

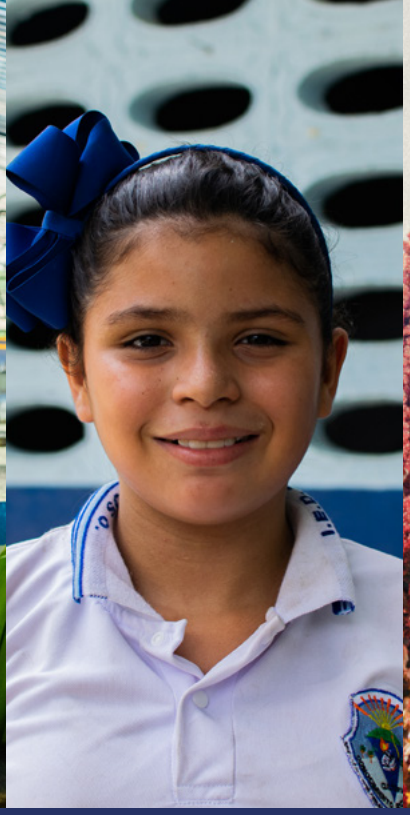


FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL EVIDENCE MAP 2021 TO 2024: EVIDENCING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

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COMMISSIONED BY: FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL




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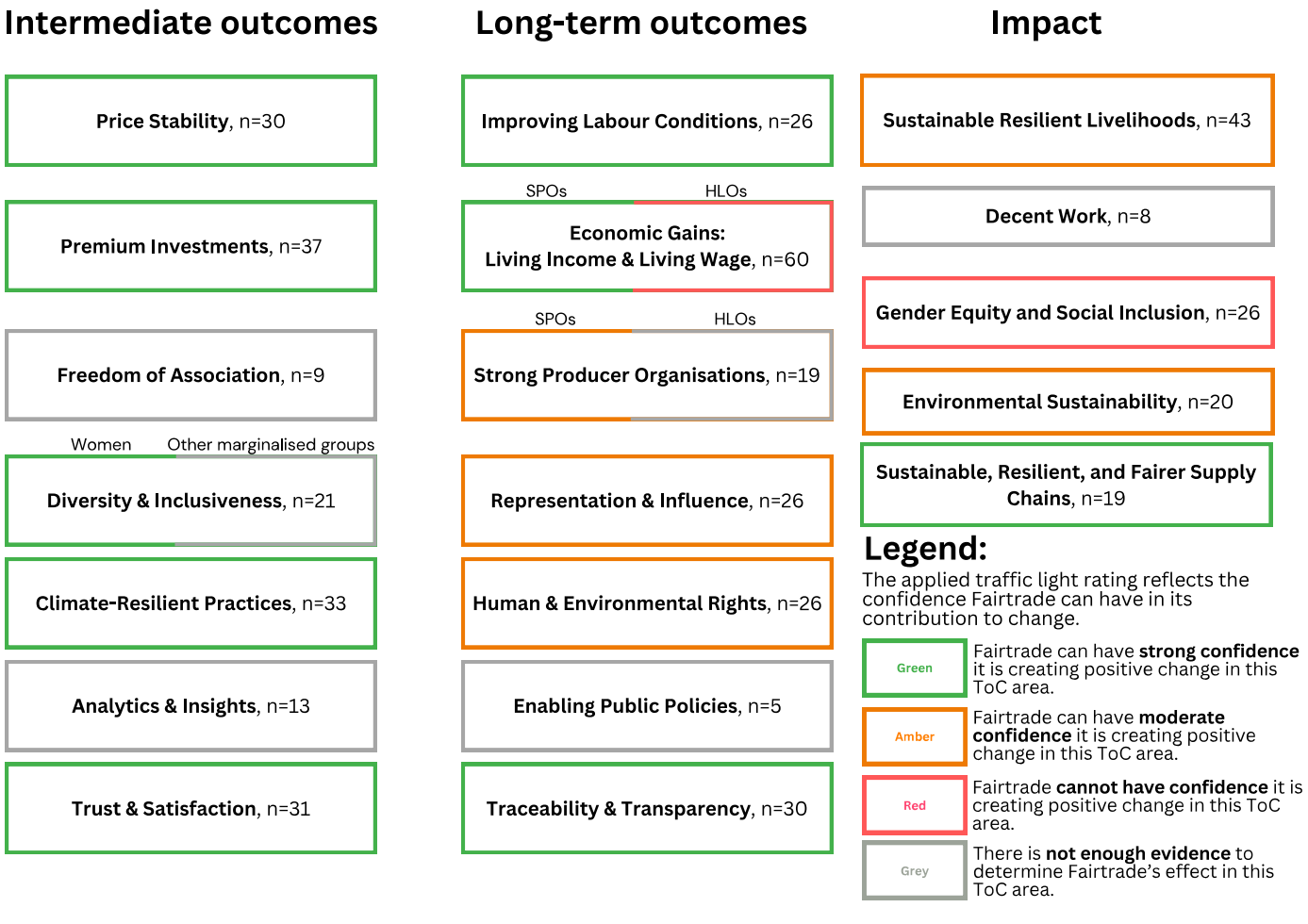
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fairtrade International considers its Theory of Change (ToC) a vital tool for driving sustainable change, empowering farmers and workers, and fostering social justice in trade. This study assessed the most recent iteration of the ToC, a digital summary launched in 2022 (follow this link), which was rooted in an evidence review and embedded in Fairtrade International's organisational strategy. The findings offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of Fairtrade's interventions.

This report presents findings from a follow-up evidence review conducted by external consultants between August 2024 and March 2025. The evidence-mapping exercise assessed whether Fairtrade's ToC and related organisational strategy have credibly contributed to its intended outcomes and impacts. To do this, the Evidence Map classifies the results from literature published between 2021-2024, assessing Fairtrade and other Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) against Fairtrade's ToC. The research: (i) reviewed and classified existing Fairtrade evidence, (ii) systematically identified new evidence, (iii) assessed evidence strength for each ToC indicator and pathway, and (iv) triangulated findings.

A total of 143 studies were identified, with 122 meeting inclusion criteria after screening. Results from each study were systematically mapped against Fairtrade's intermediate and long-term outcomes and impact indicators as per its ToC and classified as positive, mixed, evidence of no effect, or negative. Research quality was also determined to enable assessment of the evidence base. A traffic light rating system (Figure ES.1) was then applied to indicate confidence in Fairtrade's impact based on (i) consistency of findings (whether benefits were consistently demonstrated across studies) and (ii) evidence strength (considering study volume, methodological rigour, and relevance). Emerging findings were triangulated against Fairtrade's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and insights from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with Fairtrade staff, and structured around five pathways. These pathways are change trajectories within the ToC, connecting intervention(s) with intermediate and long-term outcomes and impact areas.

Figure ES.1: The number of studies mapped against each indicator and the traffic light rating assigned.



The Evidence Map (presented in Part 2 of this report) shows the most substantial evidence base at the intermediate outcome level of the ToC. Fairtrade's interventions lead to clear early-stage results around Price Stability, Premium Investments, Diversity & Inclusiveness (though only for women), Climate-Resilient Practices, and Trust & Satisfaction. However, most long-term indicators lack strong confidence ratings due to inconsistent evidence and weaker methodological design of studies contributing results. Inconsistent evidence was observed for progress towards Strong Producer Organisations, Representation & Influence, and Human & Environmental Rights. Some other long-term outcomes, such as Improved Labour Conditions, Economic Gains for Small-Scale Producer Organisations (SPOs) but not for Hired-Labour Organisations (HLOs), and Traceability & Transparency, are strongly supported by evidence of positive change. However, long-term outcomes, which demonstrate effects, often appear to be directly linked to Fairtrade interventions rather than solely progressing through intermediate outcomes. The only high-confidence impact indicator is Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains, with strong evidence of favourable views of Fairtrade and benefits throughout Fairtrade's supply chain.

"Fairtrade can have strong confidence in its contribution to positive change for six outcomes, and one impact area of its Theory of Change."

Beyond individual outcome and impact areas, this study also explored the pathways of change that connect the indicators, testing Fairtrade's assumptions around how specific interventions will lead to intermediate and long-term outcomes and later impacts as well as assessing barriers to and enablers for change (presented in Part 3 of this report, which includes visuals of these pathways). Evidence of links between indicators, their overall coherence, and feasibility are summarised in Figure ES.2.

Figure ES.2: Summary of five Pathways analysed.

1. Economic Pathway

Ensures financial stability through Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premiums, supporting Price Stability, Premium Investments and Economic Gains, which link to Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. Evidence is strong for connections between interventions, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes, though the link to Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods is weaker. Economic progress is better evidenced for farmers than for workers.

2. Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway

Promotes governance, representation, and inclusivity to achieve Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion. Strong links were found between Standards & Certification, Producer Support, and Representation among SPOs. HLOs recorded limited progress. Evidence for linkages between long-term outcomes and impact linkages is inconsistent.

3. Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway

Examines organisational capacity as a driver of Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Environmental Sustainability. Only Diversity & Inclusiveness showed strong links to Fairtrade interventions. At the same time, evidence for links to intermediate and long-term outcomes and impact was inconsistent or lacking. Findings also indicated a distinction between SPOs and HLOs. Pathway's coherence was low with strong producer outcomes represented by only a single ToC indicator at the long-term outcome level.

4. Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway

Focuses on climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, and sustainable farming, with strong links between Standards & Certification, Producer Support, and Climate-Resilient Practices, but weak or inconsistent connections further along the change trajectory and limited progress towards Environmental Sustainability.

5. 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway

Integrates Fairtrade interventions into two clusters: brand and supply chain metrics and enabling environment indicators. Strong evidence links interventions to Trust & Satisfaction and Traceability & Transparency, but the connection to Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains is inconsistent. The second cluster, an enabling environment for producer organisations, farmers, and workers, remained underdeveloped, with no or inconsistent evidence for these individual indicators and links between them.

The evidence base (2021–2024) is substantial but dominated by literature reviews, qualitative studies, and descriptive quantitative research, with few causal or attributional evaluations. This limits the ability to establish direct causal links, especially at the long-term and impact levels where external factors play a larger role. Evidence gaps are particularly apparent for HLOs and marginalised groups except for women.

While this report offers a comprehensive review of the evidence relative to the ToC, which was triangulated with staff insights and KPIs, the conclusions advocate for filling research gaps through high-quality quantitative impact evaluations (causal or attributional), refining ToC pathways, and expanding studies on under-represented areas to strengthen Fairtrade's ability to demonstrate impact across the ToC conclusively. Our discussion and recommendations cover priority areas for research, recommendations to refine indicators and pathways in the ToC, and considerations for Fairtrade's upcoming strategy review.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ARSO	The African Organisation for Standardisation
AS	Additional Submission (of documents following Focus Groups Discussions)
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CLAC	The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fairtrade Small Producers and Workers
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FMP	Fairtrade Minimum Price
FOIC	Fairtrade Organic & In Conversion (Fairtrade and organic certified farms plus Fairtrade farms in conversion to organic)
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
FTA	Fairtrade Africa
GAP	Good Agricultural Practice
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HLOs	Hired Labour Organisations
HREDD	Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
ISEAL	International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LIRP	Living Income Reference Price
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MT	Metric Tonnes
NAPP	Network of Asia and Pacific Producers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PN	Producer Network
PO	Producer Organisation
PSM	Propensity Score Matching
QED	Quasi-Experimental Design
QoL	Quality of Life
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
SPOs	Small-Scale Producer Organisations
ToC	Theory of Change
VSS	Voluntary Sustainability Standards

ABOUT THE REPORT

This report presents the findings of an evidence-mapping exercise conducted between August 2024 and March 2025. The exercise classified the results from evaluation studies of Fairtrade and other VSS against Fairtrade International's ToC.

The studies analysed were published between 2021 and 2024, either captured by Fairtrade International or identified through a systematic search. This Evidence Map builds on a previous mapping exercise that reviewed Fairtrade and VSS-focused literature published between 2015 and 2020 using a similar method (Report available here).

