

Consultancy assignment

Benchmarking of evolved Fairtrade Standards and EU and USDA Organic Standards

Background

Fairtrade International is the international non-profit, multi stakeholder body that is responsible for the strategic direction of Fairtrade, sets Fairtrade standards and prices, and owns the Fairtrade mark and certification scheme. Fairtrade is an alternative approach to conventional trade and is based on a partnership between producers and consumers, where producers can reach better deals and improved terms of trade, be empowered to combat poverty having a direct impact on their livelihoods and their position to decide on their future.

Fairtrade is evolving its Standards to remain effective, credible and practical in a changing environment. The changes in Fairtrade standards respond to key challenges, including increasing complexity in current Fairtrade Standards, rising regulatory demands, growing risks such as from climate change for producer organizations affecting their productivity and livelihoods, and higher expectations from the market and consumers on how companies address risk in their supply chains. The evolution of Fairtrade Standards introduces a number of innovations including:

- Consolidation of 18 Standards (3 generic standards and 15 product specific standards related to agricultural products) into a single consolidated standard.
- A new structure based on 20 principles that describe Fairtrade's social, environmental, economic and management and governance outcomes.
- The adoption of a risk -based approach that defines the applicability of social and environmental standards requirements based on the producer organisation's risk level for each topic.
- A new approach to continuous development, replacing development requirements based on a points system with continuous improvement criteria applicable for high risk topics. Where possible continuous improvement criteria offer options for addressing high risk topics to give producer organisations flexibility to choose the most relevant action to address the specific risk they are facing.

The adoption of the risk-based approach includes a clear process and tools to enable producer organisations to identify their risk level for each social and environmental topic. Risk levels are determined using a combination of information from the [Fairtrade Risk Map](#), structured self assessments by producer organisations, and audit results as part of the Fairtrade certification process.

Fairtrade also intends to enable evidence from other relevant certification schemes to be provided to demonstrate effective mitigation actions already in place to address specific risks. Evidence shall be based on credible third party auditing. Initially Fairtrade will focus on EU and USDA Organic certification for this purpose, which is already held by many Fairtrade certified

producer organisations. Also, both certification schemes are run by public authorities and have credible processes to approve certification bodies and to enable and support consumer facing claims. This reduces the scope of comparison with Fairtrade to the content of standards while basic information about the audit regime and approved certification bodies still needs to be at disposal for Fairtrade.

The intention is to use evidence of valid certification and information contained in the audit reports from these certifications to reduce the risk level for producer organisations that hold them for related topics. The aim is to reduce duplication of implementation and audit effort for producer organisations. Also, Fairtrade intends to reduce duplicative audit efforts and focus Fairtrade audits increasingly on specific Fairtrade matters not covered by other certifications.

The [evolved Fairtrade Standards](#) are open for [public consultation](#) until 31 August. Publication of the final standards is expected in the first quarter of 2027.

Objectives

The objective of the benchmarking exercise of EU and USDA Organic certification standards against the draft evolved Fairtrade Standards aims to determine where and how evidence of these certifications can credibly be used to demonstrate compliance with criteria in the evolved Fairtrade Standards.

Specific tasks

Specific tasks of the consultancy will include:

- Establish a benchmarking comparison of the content of the EU organic certification standard and the USDA organic certification standard against the current draft of the environmental and –as applicable- social criteria in Fairtrade's Evolved Standards.
- Assess the relationship between the standards and identify
 - where requirements in the EU and USDA organic standards are stricter, fully cover, partially cover or do not cover the relevant criteria in the Fairtrade evolved standards.
 - for requirements with partial coverage, provide details to identify the gaps
- Pay particular attention to environmental criteria in the Fairtrade evolved standards that provide options for actions that producer organizations can implement and assess the level of coverage for the different options in the EU and USDA Organic Standards.
- Provide an overview of the auditing process required for EU and USDA organic standards, including scope and frequency of audits, procedures and timelines for closure of non conformities. Provide links to overviews of approved certification bodies and to other information from the scheme owners providing insights about the performance and credibility of approved certification bodies.

Deliverables and timelines

Deliverable	Timeline
1. Workplan outlining activities and timeframes	7 days after contract begins

2. Draft benchmarking (Excel table showing comparison)	15 October
3. Final benchmarking (Excel table) and overview report (word document or Power point)	31 October

Delivery and working arrangements

The consultant is expected to deliver the services based on the following :

- Provide the service home-based.
- Use own equipment. No electronic devices will be provided.
- Agree a work plan and timelines with the responsible person in the Standards Unit.
- Participate in meetings (virtually or in person in the office in Bonn if required) as set out in the workplan (i.e. planning, specific milestones, reports and deliverables presentation if applicable).
- Meet all deadlines on time, with proper times scheduled in advance to incorporate recommendations and observations from Fairtrade International.

Professional experience of the proponents

The proponents for this service should have the following expertise:

- Relevant qualifications and /or experience in a relevant field such as environmental sciences, environmental management, agriculture, sustainability.
- Proven experience in benchmarking of voluntary sustainability standards,
- Experience with Fairtrade standards, or other standards implemented by smallholder producers,
- Good understanding of organic standards and certification schemes is an advantage.
- Excellent communication and writing skills in English.
- If the proponent is a company, please provide the above evidence of the organization and a specific CV from the individual proposed for this task

Timelines

The service framework contract is expected to cover a maximum of 8 working days over the period from 1 September to 31 October 2026. The Consultant will start as soon as possible.

Proposals minimum content and how to apply

The proponents should provide:

1. Individual CV highlighting all relevant experiences related to this tender
2. A cover letter explaining the consultant's relevant experience and motivation
3. A daily fee rate (based on an 8 hour working day)
4. An indication of availability to ensure delivery of the final report by 31 October 2026.



Proposals should be sent via e-mail to a.amador@fairtrade.net with the email subject "Benchmarking FT and EU and USDA Organic".

Deadline to submit proposal: August 31

Questions. Interested parties can send their questions regarding this service to Alina Amador (a.amador@fairtrade.net).