



Consultancy for the Development of a Social Return on Investment (SROI) Concept in the Fairtrade Context

Commissioned by: Fairtrade International, Max Havelaar France

Supported by: Fairtrade Foundation, Fairtrade America

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1. Background

Fairtrade is a global movement and certification system that works to achieve fairer trading conditions and better rights for farmers and workers in developing countries. At the heart of the Fairtrade (FT) model is a commitment to paying producers a Fairtrade Minimum Price, which acts as a safety net against volatile commodity markets, and the Fairtrade Premium — an additional sum paid on top of the selling price that farmers' and workers' producer organisations (POs) through their Premium committees democratically invest into projects of their own choice.

The Fairtrade Premium is a defining and distinctive feature of the Fairtrade system. Producer organisations channel premium funds into a wide range of investments spanning business development, agricultural inputs, social infrastructure such as healthcare and education, and environmental initiatives. In 2023 alone, producers earned more than €211 million in Fairtrade Premium; over the past decade, total premium earnings have exceeded €1.5 billion. Despite this significant financial flow, the full social, economic, social and environmental value generated by FT Premium investments remains largely unquantified in systematic terms. One goal of this consultancy is to give Fairtrade the practical tools and approaches it needs to leverage this opportunity and work better with commercial partners.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is an internationally recognised methodology, developed and standardised by f.e. [Social Value International](#) (originally the SROI Network), which enables organisations to measure, manage and account for social, economic and environmental value in a rigorous and consistent manner. SROI builds on eight core principles: involve stakeholders; understand what changes; value the things that matter; only include what is material; do not overclaim; be transparent; verify the result; and be responsive. The methodology produces an impact ratio — for example, a ratio of 3:1 means that for every €1 invested, €3 of social value is generated.

Interest in applying the SROI methodology within the Fairtrade system has been growing across multiple stakeholder groups. An initial exchange has identified the Fairtrade Premium — and specifically a subset of premium investment categories — as a promising and appropriate subject for a first SROI application. A phased approach was agreed in principle: conceptual and preparatory work in 2026 to serve as proof of concept and prepare for full implementation in 2027 and beyond. **The present consultancy forms the first, concept-development phase of this initiative** and is jointly commissioned by Fairtrade International and Max Havelaar France, and supported by Fairtrade Foundation and Fairtrade America.

2. Core Objective and Research Questions

Objective

The objective of this consultancy is to **develop 2-3 (3 preferred, 2 fall-back option) well-documented, methodologically rigorous concepts for applying the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology to the Fairtrade context**, with the Fairtrade Premium as the subject of analysis.

Specifically, the assignment aims to:

- **Assess the feasibility** of a full SROI study in the Fairtrade context, including an analysis of data availability, data gaps, and options for addressing those gaps. To this end, the consultants are expected to present a framework to assess and compare the suitability of multiple potential SROI cases against a set of methodological and practical criteria — including for example data availability, stakeholder accessibility, commercial relevance, feasibility of monetisation, etc.
- Based on this assessment, **develop 2-3 concrete, operationally grounded scenarios** for how the SROI methodology could be applied in the Fairtrade context, each specifying a commodity, geographic region, premium investment category, and a recommended SROI approach (prospective/retrospective).

These 2-3 SROI scenarios should entail:

- 1-2 prospective SROI cases, to inform future SROI implementation. For the prospective (forecast) SROI concept an implementation period of 2027 to 2029 should be considered.
- 1 retrospective SROI case. For the retrospective (evaluative) SROI application — for example where rich historical premium use and accompanying external and FT program data already exists — this should be presented as an indicative, retrospective SROI calculation for one year (latest premium data available for 2024), showcasing the potential of SROI analysis in the Fairtrade context.
- a mix of premium investment categories, ideally reflecting the social, environmental and economic dimensions of Premium investment.
- a preliminary impact map for each of the 2-3 cases that identifies the relevant inputs, outputs, outcomes and stakeholders for the selected scope, drawing on the SROI six-stage framework.
- appropriate financial proxies and proxy sources for the monetisation of key outcomes in the Fairtrade context.
- a methodological roadmap and work plan for implementing a full SROI study including any conditions or data collection activities that would need to be in place prior to implementation in 2027.