The evidence-mapping exercise aimed to assess whether Fairtrade's interventions and strategy have credibly contributed to its intended outcomes and impacts. We mapped results for each evaluation study reviewed as positive, mixed, evidence of no effect, or negative within Fairtrade International's ToC. Then, for each ToC area, we summarised the strength of evidence supporting Fairtrade's impact claims. Since the latest ToC aligns with Fairtrade International's strategy, these findings provide insight into the effectiveness of Fairtrade's efforts. This report is structured around four key objectives:

1. To review and classify existing evidence from 2021-2024 collected by Fairtrade International against its ToC.

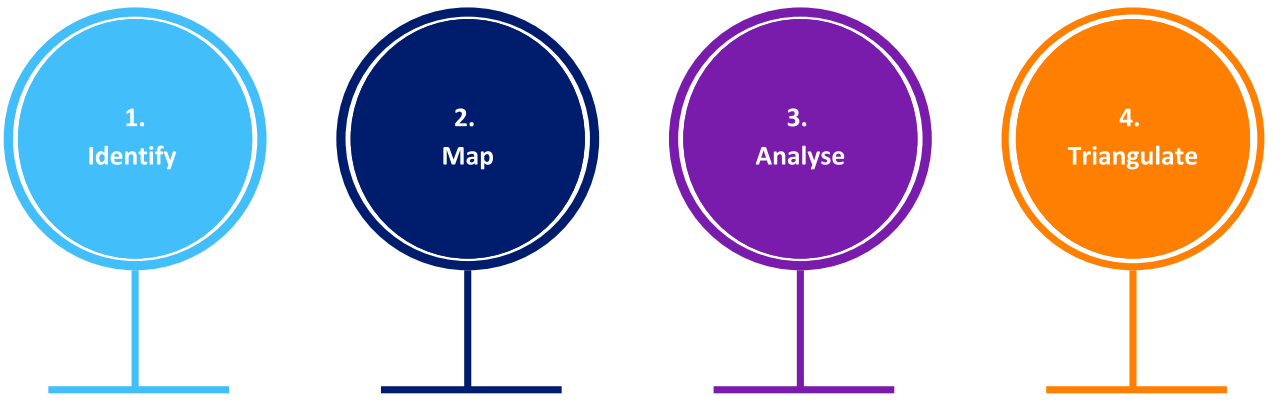
2. To systematically identify and classify additional evidence from the same 2021-2024 period relevant to the ToC.

3. To assess the strength of the evidence supporting ToC indicators, pathways, and outcomes, providing insights into how well it reflects real-world outcomes and impacts.

4. To triangulate findings using Fairtrade KPI data and feedback from staff derived through FGDs, including additional submissions of materials[1] following FGDs.

To achieve these objectives, following project inception, the evidence-mapping assignment was structured into four phases:

Figure 1: Steps within the evidence-mapping process.



A total of 143 studies were identified from Fairtrade's Learning Platform or through a systematic search.

Findings from 122 evaluative studies were mapped into a framework, capturing key details on findings, focus, context, and rating research quality.

The framework assessed supportive evidence for each ToC area, examined outcome-impact pathways, and provided a broader overview of Fairtrade's evidence base.

Emerging findings from the evidence map and pathway analysis were triangulated and cross-validated using KPIs, insights from six FGDs, and additional material submissions.

1 Referenced as additional submissions (AS) in text, e.g. AS. 1 with full references listed in Annex 1, Table A.6.

This report has a dedicated section About Fairtrade International's Theory of Change (page 8) to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the ToC, which is critical for interpreting results. Following this section, Research Findings are presented in three parts:

1. **Background**: Overview of studies in the Evidence Map and Fairtrade's overall evidence base.
2. **Evidence Map**: Narrative report section covering the strength of evidence for change across 19 ToC areas, the intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts, assigning confidence ratings to Fairtrade's effect in creating positive change.
3. **Pathways**: Examines linkages across ToC layers, analysing findings through five pathways identified as primary change trajectories.[2] This is a more methodologically dense analysis, intended as a reference point for readers seeking to understand the evidence base underpinning pathways. Findings are presented in a much more visual layout.

Following the results, the reader will find a focused Discussion and Recommendations section and a Conclusion at the end.

Evidence underpinning our analysis is clearly referenced using an ID number and can be looked up in the Bibliography (Annex 3).[3]

ABOUT FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Fairtrade International considers its ToC the articulation of changes it expects to see from the strategies and interventions undertaken to drive sustainable change, empowering farmers and workers and fostering social justice in trade. It guides strategic decision-making, aligning internal teams and external stakeholders towards shared goals. Fairtrade also views its ToC as aspirational and proactive, allowing for the inclusion of assumptions and adaptation to challenges by identifying risks, gaps, and learning opportunities.

Reflecting its importance, Fairtrade's ToC has undergone four iterations over 15 years. First developed in 2011 through extensive consultation, it was revised in 2015 to integrate research evidence. The second revision in 2021 actively incorporated findings from 150 studies in order to assess the evidence base for Fairtrade's achievements in 20 ToC areas. This resulted in the current digital interactive ToC launched in 2022, which embedded Fairtrade International's organisational strategy. This latest version can be explored via this link.

The current digital ToC (from 2022) assessed during this evidence-mapping exercise describes Fairtrade's pricing mechanisms, Standards, capacity building, and supply chain interventions across multiple socio-ecological levels (individuals, organisations, communities, and the supply chain). It comprises six interventions and 19 intermediate and long-term outcomes and impact indicators. In the context of this report, we define an **indicator** as a measurable condition that shows whether a specific Fairtrade goal is being met. It captures one meaningful message that helps assess progress toward a particular outcome in the Fairtrade ToC. For example, an indicator might be "the percentage of certified farmers that undertake climate resilient practices". This tells us something concrete about whether Fairtrade's goals around good agricultural practices are being achieved.[4]

The various 'layers' in Fairtrade International's ToC are:

- **Interventions:** These are the key activities that Fairtrade undertakes, divided into Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms, Standards & Certification, Producer Support & Producer Networks, Brand & Market Development, Data & Intelligence, and Partnerships & Advocacy.
- **Intermediate outcomes:** These are the short- to medium-term changes resulting from Fairtrade's interventions, such as improved Price Stability, improved capacity and uptake of Climate-Resilient Practices. They serve as stepping stones toward achieving long-term outcomes and broader impact.
- **Long-term outcomes:** These represent the more profound systemic changes that occur from sustained gains in intermediate outcomes, such as Improved Labour Conditions, Economic Gains, and stronger institutional governance within supply chains. These tend to be influenced by other factors (e.g., barriers, Traceability and Transparency).
- **Impact areas:** These are the overarching, lasting changes Fairtrade aims to achieve at a global level, including poverty reduction, gender equity, and environmental sustainability.

2 1. Economic Pathway, 2. Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway, 3. Strengthened Producer Organisations, Pathway 4. Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway, 5. 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway.
3 Please note that in the Bibliography there is no study ID 29 or ID 120, owing to the fact that one study was not translatable and had to be excluded from review despite its relevance, and another study was inaccessible despite being identified as relevant. Both studies were allocated ID numbers but later excluded and therefore not cited.
4 ISEAL Alliance (2010) Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards. Version 5.0. London: ISEAL Alliance. Available at: https://www.isealalliance.org (Accessed: 24 March 2025).

Impacts depend on earlier progress in long-term outcomes and are heavily influenced by other factors, actors and context.

Thus, the ToC comprises three different indicator layers that clearly articulate how interventions build up to intended positive social and environmental benefits. In Fairtrade International's ToC, the linkage between different indicator layers is structured through a series of hypothesised linear pathways, starting with intermediate outcomes and progressing to long-term outcomes and, ultimately, to impact. These pathways are summarised in the digital interactive ToC, which illustrates Fairtrade International's causal assumptions about how change occurs.

For example, *Price Stability* → *Economic Gains* → *Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods* represents a results chain within the Economic Pathway. As shown in the digital ToC, multiple pathways reflect Fairtrade International's holistic interventions. To account for this complexity and analyse how those changes may or may not be realised, five key pathways were identified based on interim findings from the Evidence Map and through consultation with Fairtrade International's Global Impact team:

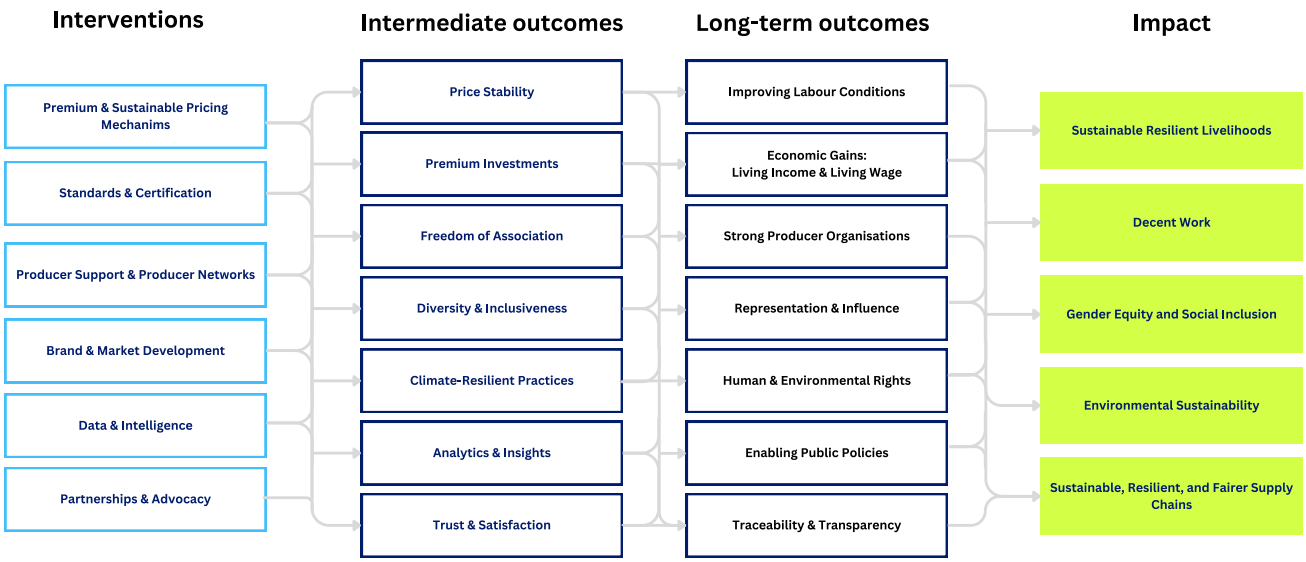
- **The Economic Pathway:** Ensures financial stability through the Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premiums, supporting Price Stability, Premium Investments and Economic Gains, which link to Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods.
- **The Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway:** Promotes governance, representation, and inclusivity to achieve Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion.
- **The Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway:** Focuses on organisational capacity as a driver of Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Environmental Sustainability.
- **The Climate and Agricultural Practice Pathway:** Encouraging climate adaptation, biodiversity protection, and sustainable farming practices.
- **The 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway:** Expanding market size, increasing access and promoting Fairtrade principles to strengthen the overall supply chain system to create an enabling environment for HLOs and SPOs.

Despite these efforts, the ToC remains complex. A 2024 survey of 69 staff members revealed that many found it difficult to use, with unclear pathways and overlooked outcomes. This may be due to the fact that the ToC, which is digitised and available online, is a summarised version of Fairtrade's ToC. Respondents highlighted the need for greater adaptability to the complex environments in which Fairtrade works and better alignment with the organisational strategy.

Finally, Fairtrade International's ToC is designed to be globally relevant and applicable across diverse populations and interventions. As such, its indicators are intentionally broad and, at times, these findings reflect the broader scope of external research, which often extends beyond Fairtrade's core indicators. For instance, studies mapped under Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods include outcomes on poverty, while those under Gender Equity and Social Inclusion report on shifts in social norms. To better interpret this range of results in the Evidence Map, we distinguish between early-stage and late-stage results within an outcome or impact area:

- **Early-stage results:** reflect foundational or initial changes, such as the delivery of capacity building initiatives, improved transparency or increased participation in governance structures within producer organisations (POs).
- **Late-stage results:** capture more advanced outcomes and impacts, such as enhanced bargaining power or long-term financial sustainability of producer organisations.

