Terms of Reference

Consultancy for a carbon footprint study on Fairtrade cocoa in West Africa

Includes addendum integrated on 05.03.26 (p.8)

1. Background

a. Why do we need this study?

Fairtrade is an alternative approach to conventional trade and is based on a partnership between producers and consumers. When farmers can sell on Fairtrade terms, it provides them with a better deal and improved terms of trade.

Carbon footprint data is increasingly important, because it is either requested by regulatory sustainability legislation, by voluntary sector objectives to reduce environmental footprints, or aspirational motives of companies wanting to demonstrate to their clients that they are in favour of sustainable production. Fairtrade producer organisations show growing interest in understanding the footprint of their crop production and how they can reduce it.

In an explorative approach in recent years, Fairtrade has commissioned some studies to estimate the carbon footprint associated to the agricultural production of sugar, cotton and oranges in a sample of Fairtrade certified cooperatives. In some cases, these studies also cover comparisons with conventional and organic production, to be able to compare Fairtrade against other agricultural approaches.

So far, there is not yet any carbon footprint data available on Fairtrade cocoa production, nor does a study exists that compares Fairtrade cocoa production with conventional or organic cocoa production. To close this gap, Fairtrade wants to commission a baseline research study to estimate the carbon footprint associated to the agricultural production of cocoa in a sample of Fairtrade certified cooperatives in West Africa.

b. Who will use the results and how?

The results of this study can be used by different stakeholder groups that will have insights on the drivers of GHG emissions of Fairtrade cocoa production and potential measures to reduce them:

- Producer organisations participating in the study (Fairtrade certified or not) will be provided with the results and could use the data to advocate for investments (from buyers, donors or other stakeholders) aiming at reducing the carbon footprint.
- Producer Networks could integrate the learnings in their programs supporting Fairtrade certified producer organisations. They could also build on this project to replicate a similar study assessing other regions and/or products.
- National Fairtrade Organisations could use the results in their discussions with commercial partners that have interest in understanding the drivers of the carbon footprint of Fairtrade cocoa agricultural production. They could use the data to

advocate for investments from companies buying Fairtrade cocoa, aiming at reducing the carbon footprint.

- Fairtrade international could use the results to support communication on Fairtrade global climate and environment interventions. It could use the data also as inputs for future interventions (programs, research or others).

2. Scope and Object of the study

The scope of the study is Fairtrade cocoa agricultural production in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Both countries together represent 80% of Fairtrade cocoa production[1]. In 2023, Fairtrade certified cocoa has been produced by 250 producer organisations in Cote d'Ivoire (representing 300,348 farmers) and 20 producer organisations in Sierra Leone (representing 47,723 farmers).

Ideally it would also cover conventional (not Fairtrade certified) cocoa production to enable comparisons; however, we cannot guarantee access to and collaboration with non-certified producer organisations.

The expected boundary of the study is the agricultural production under cooperative control. It will be decided with the research team if the study will focus only on the individual farm level or include also other first-mile activities under cooperative control (transport to collection point; centralised drying and/or fermenting etc.). Transport from cooperative to port and all others steps down the supply chain will not be covered by primary data collection. However, secondary data will be used to estimate the share of the agricultural production footprint in the total footprint (e.g; chocolate bar sold in retail in Europe).

The research team will outline in its proposal their capacity to include non-Fairtrade certified producers in the scope of the study.

The object is to assess the carbon footprint associated with the cocoa agricultural production from a sample of farms from Fairtrade certified (and conventional, if applicable) producer organisations. Based on the carbon footprint results, the study will also outline recommendations in implementation of agricultural practices that have the potential to reduce emissions and/or increase removals. It will also compare them with conventional cocoa production data (collected via this study or secondary data)

The research team will outline in its proposal the possibility (as an option costed separately) to include in the recommendations a feasibility analysis (mainly based on additional labour and additional costs) of the carbon footprint reduction measures identified.

This project doesn't include the implementation of emission reductions activities nor the monitoring of this data beyond this study. These activities could be part of an additional, complementary project.

[1] Source: Cocoa dashboard, data 2023.

3. Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to create carbon footprint data availability on Fairtrade cocoa.

The deliverables will give insights to various stakeholders on the drivers of GHG emissions and removals in Fairtrade cocoa production, comparison with conventional cocoa production data and potential emissions reductions and/or removals increase measures that can be implemented.