Research Questions

The following core research questions guide the assignment. They can be adjusted in the proposal of the consultants and during the kick-phase of the assignment. Additional research questions may also be proposed by the consultants and the commissioning party, based on their review of the literature and initial stakeholder consultations.

SROI case selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which commodity, region, and premium investment category combinations are most amenable to an SROI analysis, considering data availability, stakeholder accessibility, commercial relevance, and methodological feasibility? • What criteria should guide the selection of cases for an SROI analysis in the Fairtrade context, and how do the indicative options compare against those criteria?
Operationalisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What financial proxies exist for the monetisation of key outcomes in the relevant agricultural and geographic context, and how robust are these sources? • Are there established repositories of financial proxies (e.g. Social Value International, World Bank, UKRI) that are applicable to the Fairtrade context, and what adaptations may be needed?
Feasibility and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data is currently available within the Fairtrade system (including from existing programmes and studies, the Fairtrade Impact Platform, the latest premium data analysis, and the recent GI evidence mapping study) that could serve as inputs to an SROI analysis? • What are the critical data gaps, and what primary data collection would be required for a full SROI study in the future? What are the expected costs of such additional data collections? • To what extent could existing research, including RCT evidence from comparable contexts, be used to strengthen the attribution and deadweight assessment in a prospective SROI application? • What are the key methodological risks and limitations of applying SROI to the Fairtrade Premium, and how can these be mitigated?

Who Will Use the Results and How?

The results of this concept development work will be used by stakeholders within the Fairtrade system. The primary purpose is to equip Fairtrade International and Max Havelaar France with a documented, methodologically sound concept that enables a decision on whether and how to proceed with a full SROI analysis of Fairtrade Premium investments.

The following is an indicative, non-exhaustive overview of how each stakeholder group may use the outputs:

Fairtrade International (FI) – Global Impact Team:

- Use the concept document to assess methodological feasibility and resource requirements for a full SROI study.
- Inform internal decision-making on commissioning a subsequent evaluative or forecast SROI analysis.
- Identify data gaps and initiate preparatory data collection conversations with relevant programmes.

Producer Networks (PNs):

- Understand how their producer organisations' Premium investment decisions can be captured and valued under an SROI framework.
- Gain insight into the types of stakeholder engagement that a full SROI study would require at producer level.

National Fairtrade Organisations (NFOs):

- Use concept findings to communicate the potential value of SROI evidence to commercial partners and funders.
- Explore opportunities to co-fund or co-implement a subsequent full SROI study within their programmatic or partnership workstreams.

Producer Organisations (POs):

- Gain an early understanding of what participation in an SROI study would require in terms of data provision and stakeholder engagement.

3. Object of the Study and Scope

This consultancy concerns primarily a concept development assignment — not a full SROI analysis. The consultant will develop 2-3 (3 preferred, 2 fall-back option) detailed methodological concepts specifying how the SROI methodology can be applied in the Fairtrade context, with the Fairtrade Premium as the subject of analysis.

The study will focus on the **Fairtrade Premium** as received and invested by (preferred) Small-scale Producer Organisations (SPOs) or (alternatively) HLOs (Hired Labor Organisations) via their premium committees. Given the breadth of premium use categories (see also latest [Global Monitoring Report](#), 2026), the scope will need to be limited to defined premium investment category/categories (e.g. education, healthcare, agricultural inputs, or business development), in consultation with Fairtrade International during the inception or data collection (interviews with key stakeholders) phase of the assignment.