Figure 2: Fairtrade International's ToC.



FINDINGS: PART 1

BACKGROUND

The Evidence Map includes 122 studies sourced from Fairtrade International's research platform and an independent literature review. These studies employ various methodologies, but for the Evidence Map we focus on quantitative research to assess Fairtrade's impact. However, while rigorous quantitative impact evaluations are necessary to definitively attribute changes in ToC areas to Fairtrade, only a small subset of available studies utilised high-quality experimental or quasi-experimental designs, limiting definitive conclusions. Here, in Part 1 of the report, we provide an overview of the study selection, the Evidence Map sample, and a discussion of the overall robustness of the evidence base. Those less interested in the methodologies used to evaluate Fairtrade and other VSS may skip directly to the findings in Part 2.

STUDY SELECTION

A total of 143 studies were entered into the Evidence Map framework (an Excel framework where studies were logged and analysed). Of these studies, 77 studies (both internal and external) were suggested by Fairtrade International's Research Task Force and Global Impact team, and 66 external studies were identified through a literature search.

The external literature search involved a structured review of three bibliographic databases[5] covering papers published between 2021 and 2024 in English. Before analysis, some identified studies were excluded[6], resulting in 122 studies contributing to the Evidence Map. Of these, 46% were pre-selected by Fairtrade International, while 54% came from our literature search. More detail on study selection and the overall methodology can be found in Annex 1.

Figure 3: Word cloud illustrating the distribution of countries covered by studies reviewed.

EVIDENCE MAP SAMPLE

The study sample consists of journal articles (62%) and reports (29%), with 10% of studies representing other types of publications.[7] The mode publication year was 2022, and 17% of the studies were commissioned by Fairtrade. The study sample covered numerous countries, as shown in Figure 3, with Ethiopia, Peru, Kenya, and Ghana being the most frequently researched.[8]

Regionally, Latin America and Africa emerged as the most evaluated.

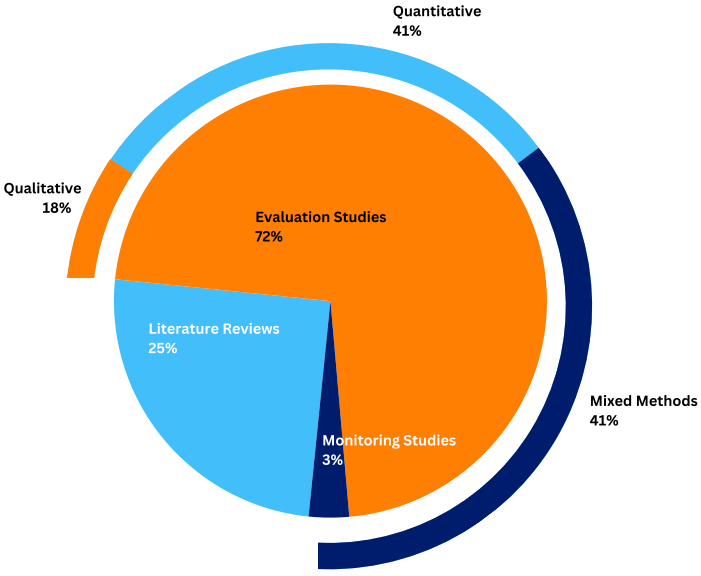
A quarter (25%) of the studies were literature reviews, while 72% were evaluations (studies that assess whether interventions aimed at creating change are effective), and 3% were classified as monitoring reports. In total, 75% (n=91) of studies analysed

5 The DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar.
6 Before analysis, several internal studies were excluded, including three that, while useful for mapping, were published prior to 2021 and two that were deemed out of scope in discussion with Fairtrade International. Furthermore, internal literature classified as formative (i.e., not providing evaluative results) was excluded from the analytic sample (n=16), resulting in 122 studies contributing to the Evidence Map.
7 Other types of publications included: Abridged/Summary Report, Book Chapter, Field Report, Master's Thesis, Unpublished Manuscript, and Working/Discussion Paper.
8 Ethiopia (15 mentions), Peru (14 mentions), Ghana (12 mentions), and Kenya (12 mentions).

during the evidence-mapping exercise were based on primary data. Of these, 41% employed quantitative methods, 41% used mixed-methods[9], and 18% relied solely on qualitative approaches (Figure 4).

The methodological approaches of the 122 studies entered in the Evidence Map were assessed for robustness using method-specific criteria (see Annex 1).[10] They were then classified as exploratory, acceptable, or highest-quality evidence for later review of mapped results against Fairtrade's outcome and impact indicators. Figure 5 illustrates the breakdown of study type, robustness, and their contribution to the analysis.

Figure 4: Distribution of study types and methods in the Evidence Map.



The use of evidence presented in this report varies per section of the report in order to meet our analysis objectives and differed per methodology of the mapped studies. Evidence from quantitative results were the main determinant when assigning confidence ratings for Fairtrade's effect in each ToC area, while literature reviews were used to assess the conclusiveness of findings. Qualitative studies primarily contributed to understanding contextual factors, barriers, enablers, and pathways.

For the Evidence Map, we prioritised quantitative findings, particularly those applying causal or attributional methods, as these methodologies determine whether observed changes are directly attributable to the intervention, rather than to external factors. These types of studies employed rigorous evaluation methods—such as randomised controlled trials (RCTs), or well-conducted quasi-experimental designs (QEDs)—to isolate Fairtrade's effect, ensuring high confidence in the results.

For findings arising from literature reviews, study quality was assessed based on the comprehensiveness of the search strategy and the quality of included studies. As a result, in the Evidence Map, we also prioritise systematic reviews and meta-analyses as our sources of highest-quality evidence on the conclusiveness of the effects of Fairtrade and other VSS on ToC outcomes and impacts. The credibility of qualitative research findings was assessed based on the study's research design and conduct, rather than the specific methodological approach. Qualitative components of mixed-methods studies, as well as purely qualitative studies, provided nuance for ToC indicators and helped strengthen the narrative underpinning the identified pathways.

Among the studies employing quantitative methods, only a few demonstrated rigorous, high-quality causal results (n=4), including one RCT, one difference-in-difference analysis, and two instrumental variable analyses. A total of 24 studies were rated as attributional, these most often used Propensity Score Matching (PSM), with other methods being fixed effects, interrupted time series, and longitudinal designs. As shown in Figure 5, most quantitative evidence was rated as exploratory (n=46), based on weaker evaluative methods, often using uncontrolled cross-sectional designs, monitoring data, and pre-post-tests.

Qualitative research, or the component thereof in mixed-method studies, primarily gathered data through case studies, FGDs, and interviews, and produced acceptable evidence in 78% of cases (n=42). The methodological strengths of qualitative studies reviewed was robust data collection and appropriate sampling. The limitations were narrow use of existing literature, moderate analytical rigour and limited attention to bias or alternative explanations.

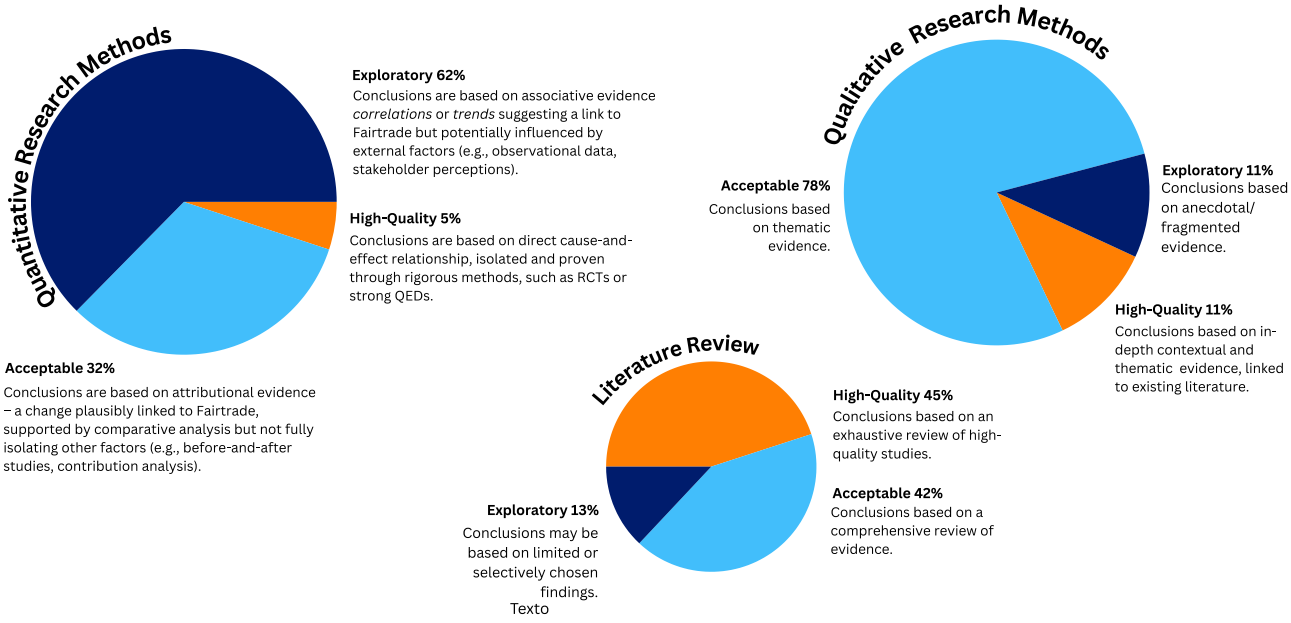
A sizeable number of systematic reviews and some meta-analyses resulted in 45% of the included literature reviews being classified as high-quality evidence (n=15).

Fairtrade-commissioned quantitative research was exclusively conducted as part of mixed-methods research. The majority relied on weak evaluative methods, such as cross-sectional and monitoring data, resulting in all but one study being classified as exploratory. A single well-conducted PSM evaluation provided attributional evidence (ID 36). Fairtrade-commissioned quantitative studies showed little difference in design, sampling, analysis, and conduct compared to the overall sample of studies. Limitations in commissioned quantitative research stemmed instead from the methods used.[11] On the other hand, Fairtrade's qualitative research was of higher quality than the broader mapping sample.

Fairtrade-focused quantitative studies showed no difference in quality. However, qualitative studies and Fairtrade-focused literature reviews demonstrated stronger methodologies compared to the total sample.[12]

9 Both qualitative and quantitative components were included in the study.
10 Separately developed for literature reviews, quantitative and qualitative methodologies with mixed-method studies rated twice for each component.
11 No Fairtrade-commissioned quantitative research was determined to be causal, and only one study was deemed acceptable. For qualitative studies, 26% provided the highest quality evidence.
12 Level 1: Of the studies focusing exclusively on Fairtrade, 20% of qualitative studies demonstrated the strongest level of evidence, whereas 75% of literature reviews were determined to be of the highest quality.

Figure 5: Distribution of high-quality, acceptable, or exploratory evidence by research methods.



INTERVENTIONS EVALUATED

Studies were rated for their relevance to Fairtrade, with categories and their results presented in Table 1. A total of 84% of the studies focused either exclusively on Fairtrade or evaluated Fairtrade alongside other VSS. Due to the small numbers of studies not focusing on Fairtrade, study relevance was not formally incorporated into study quality ratings, but it was still considered in the overall narrative when determining strength of evidence for each ToC indicator.

For studies involving Fairtrade and other VSS, i.e., Level 2 relevance, specific findings relevant to Fairtrade were prioritised. Of the studies that collected primary data, 44% focused exclusively on Fairtrade, while 42% included Fairtrade alongside other VSS.

