FAIRTRADE IN BANANA SUPPLY CHAINS: IMPACTS, RESILIENCE AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

SCOPE OF WORK | OCTOBER 2026

1. Overview

Fairtrade Foundation is seeking to understand and review the impact of Fairtrade certification in Fairtrade banana supply chains, with particular attention to Hired Labour Organisations (HLOs) where there has been long-term sourcing and Fairtrade Premium investment.

We are seeking to examine the ongoing impact of Fairtrade support, including the Fairtrade Premium, Fairtrade Minimum Price and Producer Network support and explore how possible evolutions to Fairtrade support could affect producer organisation decision-making, investment, workers and surrounding communities.

The work will be used to support evidence-based discussions with commercial partners about the implications of sourcing decisions and to inform wider Fairtrade system discussions about the role of Fairtrade where the Living Wage gap has been closed.

The central question is not only what Fairtrade has contributed historically, but what additional value Fairtrade continues to provide today in a supply chain where a living wage gap is closed, which outcomes remain dependent on Fairtrade support, and which have become embedded or self-sustaining.

2. Background

Fairtrade has supported banana producer organisations and workers over many years through a combination of market access, Fairtrade Premium investments, Producer Network support and other interventions. While previous research has demonstrated the value and impact of specific Fairtrade mechanisms, there has been limited study on the longer-term role of Fairtrade in banana supply chains that have received sustained investment over more than a decade.

In addition, Fairtrade International adopted in 2022 a policy on sustainable agriculture under Fairtrade terms which entails committing to promoting agroecology and its principles and practices within the Fairtrade system. Recent consultancies in Colombia, Dominican Republic and Ecuador aimed at supporting producer-led advocacy within banana supply chains for government policies that help producers maintain or transition to agroecological practices.

As banana supply chains evolve, there is increasing interest in understanding how Fairtrade contributes to the resilience, livelihoods, working conditions and wellbeing of workers and communities in more long standing supply chain contexts, and how different forms of support interact to sustain positive outcomes over time. Strengthening the evidence base in this area is important for informing future strategy, investment and decision-making across the Fairtrade system.

Previous Fairtrade-commissioned studies have explored the use and impact of Fairtrade Premium investments in banana supply chains. These studies provided valuable insights into the benefits of Premium investments for workers and communities. However, they did not examine the combined contribution of Fairtrade Premium, Fairtrade Minimum Price, Producer Network support and other Fairtrade interventions, nor explore how changes in these forms of support might affect producer organisations, workers and surrounding communities over time.

The overall purpose of this work is to generate robust evidence on the full contribution of Fairtrade interventions to the resilience of banana supply chains in relation to the Fairtrade Theory of Change.

3. Approach

Relationship to the wider study
This commission forms part of a linked programme of work. The work will adopt a two-phase approach to distinguish between evidence on the current contribution of Fairtrade interventions and analysis of potential future pathways.

This study form Phase 1 of a wider study. This phase 1 research piece will establish the current contribution and additional value of Fairtrade interventions and identify the outcomes, dependencies, risks and resilience factors that should inform a separate research piece on supply-chain modelling. Phase 2 will build on this research, exploring potential impacts with producer organisations and workers. The appointed teams will therefore be expected to work collaboratively, share relevant findings and assumptions, and participate in formal handover and validation points.

Objectives: Current Contribution and Supply Chain Resilience Assessment

1. Understand the ongoing contribution of Fairtrade Premium, Fairtrade Minimum Price and Producer Network support in banana supply chains across both Latin American and African origins
2. Assess contribution against the Fairtrade Theory of Change and the emerging Fairtrade Banana Theory of Change.
3. Examine how Fairtrade mechanisms contribute to producer organisation, worker and community resilience, including resilience to market, climate, political and regulatory risks.
4. Explore the perspectives of workers (including both women and men), producer organisations and other stakeholders regarding the value, limitations and future role of Fairtrade support in relation to livelihood aspirations and the perceived impact of Fairtrade.
5. Identify key risks, vulnerabilities and resilience factors that influence the long-term resilience of Colombian banana supply chains.
6. Identify key benefits of Fairtrade certification to market actors.

Methodology

This phase should include:

- A literature and evidence review covering Fairtrade banana evidence, relevant living wage/livelihood evidence, supply chain maturity, and political and climate context in the relevant supply chain countries.
- A review of relevant Fairtrade data and previous studies, including the 2022 and 2023 Fairtrade Premium studies where available.
- Remote Conversations/interviews with key stakeholders from Fairtrade including HLO Managers
- Secondary analysis of the political, market and climate context in the relevant countries
- All interviews, engagement materials and validation processes should be conducted in appropriate languages, with Spanish-speaking participants able to engage directly in Spanish without reliance on translation during analysis.
- Develop and apply a clear contribution-analysis framework.
- Map Fairtrade mechanisms to intended intermediate and longer-term outcomes.
- Test alternative explanations for observed outcomes.
- Distinguish between:
    - Outcomes directly dependent on Fairtrade;
    - Outcomes materially strengthened or accelerated by Fairtrade;
    - Outcomes to which Fairtrade has made a supporting contribution;
    - Outcomes now embedded or self-sustaining;
    - Outcomes primarily attributable to other actors or contextual factors.
    - Identify the strength and limitations of evidence for each conclusion.