Rather than pre-selecting a single commodity, premium category and region, a key task of this consultancy is to explore and assess the relative suitability of a range of possible settings, through desk review and stakeholder consultations, and to **develop 2-3 concrete scenarios for how an SROI methodology could be applied in the Fairtrade context.**

The following products and regions are indicative starting points for this exploration, and are not exhaustive:

- Cocoa / West Africa (e.g. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana): High commercial partner interest; potential to build on past/existing programme data collection activities.
- Banana / Latin America: An SROI analysis was previously conducted retrospectively for a banana Small Producer Organisation (SPO) in Colombia, providing a potential reference case.
- Coffee / Latin America: High commercial interest as well, potential to build on existing programs.
- Flowers / East Africa: Less commercially prominent than Tier 1 products (cocoa, coffee, banana) but benefits from detailed producer reporting platforms.

This assignment does not include the additional collection of primary data from producer organisations or the development or piloting of data collection instruments. The output is a conceptual framework and methodological roadmap for a subsequent full SROI study and where possible an indicative retrospective SROI calculation (proof of concept) on the basis of available data.

4. Methodology

The methodology should be appropriate to the production of a robust, evidence-based methodological concept document. The consultant is expected to apply a renowned SROI framework (f.e. [the six-stage SROI framework by Social Value International](#)) as the overarching methodological reference point. The approach may be refined and adapted based on the consultant's expertise and their assessment of the most appropriate research design for this context.

The methodology for the concept development is expected to include the following components:

- **Literature and document review:** Review of the [SROI Guide](#) (Social Value International, 2012) or appropriate alternatives, available SROI case studies in agricultural and fair trade contexts (including the available case study of an SROI analysis applied to a banana SPO in Colombia), Fairtrade's latest monitoring report ([Global Monitoring Report](#), 2026, p. 20 ff.), the Fairtrade Theory of Change, relevant Fairtrade Standards and premium use guidelines, a 2019 Fairtrade study on [Premium Impact](#), and the recent GI [evidence mapping study](#).
- **Desk-based feasibility assessment:** Analysis of available data sources within the Fairtrade system, including the Fairtrade Impact Platform, existing programme databases, producer organisation reporting, and premium use data (f.e. new economic and environmental premium use analysis for 2024 data).
- **Key informant interviews (KIIs):** A limited number of structured or semi-structured interviews with key Fairtrade system stakeholders. Interviewees are expected to include staff from Fairtrade International (GI and relevant programme teams, e.g. the West Africa Cocoa Programme) Interviews with representatives from producer networks, FLOCERT or commercial partners could also be considered. No programme leads have been formally or informally approached prior to the launch of this consultancy; Fairtrade International will facilitate introductions to relevant internal contacts once the consultant is contracted. The number and scope of KIIs should be proposed in the consultant's proposal and will be agreed with Fairtrade International during the inception phase.
- **Impact mapping workshop or equivalent:** An iterative, collaborative process (which may take the form of a workshop, structured consultation, or document-based review cycle) to validate the preliminary impact map with Fairtrade staff and, where feasible, producer-side stakeholders.
- Since this is a concept development consultancy, no additional large-scale quantitative data collection is expected.

The following support by Fairtrade International can be expected:

- Facilitation of access to internal (program) data, and studies (e.g. [Participatory analysis of the use and impact of the Fairtrade Premium](#), 2019).
- Access to the latest premium use data and analysis.
- Facilitation of introductions to relevant Fairtrade programme leads and internal staff for the purposes of key informant interviews; the consultant will be responsible for organising and conducting documents the interviews.
- Review and feedback on the inception report and draft concept document.
- Participation in the validation workshop or equivalent consultation process.

5. Deliverables, Milestones (Timeline) and Budget

Deliverables

- An inception report of no more than 15 pages (excluding annexes), including: a documented understanding of the assignment; an assessment framework of the indicative commodity/region options and their suitability for an SROI analysis; a proposed methodology and workplan for gathering stakeholder insights (KIIs) for developing the scenarios; and a preliminary stakeholder map.
- A presentation and discussion of the inception report with the project team.
- A concept document (final report) of no more than 35 pages (excluding annexes), comprising: a final comparative assessment of explored SROI cases; 2-3 fully developed SROI application scenarios (1 retrospective, 1-2 prospective), each including a preliminary impact map, a financial proxy inventory and source assessment, a data availability and gap analysis, and the conditions required for future SROI implementation; a prioritised recommendation on which scenario(s) to take forward; and a phased work plan for implementation in 2027 onwards. The final report should also include an actionable deliverable, such as a checklist, an excel template, or a practical guideline (f.e. decision tree etc.).
- A validation session (likely online) presenting and discussing the draft concept document with the core Fairtrade project team (1,5-4 hrs).
- One internal presentation of the final concept document for the wider Fairtrade system (1-1,5 hrs approx.).