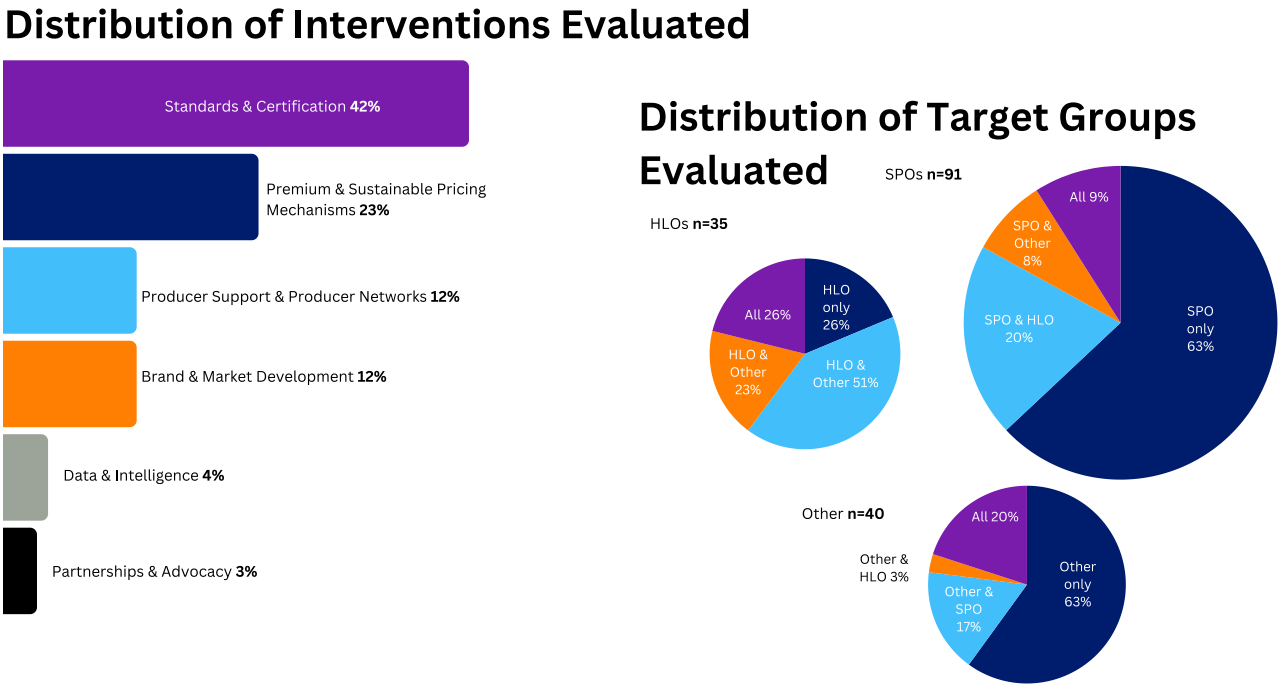
Table 1: Relevance of studies to Fairtrade.

Relevance to Fairtrade movement	No	%
Level 1: The study focuses exclusively on Fairtrade	43	35%
Level 2: Examined Fairtrade alongside other VSS	60	49%
Level 3: The study did not focus on Fairtrade, but did examine VSS	19	16%
Total	**122**	

The products investigated were primarily coffee (n=53) and cocoa (n=36), while other products were studied an average of six times each. Figure 6 illustrates the Fairtrade interventions covered in the reviewed literature. Standards & Certification accounted for just under half (42%) of the studies reviewed, and Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms also represented a considerable proportion (23%). Other areas were less frequently investigated, with Producer Support & Producer Networks, and Brand & Market Development interventions each comprising 12%. Interventions related to Data & Intelligence, and Partnerships & Advocacy were hardly covered in the reviewed literature (both 4%).

The literature was categorised by the target groups examined and many studies examined multiple groups simultaneously: 35 studies focused on Hired Labour Organisations (HLOs), 91 on Small-Scale Producer Organisations (SPOs), and 25 analysed both intervention groups simultaneously. Additionally, 40 studies examined other groups, such as consumers, policymakers, and upstream actors within Fairtrade's supply chain. The overlap across these target groups is also shown in Figure 6. It shows that SPOs form the largest exclusive group (n=58) and frequently overlap with HLOs (n=18). HLOs are both the smallest and least independently evaluated target group (n=8). The "Other" category is relatively distinct (n=24), showing some interaction with SPOs (n=7). Only a small subset of studies (n=8) investigated all three target groups.

Figure 6: Distribution of Fairtrade International interventions and target groups evaluated.



FINDINGS: PART 2

EVIDENCE MAP

The Evidence Map presented in this section of the report (see Figure 7) applies a traffic light rating to assess confidence in Fairtrade's contribution to impact. This was looked at through the lens of 19 indicators in the ToC. The rating is based on two factors assessing the credibility of research evaluating Fairtrade's effects:

1. **Consistency of findings:** Each study result was classified as positive, mixed, no evidence of effect, or negative based on how they demonstrated Fairtrade's effects. Positive findings showed consistent benefits, while mixed results indicated both achievements and gaps. No effect or negative results lowered confidence in Fairtrade's effectiveness in a ToC area. The highest confidence rating - **Green** - was given to areas with strong, consistent evidence across multiple evaluations, countries, and commodities.
2. **Evidence strength and robustness:** Assessed based on the quantity of mapped studies evaluating an indicator, their methodological rigour, and relevance to Fairtrade. ToC indicators with limited evaluative studies automatically scored **Grey**. Findings from high-quality qualitative evaluations (e.g., well-designed RCT and QED studies with significance testing, controls, and objective measurements) and comprehensive literature reviews (e.g., systematic reviews, meta-analyses) were prioritised in determining if positive change occurred. The exact criteria used to determine the evidence strength of studies can be found in Annex 1.

Based on these domains, the traffic light rating enables Fairtrade International to assign an impact credibility rating, reflecting the level of confidence that Fairtrade has contributed to positive changes in the outcomes and impacts articulated in the ToC:

Green	Fairtrade can have **strong confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Amber	Fairtrade can have **moderate confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Red	Fairtrade **cannot have confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Grey	There is **not enough evidence** to determine Fairtrade's effect in this ToC area.

Fairtrade International's ToC includes six core interventions (Figure 2), which were not individually assessed using the traffic light rating. However, because the ToC assumes progress at the outcome and impact levels is contingent on these core interventions, their collective influence is reflected in the Evidence Map. In other words, the Evidence Map captures whether changes observed in ToC outcomes and impacts align with the expected effects of these interventions, though it does not attribute causality to any single intervention. Research findings on the specific linkages between interventions, intermediate outcomes, and long-term outcomes are presented in Part 3: Pathways.

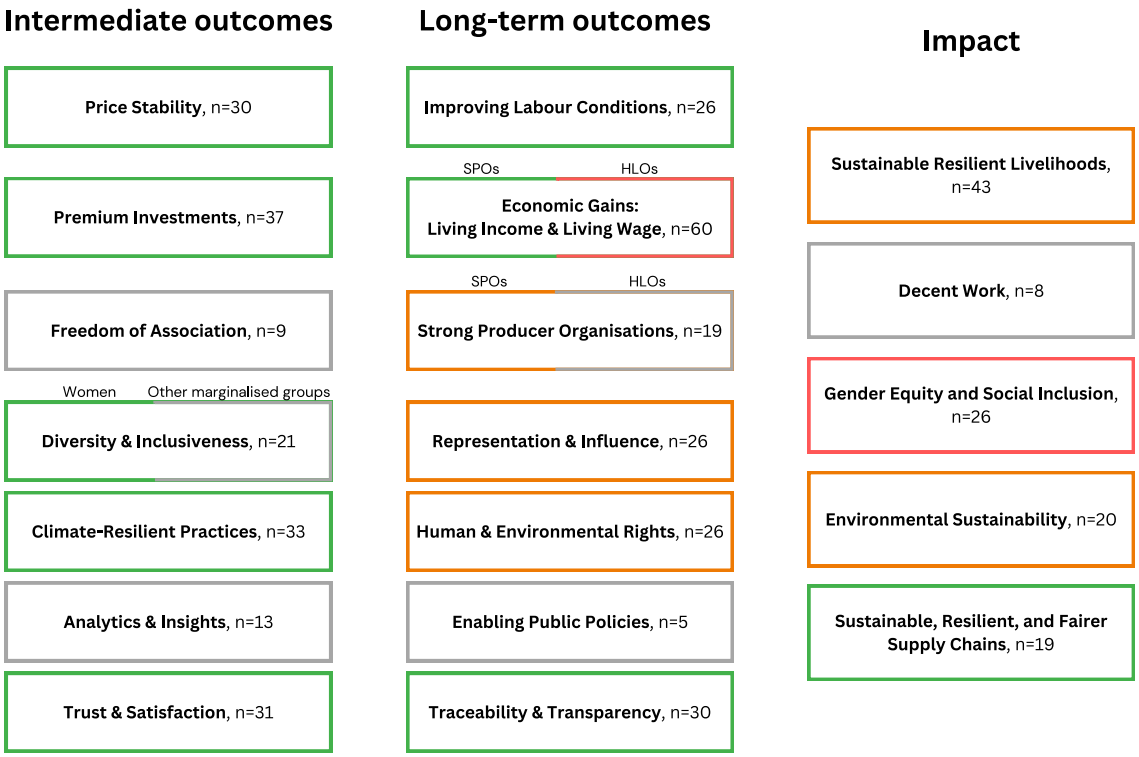
Fairtrade International's ToC also outlines the expected sequence in which these layers unfold, influencing how credible claims of Fairtrade's benefits are established. ISEAL notes that for intermediate outcomes directly associated with interventions by VSS actors within their supply chains, credible impact claims can be made using output data and weaker evaluative standards.[13] Hence, to align with sector best practices we applied the following rules:

- For intermediate outcomes directly linked to Fairtrade's supply chain, consistent positive evidence from weaker exploratory evaluations on shorter-term indicators (e.g., Premium fund distribution under Premium Investments) will be sufficient for credible impact claims, i.e., receiving a **Green** rating.
- For intermediate outcomes outside Fairtrade's direct influence, as well as for long-term outcomes and impacts, positive results across all domains, supported with high-quality or attributional evaluations, are required for a **Green** rating.

Bearing the above in mind, we present the following main visual of the Evidence Map:

13 A Framework to Guide Practice. December 2023, ISEAL. Impacts and Outcomes: Claims and Communications Guidance. Available at: https://www.isealalliance.org/get-involved/resources/impacts-and-outcomes-claims-and-communications-guidance.

Figure 7: Number of results mapped to Fairtrade ToC and the traffic light rating for each ToC area.



Study results once mapped against the ToC revealed that 76% of the literature reported one or more results related to Fairtrade International's intermediate outcomes; 83% addressed long-term outcomes, and 61% covered the impact layer, although impact only had five indicators. Coverage of studies per outcome or impact area varied widely ranging from 5-60 studies.

At the intermediate outcome level, economic outcomes, particularly Price Stability and Premium Investments alongside Climate-Resilient Practices and Trust & Satisfaction, were heavily covered by the reviewed literature. In contrast, Analytics & Insights, as well as Freedom of Association, were under-represented. This pattern extends to the long-term and impact layers, where Economic Gains and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods featured prominently.

In relation to evidence supporting Fairtrade's positive effect, the Evidence Map shows the strongest evidence base at the intermediate outcome level of the ToC. Fairtrade's interventions lead to clear early-stage results. However, most long-term outcome indicators lack strong confidence ratings. Evidence gaps were observed for sustained improvements for Strong Producer Organisations, Representation & Influence, and Human & Environmental Rights. While some long-term outcomes, such as Improved Labour Conditions, and Traceability & Transparency, are strongly supported, they remain closely tied to Fairtrade International's direct interventions. The only high-confidence impact indicator is Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains, with strong evidence showing favourable views of Fairtrade, and benefits throughout Fairtrade's supply chain.

In contrast, Fairtrade's effect on labour rights, particularly Freedom of Association, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, remains weak. Economic indicators show higher confidence for farmers than for workers, reflecting both limited research and limited progress with labour organisations. Strong Producer Organisations also received a partial **Grey** rating for HLOs reflecting under-researched labour dynamics. Marginalised groups (except for women) were another under-researched area of the ToC, as shown in the **Grey** rating for Diversity & Inclusiveness. Other poorly studied indicators include Freedom of Association, Analytics & Insights, Enabling Public Policies, and Decent Work. However, the small evidence base for Decent Work appears to stem from overlap in the indicator definition with Improved Labour Conditions, Human & Environmental Rights, and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods.