4. Scope of work

Core research questions

- What has been the ongoing contribution of Fairtrade Premium, Fairtrade Minimum Price and Producer Network support in HLO banana supply chains?
- How do workers, producer organisation representatives and relevant Fairtrade stakeholders understand the value and limitations of Fairtrade support in these contexts?
- How do producer organisations currently use Fairtrade support to make decisions, manage risk, invest in workers and communities, and plan for the future?
- What institutional, market, political and climate-related factors affect the resilience of these supply chains?
- What elements of the current system remain dependent on Fairtrade versus what has become self-sustaining?

5. Deliverables

Deliverable	Description
Inception report	Refined research questions, methodology, sampling approach, workplan, stakeholder engagement plan, risk mitigation plan and data protection approach.
Evidence review and data review summary	Synthesis of relevant literature, previous Fairtrade studies, internal data and contextual evidence.
Regular updates during data collection	Frequent meetings to take place between the consultant and Fairtrade Foundation to update on progress and address any challenges that arise.
Draft report	Full draft report setting out findings, analysis, implications and recommendations for Fairtrade and relevant stakeholders.
Validation workshop materials	Materials to support feedback and validation with Producer Networks, producer organisations and relevant Fairtrade stakeholders.
Final report and executive summary	Final report incorporating feedback, with a concise executive summary suitable for senior audiences.
Presentation deck	Short slide deck for sharing findings with key audiences
Modelling inputs and dependency matrix	A structured summary of the mechanisms, outcomes, financial and non-financial dependencies, contextual risks, available data, evidence gaps and assumptions that should inform the supply-chain baseline and future scenarios

6. Timelines

Indicative timings are set out below and should be refined by the consultant as part of the proposal and inception process.

Timing	Activity
Late October 2026	Terms of Reference published for phase 1 research
November 2026 – early December 2026	Consultant selection and contracting for phase 1
December 2026 - January 2027	Evidence review
February 2027	Data collection
February 2027 – March 2027	Data cleaning, analysis and synthesis
March – April 2027	Write up and presentation of results, including validation workshop with key partners.
April 2027	Final phase 1 research report

7. Skills and experience

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Strong experience designing and delivering qualitative and/or mixed-methods social research or evaluation in agricultural supply chains, ethical trade, labour rights, or international development.
- Strong understanding of supply chains, living wage/livelihood issues, responsible sourcing and human rights and environmental due diligence.
- Ability to analyse complex organisational, market, political and climate-related factors and translate findings into clear recommendations to inform decision making.
- Experience working in experience working in Colombia/ Latin America and/or Africa within Fairtrade, certification systems, producer networks or similar multi-stakeholder systems would be an advantage.
- Fluency in Spanish and English
- Excellent written communication skills and ability to produce clear outputs for both technical and senior non-technical audiences.

8. Inclusive MEL approaches

The research team at Fairtrade Foundation has outlined principles for an ethical research approach. Fairtrade is committed to reflection and learning on how MEL and research processes can be more beneficial to the people, farmers and workers we work with. Applicants should demonstrate how their approach will support accountability towards farmers, workers and communities; embed anti-racism; support equity within research teams; and create space for joint, participatory or producer-led analysis where appropriate.

The research design should be sensitive to gender and power dynamics between workers, management, producer organisations, buyers and the Fairtrade system. Methods should be designed to enable safe, meaningful participation and to ensure that workers' perspectives are not lost within broader organisational analysis.

9. Data protection and ethical standards

The protection of farmers', workers' and project participants' data is non-negotiable. Applicants must be aware of, and compliant with, relevant data protection laws in the UK, including GDPR, and in Colombia. The successful consultant will be required to have an ethical, data protection approach that covers informed consent, confidentiality, responsible data storage, secure transfer, retention and deletion of data, and appropriate handling of sensitive information.

The study should follow a do-no-harm approach and ensure that participation is voluntary, confidential and appropriate to context. Particular care should be taken when discussing employment conditions, livelihood concerns, organisational decision-making or potential changes to Fairtrade support.

10. Budget, proposal process and deadline

An indicative project budget of £20-25, 000 is available, subject to confirmation of currency, scope and final procurement requirements. Fairtrade Foundation expects applicants to provide a clear and itemised budget, including all anticipated expenses.

Proposals should include:

- A short understanding of the assignment and proposed approach.
- A proposed methodology, including sampling, participant engagement and analysis approach.
- A workplan aligned to the indicative timetable.
- Details of the proposed team and roles.
- Relevant experience and examples of similar assignments.
- A clear budget and value for money explanation.
- A brief ethics and data protection approach.
- Two relevant references.

The deadline for proposals is 15 November 2026. Applications should be sent to john.vivian@fairtrade.org.uk with the subject: 'Proposal for The Role of Fairtrade in Banana Supply Chains study'.

Interviews with shortlisted candidates will take place during the week commencing 16 November 2026.

11. Evaluation criteria

Criterion	What Fairtrade will assess
Quality of proposed methodology	Strength of design, appropriateness of mixed methods, worker-centred approach and ability to answer the research questions.
Relevant experience	Experience in agricultural supply chains, labour rights, ethical trade, Fairtrade/certification or comparable contexts.
Participatory and inclusive approach	Commitment to inclusive MEL, ethical practice, producer/worker voice and sensitivity to gender and power dynamics.
Understanding of strategic context	Ability to connect findings to Fairtrade Theory of Change, supply chain questions and evidence-based partner engagement.
Team capability and language/context fit	Relevant technical expertise, Spanish language capacity and Colombia/Latin America/West Africa experience where available.
Value for money	Clarity, realism and proportionality of budget in relation to proposed methodology and outputs.