Milestones (Timeline)

Milestone	Indicative Date
Date advertised	10 June 2026
Deadline for submission of proposals	30 June 2026
Interviews	Early July 2026
Contract start	Mid-July 2026
Inception report submission	Late August 2026
Inception report presentation	Late August 2026
Draft final report/concept submission	October 2026
Validation session	October 2026
Finalized report	Late October 2026
Wider Fairtrade system presentation	November 2026
End of contract	December 2026

Budget

The total budget available for this assignment is 20.000 € (inclusive of 19% VAT as applicable in Germany, where Fairtrade International — the lead contracting entity — is headquartered). The budget should be understood as inclusive of all professional fees,

preparation time, travel (not expected), and other direct expenses related to the completion of the assignment.

6. Qualifications of the Researcher/Consultant (or Team)

The assignment will be awarded to an individual consultant or institution that can demonstrate the following qualifications:

Essential:

- Fluency in English, both written and spoken, to a professional standard.
- Demonstrated knowledge of and hands-on experience with the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology, as developed and standardised by Social Value International.
- Experience of applying outcome-based impact measurement and/or SROI in contexts relevant to agriculture, food systems, or international development cooperation.
- Strong conceptual and analytical skills, including the ability to develop theories of change, construct impact maps, and assess the monetisation of social and environmental outcomes.
- Familiarity with qualitative and quantitative research methods, including key informant interviews and document analysis.
- Experience of conducting evaluability assessments or feasibility studies for impact measurement.
- Ability to communicate complex methodological concepts clearly and concisely in writing and in presentations.
- Demonstrable commitment to research ethics (see also [Fairtrade Research Ethics Policy](#))
- Responsible AI integration into research: Service providers to Fairtrade must disclose in their proposals and (final) reports whether and how AI tools were used and are planned to be used at any stage of the work; they are obliged to collect consent before employing AI in their workflows. A FT AI guideline will be shared with the consultants upon contracting.

Desirable:

- Prior experience of working with or researching the Fairtrade system, including an understanding of Fairtrade Standards, the Fairtrade Premium mechanism, and Fairtrade's Theory of Change.
- Familiarity with financial proxy repositories relevant to international development contexts (e.g. Social Value International proxy libraries, World Bank social value datasets).
- Experience of applying or adapting SROI in contexts involving small-scale farmers or workers in low- and middle-income countries.
- Fluency in Spanish or French is an asset, as relevant documentation and potential KII contacts may exist in these languages.
- Familiarity with outcome mapping, outcome harvesting, process tracing or most significant change methodologies as complements to SROI.

7. Application Process

Proposals should be submitted to impact-tenders@fairtrade.net by **30 June 2026**, using the email header "SROI concept offer – [company name]".

The proposal should comprise a technical and financial offer of no more than 8–10 pages (excluding CVs and annexes), and should include:

Technical offer:

- The consultant's understanding of the assignment and the subject matter.
- A proposed methodology and research design, including a description of how the SROI concept development process will be structured and how key methodological decisions will be approached.
- A workplan including a time plan, proposed milestones, and (if applicable) division of roles within a team.
- A brief statement of how the consultant proposes to engage with Fairtrade staff and, where relevant, producer-side stakeholders during the concept development process.
- A statement on research ethics, data management and responsible, transparent AI integration (if applicable).

Financial offer:

- A breakdown of daily rates and estimated days per work package.
- Any anticipated additional expenses (e.g. for travel, if proposed).

Annexes:

- CVs of all consultants proposed for the assignment, providing evidence of the qualifications listed above.
- Up to two relevant work examples (e.g. SROI reports, evaluability assessments, or impact measurement concept documents) may be included.