Fairtrade can confidently claim success across most intermediate outcomes. However, at the long-term outcome level, evidence gaps emerge for HLOs and rights-based outcomes. While evidence for labour conditions, economic gains for farmers, and supply chain benefits is strong, the impact layer of the ToC reveals gaps in linking these to lasting livelihoods, equity, and labour-related improvements. For Environmental Sustainability, early-stage results are well-supported under Climate-Resilient Practices, but few environmental findings are mapped to long-term outcomes (under Human & Environmental Rights). At the impact level, there is only limited confidence in Fairtrade's ability to generate sustained benefits outside of Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains.

The specific results per outcome and impact area are presented in much more detail in the following sections, as per the order of Fairtrade's ToC.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

As outlined earlier, for several intermediate outcomes, weaker exploratory evaluations of early-stage output indicators will be sufficient for credible impact claims, in line with ISEAL's standards. Hence, in collaboration with Fairtrade International, and steered by ISEAL Alliance guidance[14], we decided consistent gains in outputs (products, goods and services delivered[15]) or early-stage results (defined above) for Price Stability, Premium Investments, Diversity & Inclusiveness, and Climate-Resilient Practices would serve as a credible (**Green**) impact claim. The following section presents detailed findings per intermediate outcome indicator.

Green	Fairtrade can have **strong confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Amber	Fairtrade can have **moderate confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Red	Fairtrade **cannot have confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Grey	There is **not enough evidence** to determine Fairtrade's effect in this ToC area.

Price Stability: Stability and reduced risk of price fluctuations for producers.

Price Stability, evaluated through the Fairtrade Minimum Price (FMP), sales price, Premium price, farm gate prices, and collected price premiums, yielded predominantly positive results. A total of 30 studies were mapped against this outcome. Seventy percent of findings were judged positive, with mixed outcomes reported in 23% of cases, and non-impact and negative outcomes (ID 66) reported by one study each (3%).

Overall, the evidence indicates that Fairtrade frequently enables farmers and HLOs to stabilise and increase prices, with benefits relatively evenly distributed between these groups.[16] Of the 30 studies mapped to this outcome, six were robust attributional studies[17], and one was a causal evaluation (ID 124). One systematic review (ID 10) and one meta-analysis (ID 84) also assessed Price Stability. Among attributional studies, 86% reported positive results, and the single causal study demonstrated positive impacts.

Studies evaluating compliance with Fairtrade Standards reported high adherence to the FMP and Premium, with 85–87% achieving adequate compliance and 6–9% scoring even higher compliance (ID 55). Strong audit performance has translated into widespread benefits, including stable income (IDs 23, 35, 40, 145) and improved prices received[18], which were also linked to higher yields (ID 113). Fairtrade, when implemented alongside other VSS (e.g., Organic), also contributed to price stability (ID 85).

Higher-quality literature reviews often reported small or inconsistent (mixed) results, attributed to variability in capacity building, farm productivity, cooperative performance, and market conditions (IDs 10, 84). Indeed, except for bananas, market conditions approximated by metric tonnes (MT) sold and Premium generated (euros) (KPIs 8.1 and 8.2)[19] showed strong correlations (above 0.7) for all other commodities.[20] This highlights the importance of commodity sales for Price Stability, Premium Investments, and other economic indicators within the ToC. Table 2 indicates that the Premium generated remained relatively stable for all key commodities. Negative outcomes were linked to market oversupply and cooperative inefficiencies (ID 66). The FMP was most effective in stabilising incomes in regions with strong market access but was less beneficial during price volatility (IDs 32, 78). Some studies further noted that the FMP functions effectively as a safety net only when commodity prices are low (IDs 23, 37).

14 A Framework to Guide Practice. December 2023, ISEAL. Impacts and Outcomes: Claims and Communications Guidance. Available at: https://www.isealalliance.org/get-involved/resources/impacts-and-outcomes-claims-and-communications-guidance
15 Outputs are the products, goods and services delivered by a development intervention (e.g., delivery of training). They are designed to produce outcomes – the short- to medium-term effects of an intervention – and, eventually, impacts.
16 HLO-focused: 70% positive, 20% mixed, 10% negative. SPO-focused: 75% positive, 21% mixed, 4% negative. SPO-focused results refer to studies primarily evaluating SPOs but may include some HLO findings. Similarly, HLO-focused results mainly assess HLOs, but occasionally include SPO-related insights.
17 IDs 36, 66, 97, 103, 104, 113.
18 IDs 41, 85, 86, 97, 103, 104.
19 FairLens (Premium) and Fairtrace (sales).
20 A Pearson correlation analysis examined the relationship between Fairtrade Premium generated (EUR) and producer volume sold (MT) for Bananas, Coffee, Cocoa, Flowers, and Sugar (2020–2023). The correlation coefficient (r) indicates association strength: strong (>0.7), moderate (0.4–0.7), and weak/negligible (<0.4). Results: Bananas (r=0.14), Coffee (r=0.70), Cocoa (r=0.76), Flowers (r=0.98), Sugar (r=0.96).

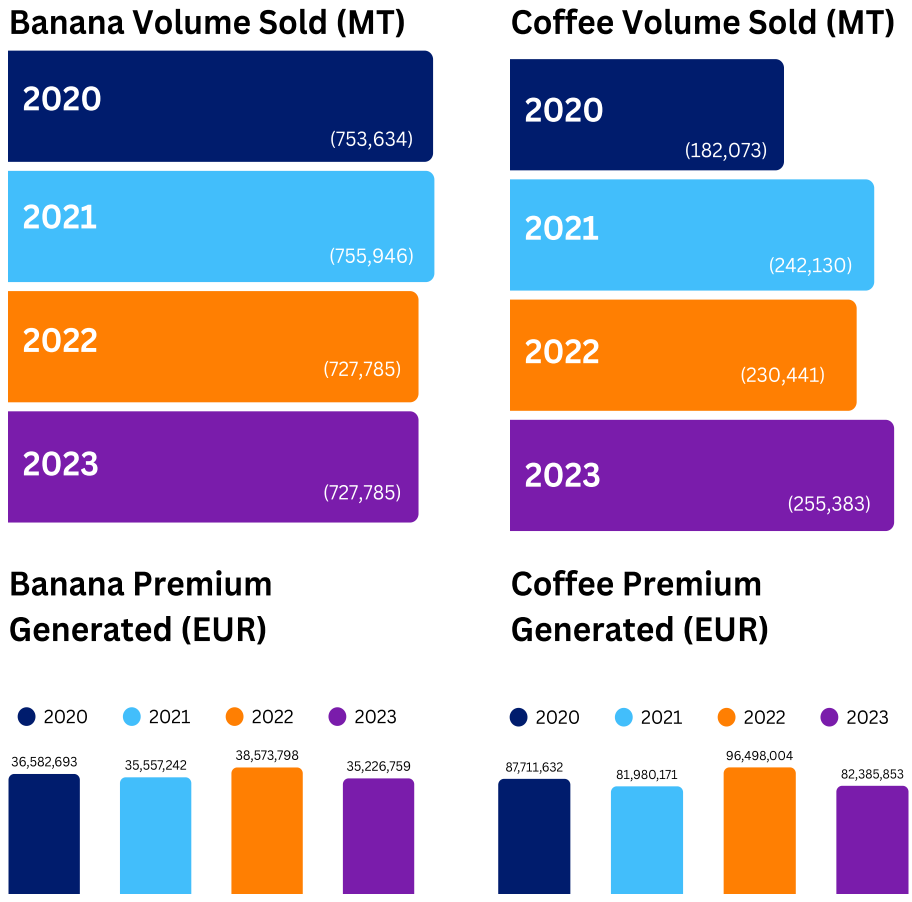
Table 2: Fairtrade Premium generated (EUR 2020-2023).

Year	Bananas	Coffee	Cocoa	Flowers	Sugar
2020	36,582,693	87,711,632	38,532,520	7,310,526	6,955,509
2021	35,557,343	81,980,171	49,233,191	8,489,017	10,113,335
2022	38,573,798	96,498,004	52,169,450	7,690,307	10,361,603
2023	35,226,759	82,385,853	57,661,485	7,347,020	8,159,284

Fairtrade staff also clarified that an FMP does not exist for every HLO product. For example, the floricultural sector does not work with a minimum price, yet it has the largest total workforce among HLO product categories. The absence of an FMP limits economic gains for these workers (FGD 3).

Despite contexts influencing the achievement of Price Stability, results were predominantly positive. Robust quantitative evaluations consistently highlighted the benefits of Fairtrade and certification, particularly regarding prices received. Mixed and non-impact results were often associated with exploratory methodologies or contextual challenges. Findings strongly affirm Fairtrade's impact on Price Stability, and this intermediate outcome area is, therefore, rated **Green**.

Figure 8: Bananas and coffee sold and Premium generated (EUR) for bananas and coffee.



Premium Investments: Investing in communities and livelihoods.

The findings on this indicator emphasised Fairtrade Premium usage, focusing on investment types, decision-making processes, and reported benefits. Overall, 68% of results were positive, 24% mixed, 6% negative (IDs 42, 83), with one study (3%) reporting no effect. This outcome was evaluated by 37 studies, including four attributional quantitative evaluations (IDs 18, 36, 47, 116), eight systematic reviews[21] and a meta-analysis (ID 24).

SPOs demonstrated a higher prevalence of positive results (75%) compared to HLOs (57%). This disparity appears linked to differences in Fairtrade Premium allocation. In HLOs, committees often allocated Premiums to community-wide projects that indirectly benefitted workers, whereas SPOs typically used Premiums to support producers through initiatives, such as extension services, production training, and improved credit access. This distinction aligns with Fairtrade International's 2022 and 2023 KPI 8.2, which shows significantly higher social investment by HLOs (69%) than SPOs (9%). Among HLOs, governance emerged as a critical factor in Premium utilisation, which tended to be restrictive in HLOs (IDs 49, 88), showing the importance of other ToC indicators, such as Freedom of Association, or Representation & Influence. Among SPOs, studies mapped to this indicator found approximately two-thirds of SPO Premiums were passed directly to producers, with the remainder used for administration and community projects (ID 85). Fairtrade International's KPI 8.2 indicates that less Premium is paid directly to farmers (20% of total Premium funds), approximately one-third of Premiums is allocated to SPO business development, and another one-third is allocated to production. In addition to low social investment, SPOs spent little (1%) on inclusion and no environmental investments were made (KPI 8.2, Figure 9).