4. Research questions

What are the GHG emissions and removals associated with Fairtrade cocoa production in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone? What are the recommendations of changes in agricultural practices that have the potential to reduce emission and/or increase removals?

What are the conditions for Fairtrade to claim that the results of the study can be considered as an Emission (or Removal) Factor representative of Fairtrade cocoa production in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone? If these conditions cannot be met within the scope of this study (E.g because of the budget and/or timelines), what type of claims can be made with the results obtained?

How do the results from Fairtrade certified organisations compare with data from conventional cocoa (and, if applicable, other certifications: Rainforest Alliance; organic non-Fairtrade)?

What are the limitations when comparing the carbon footprint of different agricultural production systems (Fairtrade, organic, conventional etc.)?

How does the methodology followed through this study align with international guidance:

- From World Cocoa Foundation (GHG accounting manual for cocoa)?
- From GHG-protocol?
- From SBTI?

As a separately costed option: For each recommendation on agricultural practices what is the feasibility of implementing them (mainly based on additional labour and additional costs)?

Additional research questions can be suggested by the researchers.

5. Methodology

The suggested methodology is the following:

- Collection of data inputs on a sample of Fairtrade certified cocoa farms via individual surveys to farmers[2].

[2] No physical measurements of GHG emissions will be requested (e.g: through chambers techniques)

    - The research team is in charge of the data collection and needs to outline in its proposal how they will proceed (E.g : through locally recruited data enumerators).
    - Use of a survey tool (E.g Kobo toolbox) to collect data offline is recommended. Potential license costs must be included in the budget.
    - Fairtrade (in particular staff from Fairtrade Africa) will support the research team in the sampling strategy and connection to the certified producer organisations.
- Processing of the data inputs in a reliable and recognised GHG tool.
    - The preferred GHG tool is the Cool Farm Platform. Fairtrade International is member of the Cool farm Alliance and can provide access to unlimited assessments to the research team for the duration of the study.
    - Another tool can be recommended with justification on why it would be more beneficial for Fairtrade to use it. Potential license costs for the alternative tool cannot be covered by the budget of this study.
- Specific attention would be given to the estimation of the carbon sequestration associated with out-of-crop trees biomass growth. Considering than no baseline tree measurements are available.
- A complimentary methodology to assess Land-Use Change emissions based on satellite imaging will be proposed by the research team. The results from this analysis will be used as inputs (supporting, complementing or replacing LUC data obtained via the Cool Farm Platform).
- Results will be delivered through a report that will include at least:
    - The methodology of the study.
    - The analysis of the results (see more in Annex 1).
    - Recommendations on agricultural practices to reduce the carbon footprint.

However, the research team can propose an alternative methodology, justifying why it would lead to more reliable and more representative results.

Capacity building

The research team will outline in its proposal what trainings will be planned for data enumerators, for the technical staff from producer organisations and for farmers.

IT tools

If the purchasing of IT tools for data enumerators (E.g: tablets) is considered necessary, this has to be included in the budget.

Soil analyses

The research team will indicate in its proposal the feasibility and relevancy to finance (through this budget) and oversee collection of soil samples and their analysis to leverage the results in the carbon footprint research.

Comparing Fairtrade conventional and Fairtrade organic

The study needs to capture data from these 2 production systems. It is expected that this will be done through analysis of Fairtrade cocoa production in Cote d'Ivoire and analysis of

Fairtrade-organic cocoa production in Sierra Leone. A comparison analysis will be done. However, it is acknowledged that the possibility to compare will probably be limited by the fact that the 2 production systems sit in 2 different countries.

Comparing Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade

Priority should be given to an assessment of conventional cocoa based on data collection made through this study (to ensure better comparability). If access to non-Fairtrade certified organisations cannot be secured, the comparison will rely on secondary data.

Support from Fairtrade

The research team will be supported by a steering committee comprised of at least 1 representative of each of these organisations: Fairtrade International, the 3 National Fairtrade Organisations; Fairtrade Africa.

Staff from Fairtrade Africa will support the research team in particular in the sampling strategy and connection to the certified producer organisations.

Fairtrade will also support in managing consent for data sharing from certified producer organisations.

