirements: 1.1.1
- 3. Production chapter

Applicable requirements for Traders

The following chapters of the Fairtrade Standard for Traders and Coffee are applicable:

- 1. General requirements
- 2. Trade (except Physical Traceability – see below)
- 5. Business & Development (= chapter 4 in Coffee Standard)

Out of scope are all *Voluntary Best Practice* requirements as well as the following (sub)chapters of the Fairtrade Standard for Traders:

- Physical Traceability
- 3. Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence
- 4. Production

Fairtrade Standard for Coffee

- 1. General Requirements: 1.1.2

3. Transparency

Based on compliance with the above limited scope a “special circumstance Fairtrade certificate” will be issued. A permission to trade may be issued before the audit for customers in DRC that have been affected by contract cancellation as a result of the pilot phase-out

The on-product claim used by the licensee must reference to “special circumstances”. To allow for this transparency, products sourced from organizations under “special circumstances” need to be identified as such in any sales documentation.

Oversight and Compliance
Fairtrade International