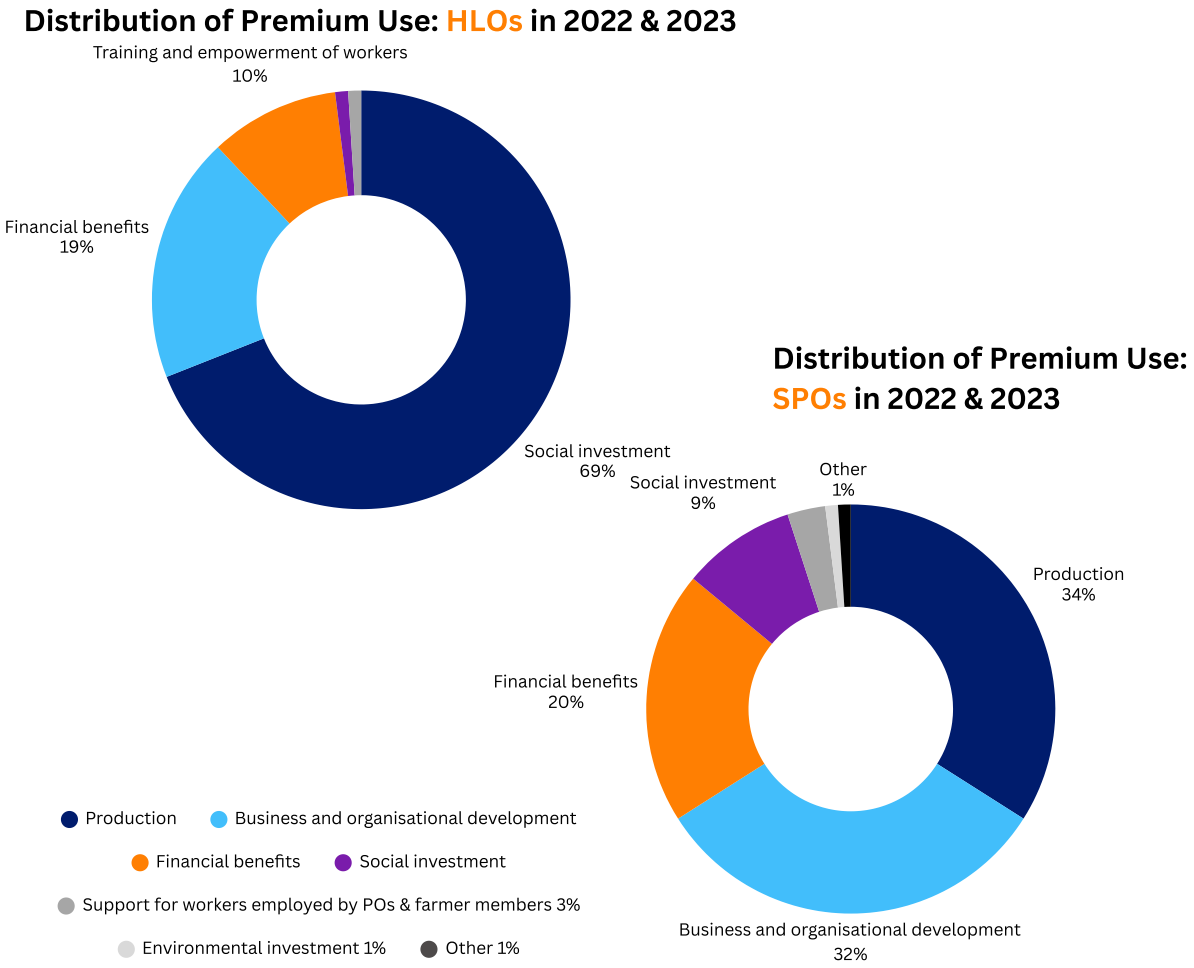
Although Fairtrade Premium Committees oversee investment distribution, barriers differ by producer organisation. In HLOs, poor worker awareness (IDs 24, 56), management co-option (ID 88), and weak oversight (ID 49) have led to poorly targeted and unequal benefits. The issue of unequal distribution of Premiums was recognised during an FGD but staff clarified that, in some contexts, Fairtrade already tries to actively address this, e.g., in the West Africa Cocoa Programme (FGD 3). Conversely, SPOs benefitted from democratic governance enabling targeted allocations, although cooperative size and management capacity affected success (ID 47).

Premium Investments demonstrated effectiveness in funding community projects, enhancing economic resilience, and reducing producers' out-of-pocket expenses (e.g., healthcare, education) (IDs 36, 47). However, this effectiveness was dependent on market share, with fluctuating income levels and the need to distribute funds across many workers or members diluting impact (ID 88). High certification costs relative to the benefits of Premium payments was also noted as a challenge, while cooperative support, larger co-ops and access to financial services in a strong co-operative were important determinants of success (IDs 24, 98). The use of direct in-cash payments to help manage debt was also found to improve the economic well-being of farmers (ID 40).

Quantitative attributional studies (IDs 18, 36, 47, 116) and systematic reviews demonstrated broadly consistent overall findings.[22] Many studies confirmed Premium distribution and convincing early-stage impacts.[23] Applying ISEAL's criteria for credible claims, the consistent delivery of Premium funds supports this intermediate outcome being rated **Green**. However, findings on the fairness and accuracy of Premium distribution suggest Fairtrade International should consider providing direct rather than indirect Premium benefits to workers and targeting mechanisms to ensure fair distribution among HLOs.

21 The eight systematic reviews involved IDs 10, 83, 98, 119, 122, 128, 142.
22 57% positive, 29% mixed, 14% negative.
23 For example: IDs 8, 10, 17, 18, 37, 40, 43, 78, 85, 116.

Figure 9: Distribution of Premium use for HLOs and SPOs in 2022 and 2023 (KPI 8.2):



Freedom of Association: Democratic organisations that improve wage negotiations and collective bargaining.

The overall quantity and quality of evidence was low for Freedom of Association, with only nine studies contributing findings to this outcome. All six studies with a quantitative component were classified as exploratory with just one systematic review providing results (ID 10). The results primarily addressed worker representation, participation in decision-making, and formation and activities of associations.

Only 11% of the findings were positive, with a global evaluation of Fairtrade's Human Rights and Environmental Due Diligence (HREDD) processes (ID 55) revealing good adherence to producer organisation audit criteria for freedom of association and collective bargaining (as a sub-category of labour rights). Another study found Fairtrade International calls for more robust representation mechanisms compared to Fairtrade USA (ID 10).

Most studies evaluating Freedom of Association reported mixed outcomes (67%) and 22% reported no effect. Progress was hampered by unequal participation, limited level of involvement in decision-making and structural power imbalances (IDs 43, 89), management influence over associations and active discouragement to join either associations or unions (IDs 49, 56, 115). Results showed associations were not a priority for all workers in Ecuador (ID 8). Colombia's results also indicate national policy can determine certification impact, for example, when rights to freedom of association are enshrined in law (ID 37).

Fairtrade staff who reflected on Freedom of Association were not surprised to see predominantly mixed results, and argued that Fairtrade:

> ***"Should take this as the sign that we need interventions beyond Standards, e.g., in the form of a commercial partners' programme, etc. This area is difficult to come up with these 'additional producer support' as the markets don't pay much attention to the topic." (FGD 1)***

Further remarks were made that the indicator is highly context specific with strong historical, political and cultural differences between regions, with significant challenges in some regions, such as South Asia, and for some products, such as tea (FGD 6). A representative of one Producer Network highlighted that: "Freedom of Association is much more influenced by external factors than what is within the scope of control of producer organisations. The external factors are so strong." (FGD 6) Overall, the evidence base is limited, with findings indicating that gaps remain in equitable worker representation and bargaining rights. Due to the lack of coverage this impact indicator is scored **Grey**.

Diversity & Inclusiveness: Initiatives supporting women and young farmers and workers to ensure opportunities.

This outcome is evaluated by 21 studies, including one robust mixed-method evaluative study (ID 36), two systematic reviews (IDs 119, 142) and one meta-analysis (ID 84). Mapped results focused on gender, reporting inclusion of women, female leadership, participation in decision-making, capacity strengthening and empowerment. Four studies examined youth in Fairtrade, including Fairtrade's youth engagement initiatives (ID 32), young workers on certified flower farms in East Africa (ID 56), and youth perception of sugarcane farming in Belize and Mauritius (IDs 34, 54). One study evaluated indigenous communities (ID 35), but there was little emphasis on other marginalised groups.

Overall, 57% of the findings were positive, 14% showed mixed results and 19% showed no effect. Two studies described negative results (10%), though neither were Fairtrade (IDs 45, 89).[24] Evaluations focused solely on Fairtrade yielded similar results[25], with higher methodological rigour linked to predominantly positive outcomes. For example, one robust study highlighted higher participation of women (ID 36), while systematic reviews (IDs 119, 142) reported gains in gender-focused capacity building, skill acquisition, and workforce inclusion. Additional positive findings included women's leadership opportunities, increased economic status, and successful capacity strengthening efforts[26], with the Fairtrade Women's School of Leadership cited as best practice (ID 144).

However, downstream effects, such as increased participation or influence among women (IDs 32, 37, 54) and youth (IDs 32, 54), were less consistent. A meta-analysis found no significant impact of VSS on female farmer participation or membership (ID 84). Mixed results reflected gains in inclusive opportunities and policies, but these often failed to translate into meaningful participation. For example, various Fairtrade certified sugarcane SPOs in Belize undertook a series of trainings on gender and had policies promoting gender equity, but nearly all leadership positions in all three associations were held by men (ID 34). However, Fairtrade International's KPIs do show progress. For example, in 2024, 34% of women were serving as either producer, board or committee members (Figure 11). Staff members reflected that there has been positive feedback from producer networks. However, it was felt that Fairtrade Standard requirements regarding Diversity & Inclusiveness are weak, hampering long-term progress on participation: "Still we are not making a dent. There is a clear gap in our strategy." (FGD 1)

For women, there are consistent and encouraging gains with regard to participation, but a lack of sustained downstream impacts in areas such as representation. This highlights the challenge of addressing entrenched socio-cultural norms through certification alone. Using ISEAL's criteria, strong evidence of early gains is sufficient for women. Diversity & Inclusiveness warrants a **Green** classification. However, for youth and other marginalised groups, the evidence base is classified as **Grey** denoting it as a priority for future research.

Climate-Resilient Practices: Adoption of practices that enhance productivity and climate adaption.

Thirty-three studies provided evaluative findings, with 58% reporting positive results, 30% mixed, 6% showing no effect, and 6% reporting negative results (IDs 79, 109). The findings encompassed GPS mapping of producer plots, disaster risk management, adoption of energy-efficient technologies, soil and waste management, forest conservation, and the use of organic fertilisers and pesticides. Improvements were also observed in output metrics such as knowledge, awareness, and skills related to climate resilience and good agricultural practices (GAPs) through capacity building initiatives.

This indicator had a robust evidence base, with six attributional and one causal evaluation (ID 138). Three systematic reviews (IDs 10, 83, 128) and one meta-analysis (ID 24) were among a broader set of literature reviews. Results show strong evidence at the output level with VSS, particularly Fairtrade, demonstrating notable progress in providing training, advisory services, and technical support for GAPs, including agrochemical application and improved farm management (IDs 24, 85, 138, 139). Fairtrade also addressed resilience through disaster risk management training and plan development (ID 31). In Ecuador, 76% of participants reported knowledge gains in agriculture as a benefit of certification (ID 80).[27] Other

24 The first study (Id 45) had no specific reference to Fairtrade but focused on the supply chains of major German supermarkets, specifically in pineapple, banana, and grape farming in Costa Rica and South Africa. The other study evaluated Fairtrade USA (ID 89).
25 Positive 50%, 20% mixed and 30% no effect.
26 IDs 8, 22, 31, 36, 56, 119, 137, 139, 142, 144.
27 A Level 2 relevance study focusing on Fairtrade, Fair for Life, and Olam's sustainable sourcing programme (non-VSS, corporate regulations).

evaluations highlighted increased environmental awareness (ID 83) and sustainable farming practices (ID 53).

Findings on the application of such practices were also encouraging, with studies reporting improvements in fertiliser, pesticide, and herbicide use[28], soil, water, and forest conservation measures[29], crop rotation (ID 123), and the adoption of energy-efficient technologies, such as solar panels (ID 31). Additional practices documented included tree nursery establishment (ID 31) and reduced paraquat use (ID 34). Some studies also evidenced broader adoption of sustainable agricultural practices (ID 135), and climate-smart techniques (ID 123).

No effect was identified for a range of practices, including integrated pest management (IPM) or broader environmentally friendly practices (ID 18). One of the two negative findings showed Fairtrade certified farmers used more mineral fertilisers and pesticides than non-certified producers in Cameroon (ID 79), while the second reported that Fairtrade certified coffee producers in Costa Rica implemented fewer sustainable pest control and soil conservation practices (ID 109).

Mixed results often stemmed from challenges in implementing certain practices locally. For example, certified banana producers in Peru adopted soil improvement practices but made limited progress in water conservation and ecosystem enhancement (ID 35). Similarly, while GAPs were widely adopted, the uptake of climate-resilient practices was more limited (ID 54).

A study reporting on feedback from producers suggests Fairtrade could place greater emphasis on sustainable practices within its Standards (ID 56). This triangulates with feedback from FGD5, which also cited concerns about enforcement, a lack of emphasis within Standards, and the efficacy of environmental auditing (see Human & Environmental Rights). KPI data from 2023 indicates that 51% of Fairtrade SPOs were trained in GAPs or were implementing climate adaptation plans. While this represents growth[30], it falls short of Fairtrade's target of 100% (KPI 7.1). Staff also raised concerns about the use of GAP terminology, flagging that the term is outdated and does often not align with environmentally sustainable and good agroecological practice but merely refers to legal compliance (FGD 5, see more Part 3: Pathway 4).