6. Deliverables and Milestones

a. Deliverables

- A virtual kick-off meeting in early April.
- An inception report of no more than 15 pages including the proposed methodology for answering the research questions.
- A presentation and discussion of the inception report in an online meeting.
- A final report of no more than 50-60 pages, including an executive summary and graphical illustrations where possible (excluding annex).
- A validation workshop, presenting and discussing the final report and its findings and recommendations with the core team engaged in this study in September 2026.
- In addition, 2 engaging webinars, presenting and discussing the results in October 2026:
    - 1 for the participating producer organisations.
    - 1 for the wider Fairtrade audience.

All documents produced in the course of the assignment are the property of Fairtrade International.

b. Milestones

- Kick-off: 01 April 2026.
- Deadline for inception report: 17 April 2026.
- Presentation and discussion of inception report: Late April.
- Data collection at origin: May-July 2026.
- Deadline for final report: 30 September 2026.
- Presentation and discussion of final report to project team: 1st half of October 2026.
- Webinars for wider Fairtrade audience: late October 2026.

7. Qualifications of the researcher/consultant (or team)

The project will be awarded to a researcher/institution which can propose a research team meeting the following criteria:

a. *Essential:*
- Fluency in English and French both written and spoken.
- Existing research experience including knowledge of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods as well as conceptual skills needed for research design.
- Proven experience in conducting carbon footprint studies.
- Proven understanding of primary data collection challenges.
- Ability to present data concisely and clearly.
- Demonstrable policy on research ethics.

b. *Asset:*
- Proven experience of use of the Cool farm Platform.
- Proven experience of carrying out carbon footprint studies in small holder context, in particular for cocoa in West Africa.
- Existing networks of local researchers and/or data enumerators in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone.
- Understanding of Fairtrade principles, research ethics policy, key tools and approaches, including the Fairtrade theory of Change, pricing & premium regulations, standards and producer support, and Fairtrade structures.

8. Envisaged Timeline

a.	Date advertised:	18 February 2026
b.	Deadline for submission of proposals:	13 March 2026
c.	Contracting by:	01 April 2026
d.	End of contract:	31 October 2026

9. Budget

The available budget is 55 000 € incl. 19% VAT to be paid in Germany (as this is where Fairtrade International, the body commissioning this assignment, is based).

Other commissioning parties of the study are Fairtrade Germany, Fairtrade Austria and Max Havelaar France; with support from Fairtrade Africa.

10. Application process

Please hand in your proposal comprising of a technical and financial offer, of 8-10 pages (not including CVs) until 13 March 2026 to n.dutois@fairtrade.net.

a. The technical offer should clarify the consultants' understanding of the assignment and the topic at hand, a proposal for a suitable research design including all data

collection and analysis instruments considered for answering the questions of this study, a workplan including the team collaboration, time plan and division of roles as well as a communication plan with Fairtrade International and ethics considerations.

b. The financial offer should include a calculation of days and personnel needed per work package of the assignment, including any potential expenses (e.g. for travel etc.).

c. The CVs of the individual consultants working on the assignment (providing proof of the qualifications) should be provided in the Annex together with other relevant documentation (e.g. work examples if applicable).

The proposal and all attached documents should be in English.

Addendum -05.03.26

Clarifications to the scope, following questions from several potential applicants:

1. The financial proposal should be within the budget indicated. If some activities are considered impossible to cover within the budget, these activities should be clearly costed separately. In addition to the optional research question (feasibility assessment), the following activities might be costed separately: primary data collection for the control group (non-Fairtrade cocoa production); LUC emissions complementary analysis based on satellite imaging open data; tree measurements for removals; soil analyses.
   Only as last resort the coverage of Sierra Leone could also be costed separately.

   As long as the robustness and credibility of the research is not affected, applications that cover more activities within the budget, in particular the country Sierra Leone, will be prioritised.

2. The estimated number of farms (and producer organisations) to be included in the primary data collection should be indicated (per country) in the technical proposal.

3. The 50/60 pages of the report is a maximum and not an objective. While introduction and context information are welcomed, the report should focus on the analysis of the results and a good report with all necessary information can be 30 pages long. Graphs and tables are highly recommended to make the report easy to read.
   As last resort, if it allows to significantly reduce the budget, the report can consist only of a slide deck.

4. The location of the Fairtrade certified producer organisations is available at the following link: https://www.flocert.net/fairtrade-customer-search/

5. Presenting the results with a distinction between FLAG and non-FLAG emissions is not a pre-requisite.