Hence, greater impact could be achieved by enhancing the focus of Fairtrade certification on Climate-Resilient Practices and strengthening their enforcement. This may already be underway, as Fairtrade International's KPIs indicate that strategic partnerships and projects were highest within the Environmental and Climate Change theme in 2022 and 2023 (KPIs 13.1 & 13.2).[31] Collaboration between VSS and farmer cooperatives was key to driving practice change (ID 125).

Robust quantitative evaluations showed 57% positive findings, while systematic reviews were evenly split between mixed and positive results (IDs 10, 128). Evaluations focused solely on Fairtrade were less supportive.[32] However, the evidence highlights Fairtrade's strengths in training, capacity building, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices, achieving credible impact on short-term indicators as required by ISEAL standards for a credible impact claim. Fairtrade can be highly confident in its capacity building impact and reasonably confident in practice adoption, warranting a **Green** rating for this indicator.

Analytics & Insights: Access to data-driven decision-making.

Analytics & Insights was evidenced by 13 studies, and was primarily investigated through qualitative research, with two mixed-methods studies providing exploratory quantitative findings and some support from a systematic review (ID 51). Approximately half of the studies focused exclusively on Fairtrade (46%), five studies explored HLOs, and 11 also investigated SPOs.

The indicators explored data systems related to labour and child protection, social and environmental audits, compliance monitoring, record-keeping, Premium investment tracking, Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) systems, regulatory compliance, and system credibility. Results tended to prioritise system evaluation and regulatory functionality over insights into improving data infrastructure for producers and supply chain actors. Emphasis was placed on assessing system implementation, credibility, and outcomes.

Mapped results revealed 38% positive findings, 46% mixed, one study showing no effect (8%), and one demonstrating negative findings (8%, ID 145). The negative result was across VSS, revealing pitfalls in the auditing systems on which VSS rely, such as lack of rigour, conflicts of interest, and insufficient monitoring that undermines their credibility and effectiveness (ID 145). However, Fairtrade's use of FLOCERT (Fairtrade's global independent certification body), including announced and unannounced audits, mitigates many of these aforementioned risks (ID 133). Nevertheless, participants in FGD 5 highlighted concerns about the accuracy of the environmental component of auditing.

Other specific strengths of Fairtrade were the inclusion of producer networks in localised M&E implementation, and community and stakeholder engagement in M&E activities (IDs 6, 143). While Fairtrade's support for farmers' record-keeping has not been formalised (ID 35), the evidence suggests that Fairtrade certification may encourage improved record-keeping practices among farmers (ID 85). Producers made recommendations for enhanced monitoring and verification of Fairtrade's Premium distribution and higher price payments (ID 53). Traders called for greater flexibility in their audit systems, often perceiving them as compliance obligations rather than

28 IDs 34, 57, 85, 86, 136.
29 IDs 30, 53, 93, 123, 134.
30 KPI 7.1: Number and percentage of POs that participate in and/or apply climate-resilient practices: 2021 - 44%; 2022 - 35%; 2023 - 51%.
31 Strategic partnerships and programmes focus on key thematic areas, including Living Income, Living Wage, Gender and Youth, HREDD, and Environmental and Climate Change.
32 Evaluations focused on Fairtrade were 36% positive, 55% mixed and 9% negative.

opportunities for improvement (ID 25). The auditing challenges facing both producers and traders included structural issues (e.g., time constraints, conflicts of interest, lack of transparency), external pressures to reduce costs, and the complexity of compliance requirements.

For Fairtrade staff with experience of Data & Intelligence the dearth of evidence was unsurprising (FGD 4, 6, 7). This intervention was "still an aspiration and work in progress." (FGD 6) The same FGD heard that current work is focused on data capture at output level and that work needs to be undertaken into how insights are shared back with producers, with "systematic provision of analytics and insight at significant scale not yet happening." (FGD 6)[33] Producer network representatives expressed the need for more training and support on Data & Intelligence (FGD 6) when reflecting on the assumption within Fairtrade International's ToC that this may strengthen producer organisations, but no evidence was found to support this ToC linkage (see more in Part 3: Pathway 3).

While positive anecdotal outcomes were noted for Fairtrade's analytics, the weak quantitative evidence base, and limited number of studies compared to topic breadth, as well as insufficient focus human and environmental rights, meant that this outcome indicator was classified as **Grey**, indicating too few studies for conclusive evidence and the need for more research.

Trust & Satisfaction: Stakeholders trust and value Fairtrade, fostering collaboration.

Trust & Satisfaction was evaluated through 31 studies, yielding 68% positive results, 23% mixed results, one study reporting no effect (3%), and two studies reporting negative results (6%) (IDs 16, 63). The evidence base consisted of eight literature reviews, including three systematic reviews (IDs 10, 51, 98), an attributional PSM study (ID 96) and one causal RCT evaluation (ID 107).

Findings mapped to Trust & Satisfaction captured trust and value perception of consumers, farmers, workers, producer organisations and other actors along the chain, e.g., export companies (ID 92). Indicators measuring self-attributed benefits were used, such as 'perceived value of certification' and 'perception of producer support'.

Fairtrade International's monitoring data estimates that 69% of consumers recognise and 72% trust in the logo and brand across 12 predominately Western countries (KPIs 12.6, 12.7).[34] Causal findings revealed that trust in and awareness of Fairtrade increases consumer willingness to pay for Fairtrade chocolate, confirming the link between trust and willingness to pay included in the long-term outcome Traceability & Transparency (ID 107). Other studies reported similarly positive consumer associations, highlighting Fairtrade's strong reputation for Standards, Producer Support & Producer Networks and Premium Investments (IDs 65, 68).

Workers, farmers, and producer organisations valued Fairtrade, with farmers and workers expressing satisfaction with Premium-funded support, social investments (IDs 34, 36, 43), and capacity building initiatives, including training (IDs 35, 58). Among East African farm workers, there was high awareness of Fairtrade's benefits, such as improved pay and labour conditions, along with a strong preference for employment at Fairtrade certified farms (ID 56).

Fairtrade International's KPI 5.1[35] tracks producer satisfaction. In 2024, it showed that 87% of SPOs were satisfied or very satisfied with steady growth since 2021.[36] Satisfaction was consistently high across the Latin American and Caribbean, African, and Asian and Pacific networks (i.e., CLAC, FTA, NAPP). The 2023 Producer Satisfaction Survey also revealed that the top reasons for Fairtrade to be considered as the preferred scheme were: the Premium and opportunity to invest in community/development, benefits to farmers, e.g., standards of living/welfare of workers, and price guarantees. High levels of satisfaction with Fairtrade were also recorded throughout the supply chain, including among traders, export companies and retailers (IDs 92, 131). Fairtrade's monitoring systems were also reported as trustworthy (ID 6).

A comprehensive systematic review of Fairtrade's business engagement revealed that association leads to significant reputational gains among consumers. Businesses reported choosing the Fairtrade label as they perceived it to align with corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies and their overall mission (ID 51). CSR was also shown to increase product sales via business reputation (ID 96). These findings are in line with a submission made following FGD 4[37], which shows market trends towards a new model of leadership that leverages partnerships across corporates, governments, and NGOs in addressing sustainability challenges.

With regard to the two negative findings, these studies reported on Fairtrade in relation to competitors. The first showed preference for local alternatives (e.g., Participatory Guarantee Systems) in East Africa and Latin America tied in with resistance to Northern-dominated VSS in general (ID 63).[38] The second negative finding pertained to Fairtrade's loss of market dominance in cocoa, with many companies opting for in-house corporate-led sustainability initiatives, leading to concerns over corporate capture and loss of influence for civil society-driven certification programmes (ID 16).[39] However, alternative studies of Fairtrade's market share indicate growth in other sectors (IDs 53, 73), and market data shows relatively stable amounts of commodities sold over the past few years (Table 3).

33 For more detail on Data & Intelligence and its effect on Analytics & Insights, see additional submissions (AS): AS. 11 and AS.13, listed in Annex 1.
34 AS.5
35 AS.10
36 2021 - 78%, 2022 - 83%, 2023 - 88%.
37 AS.2
38 Level 3 relevance: the study did not focus on Fairtrade, but study examined VSS in general.
39 Level 2 relevance: the study examined Fairtrade alongside other VSS.

Despite some outlier negative findings, overall results for Trust & Satisfaction were positive. Systematic reviews and attributional studies consistently provided strong evidence across the supply chain, confirming Fairtrade's added value for this indicator, which is classified as **Green**.

Other intermediate outcomes:

Twenty additional results were mapped to the intermediate outcome layer of Fairtrade International's ToC. Unintended findings primarily covered training and capacity strengthening on topics such as child labour, agricultural skills, labour rights, and supply chains, which are not explicitly addressed in the ToC but showed positive results. These included increased awareness, skills, knowledge, and confidence.

However, unintended negative consequences were also identified at this level, such as higher production costs for certified farmers, increased labour burdens due to certification requirements (ID 145), added pressures on women (ID 142), and challenges such as transport costs (ID 79). Some findings were unrelated to Fairtrade (IDs 81, 111, 139, 141).

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

As the ToC progresses to the long-term outcome layer, indicators become less tied to Fairtrade International's core interventions and external factors play a greater role in enabling or constraining effect.

Because of this, we stop applying ISEAL guidance for credible impact claims, and the traffic light rating shown to the right is now determined by all results mapped to each long-term outcome. We also apply the stricter criteria for evidence strength and robustness, discussed at the start of Part 2.

Green	Fairtrade can have **strong confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Amber	Fairtrade can have **moderate confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Red	Fairtrade **cannot have confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Grey	There is **not enough evidence** to determine Fairtrade's effect in this ToC area.

Improving Labour Conditions: Ensuring workers have improved wages, health and safety, and fair contracts.

Indicators mapped to this outcome focused on health and safety standards, labour rights, and working conditions. While the Fairtrade International ToC references wages under working conditions, impact on wages was examined under Economic Gains. A total of 26 studies contributed to this indicator.

Despite the ToC indicators' focus on workers and HLOs, many results mapped showed improved conditions for farm workers[40], and producers.[41] Overall, positive impact was more common for SPOs (68%), though HLOs also demonstrated notable gains (57%).

Close to two-thirds of findings were positive (64%), while 28% were mixed, and 8% showed negative effects (IDs 49, 109). Examples of positive outcomes included increased knowledge of labour rights among farmers, health and safety (IDs 34, 35, 37), such as distribution and use of protective gear and equipment for certified farmers, workers and members[42], better storage, handling and reduced use of pesticides and chemicals (IDs 8, 30, 34, 85, and others[43]). More generically, there was mention of improved health and safety standards, safer working practices and improved labour conditions in various studies.[44] Labour rights improvements resulting from Fairtrade certification included written contracts for migrants (ID 36) and legal work hours compliance for all workers (ID 89).

Of the two negative results mapped, one quasi-experimental study found fewer health protection practices among Fairtrade certified coffee farmers in Costa Rica (ID 109). Another reported inadequate sanitation facilities for women in South African Fairtrade certified vineyards (ID 49). The study showing no effect evaluated farm workers' access to protective clothing when handling pesticides and exposure to hazardous working conditions. This study was, however, evaluating other certification schemes (ID 45). In these cases, producer organisations contributed to negative outcomes through

40 IDs 32, 34, 35, 54,101.
41 IDs 30 34, 35,37, 81, 85.
42 IDs 30, 32, 34, 82, 85.
43 An additional study submitted following FGD 5 (AS.7) revealed that Fairtrade Organic & In Conversion (FOIC) cotton farmers in India recorded reduced use of highly hazardous pesticides following Fairtrade training on Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
44 IDs 34, 36, 54, 55, 56, 81, 101.

limited oversight (ID 45), low worker unionisation and fear of retaliation (ID 49), and a lack of emphasis on worker well-being in programme priorities (ID 109). Mixed studies found that improvements in working conditions were uneven across different worker groups, particularly affecting temporary and female workers (ID 115). Other studies showed inconsistent progress in labour rights (IDs 98, 140), or challenges in other areas, such as working hours (ID 118).

The evidence base was limited with just two attributional studies: one reporting positive effects on labour rights and health (ID 36) and the other showing negative findings (ID 109). Two systematic literature reviews (IDs 98, 142) on coffee production yielded mixed results across different VSS. Weak labour laws, limited enforcement, and economic pressures in some regions hindered improvements in economic gains. Hence, when interpreting results across studies mapped to this indicator, and despite some cases of non-achievement, our findings do align with the conclusions of Skalidou et al. that there is "evidence indicating general improvements in labour conditions [due to Fairtrade and other VSS], though effects are often concentrated in specific outcomes and settings." (ID 74) In other words, while evidence was not always consistent, it showed positive effects. Moreover, evaluations focused on Fairtrade showed slightly more favourable results[45] with improvements across several labour condition domains, particularly in health and safety. As a result, we classified this long-term indicator as **Green**.

Economic Gains - living income & living wages: Improved productivity and progress towards fair income and wages.

Indicators mapped to this outcome included wages, living wages, net farm revenue, farm income, household income, and yields. Economic Gains was the most extensively evaluated indicator in the ToC with 60 studies covering it. The evidence base included two causal evaluations and 13 attributional evaluations, along with nine systematic reviews and one meta-analysis.[46]

Half of the findings (50%) on Economic Gains were positive, with 37% mixed, 8% showing no effect, and 5% reporting negative effects (IDs 66, 85, 131). Notably, no positive economic orwage effects were observed for workers in HLOs, while studies on SPOs reported 56% positive outcomes.

Among SPOs, negative and non-impact on farm revenue was attributed to higher production costs and increased labour to meet certification criteria, market mismatches, incidences when certified farmers cannot sell all their produce under Fairtrade conditions, and cooperative deductions.[47] Reduced yields were noted for some certified farmers as another challenge (IDs 85, 116, FGD 3). Market conditions and fluctuating global commodity prices were also commonly cited contextual factors (IDs 3, 18, 118). Strong commodity price fluctuations were highlighted as a key failure point during FGD 3 but acknowledged as something Fairtrade is attempting to address through reference prices: "We are saying now this is the price you should pay. We're advocating very strongly to have market players move away from the commodity markets and actually support more human rights-based pricing." (FGD 3)

Despite these challenges, numerous studies reported economic gains for farmers, including higher incomes[48], improved farm revenues, net returns (IDs 94, 97, 113, 138), and greater income stability (ID 30). Economic benefits for SPOs were more likely when certification was combined with training (e.g., on agricultural practices) and SPO support (IDs 34, 113), as well as double certification (IDs 89, 94, 98, 113). Two causal evaluations demonstrated positive economic effects of Fairtrade, either alone or alongside other VSS (IDs 124, 138).

When results were inconsistent, high certification costs, limited market access, size and limited productivity often inhibited income gains, particularly for small farmers (IDs 18, 30, 40, 95). Farmer income varied by commodity and region, especially in well-researched sectors, such as coffee and cocoa (IDs 94, 99, 122, 133). For example, a study found that, in Ethiopia, cooperative inefficiencies, weak market linkages, and insufficient cooperative training led to lower yields and reduced incomes, while in Nicaragua, strong cooperative support and access to credit resulted in higher yields and increased household incomes (ID 94).

Yields and productivity emerged as key income drivers, mapped 17 times[49] against this outcome area, with 65% of these findings positive, 29% mixed, and 6% showing no effect. Additionally, product quality was frequently highlighted as a significant income driver (IDs 31, 109, 177), indicating that certification and Standards may enhance income through improved quality as well as increased yields. Notably, Fairtrade International's ToC lacks an overt linkage between agricultural drivers under Climate-Resilient Practices to improve productivity and, consequently, Economic Gains, despite the focus in the literature (see more in Part 3: Pathways 1 and 4). It was clarified during FGD 3 that yields are factored into Fairtrade International's Living Income Reference Price (LIRP) methodology, which is relatively new. This explains the limited progress documented in KPIs along with the lack of external evidence of impact on living income. As of 2023, only one country had established living income benchmarks for cocoa with just 10 SPOs using the LIRP (KPI 1.4). Only 16% of coffee farmers and 11% of cocoa farmers received a living income, well below the target of 25% (KPI 1.1). Fairtrade International is yet to develop KPIs for living wages meaning progress in this area is not being monitored.

45 Positive 73%, mixed 20%, negative 7%.
46 Causal: IDs 124, 138; Attributional: IDs 18, 66, 87, 91, 94, 97, 104, 109, 113, 116, 117, 123; Systematic reviews: IDs 10, 14, 83, 84, 98, 99, 122, 128, 142, and Meta-analysis: ID 24.
47 IDs 3, 18, 40, 66, 118, 131, 133, FGD 3.
48 IDs 14, 22, 83, 98, 101, 104, 121, 123, 124, 139.
49 IDs 10, 14, 31, 53, 54, 80, 82, 86, 91, 94, 98, 99, 116, 117, 123, 139, 141.

The results for Economic Gains for broader areas, such as overall household income or in reference to living income, were much more mixed among SPOs. Out of seven studies examining household income, three reported a positive effect (IDs 2, 86, 95). For example, Ethiopian coffee farmers in a certified scheme earned €57 per annum more than non-certified peers (ID 95).

Household income gains depended on certification type, market conditions, production costs, and equitable distribution of the Fairtrade Minimum Price (IDs 2, 40, 95). These factors led to variable results. For example, another study focused on Ethiopian coffee production found no effect on household income, attributing this to larger household sizes and alternative income streams diluting effects (ID 94). This said, while diversification hindered income gains in Ethiopia, it was also seen as a positive outcome of certification in several contexts (IDs 3, 31, 56).

HLOs showed no measurable wage improvements across multiple studies (IDs 42, 43, 49, 74). While Fairtrade generally ensured compliance with minimum wage standards in countries such as Nicaragua, Ecuador, and India (IDs 8, 42, 89), compliance was not consistently observed, e.g., in South Africa workers earned below the national minimum wage with many of these workers unable to afford a basic living standard (ID 49). Even where minimum wages were met, income often failed to cover basic needs (IDs 8, 42, 49, 89) or meet living wage benchmarks (ID 43). Supportive local laws, price regulations, collective bargaining, and minimum wage floors were identified as key enablers for fair wages (FGD 3). However, when local laws on minimum wages fall short, this can perpetuate living wage issues, as seen with flower workers in Ecuador (ID 8). Challenges in securing decent wages were especially pronounced for female workers, and often linked to discrimination, gender inequality, and power imbalances between management and workers (ID 43, FGD 1). Sectoral level agreements can also act as a constraint, as clarified by one staff member:

> ***"Wages develop in different ways and depend on other factors than business income. For example, adequate minimum wage setting and collective bargaining tend to have a positive impact on wages in Fairtrade certified plantations. When these processes occur at sector level, Fairtrade has little control. In the absence of regularly updated minimum wages and regularly bargained agreements, wages tend to stagnate. Companies that conform to sector level bargaining are often averse to Fairtrade interventions that require them to deviate from sectoral arrangements. Tea is an example." (FGD 3)***

Fairtrade demonstrates strong positive impacts on income indicators for SPOs, particularly when certifications are paired with training and market access, though this did not always translate into improvements in household income and gains in living income. HLOs, on the other hand, showed no measurable wage improvements with results often failing to meet basic needs or living wage benchmarks. Hence, this ToC indicator is rated **Green** for SPOs and **Red** for HLOs.

Strong Producer Organisations: Enhanced viability, resilience, and competitiveness of producer organisations.

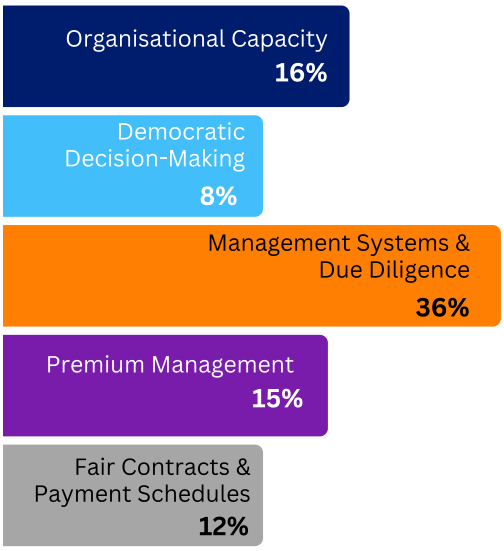
This is the only ToC area explicitly focused on producer organisations, evaluated by 19 studies. Of these, 53% of findings were positive, 37% mixed, and 11% showed no effect, with no negative effects encountered. As the sole organisational indicator, a diverse range of results were mapped, including economic performance of POs (profitability, income, financial health, market position, and producer organisation's bargaining power), organisational strength (leadership, management, governance, transparency, and stakeholder engagement), resource and benefit provision, training and capacity building.

Most studies focused on SPOs (n=18), with six evaluating HLOs and SPOs jointly and only one exclusively examining hired labour organisations (ID 115). Results for HLOs were less encouraging with just 33% positive outcomes, compared to cooperatives, which showed stronger support with 56% positive findings.

Cooperatives showed broad gains in technical capacities, such as account management, bookkeeping, transparency, democratic decision-making (IDs 3, 54, 56, 86), collaboration among Fairtrade POs (ID 56), and certification compliance with increased productivity (ID 34). Impacts on management and governance were inconclusive. One study noted stronger governance metrics in certified SPOs, but these were unrelated to Fairtrade (ID 36). Literature reviews found no effect on best management practices and compliance with areas such as democratic decision-making, management systems, due diligence, and Premium management receiving the second-highest non-compliance ranking, despite Fairtrade's focus on these aspects (ID 55). As shown in Figure 10, Fairtrade International's KPIs indicate that, by 2023, relative to other organisational strength criteria, management systems and due diligence showed the highest level of non-compliance, whereas organisational capacity ranked second and Premium management third highest non-compliance level (KPI 4.2a & 3.2a).[50] That said, the overall results were encouraging across all areas, with approximately 80% of POs meeting minimum compliance across the criteria listed and 13–23% demonstrating best practices. While best practices in organisational strength showed a slight decline between 2021 and 2023, overall results remained broadly stable, suggesting consistent adoption by most POs.

50 FLOCERT audit results.

Figure 10: Distribution of organisational strength non-compliance in POs.



Traceability, Fair Trading Practices, Fair Practices <10%

Economic benefits were evident but did not always translate into increased financial strength for SPOs. Gains were consistently observed in price received (IDs 40, 56), income levels (ID 126), and financial health (ID 86). However, profitability remained uncertain, often limited by global price pressures (e.g., the banana market, ID 40), increased competition (ID 58), low productivity, and high certification costs (ID 36). Training programmes that improved governance, transparency, and operational capacity facilitated market access and financial management, helping convert higher prices into profitability (ID 3). Collaboration among SPOs enhanced market positioning and efficiency, though results were inconsistent (ID 90).

Among HLOs, tentative support was noted for freedom of association and representation (ID 115), but this did not extend to bargaining power. No studies directly examined HLO capacity, with findings largely drawn from literature reviews (IDs 10, 139) or broader evaluations of labour conditions (ID 56). Evidence remains insufficient to draw reliable conclusions for HLOs.

The evidence base was limited comprising only two attributional evaluations and one systematic review (IDs 10, 36, 126). Rigorous quantitative evaluations showed mixed results[51], and the systematic review showed no effect. Promising findings for SPOs emerged in early indicators, such as financial management, responsiveness to members, price received, and financial health, with some evidence suggesting these improvements bolstered resilience (e.g., during COVID-19, ID 32). However, long-term outcomes, such as governance and profitability, remained inconsistent, even in higher-quality studies. Hence, this indicator is classified **Amber** for emerging but inconsistent evidence on SPO effects, and **Grey** due to insufficient evidence for HLOs. While early-stage results show promise, consistent long-term outcomes remain challenging.

Representation & Influence: Greater voice and decision-making influence for producers, workers, women and youth.

This outcome was evaluated by 26 studies, including two attributional evaluations (IDs 36, 47) and three systematic reviews (IDs 24, 84, 142). Overall, 44% of findings were positive, 26% mixed, 22% showed no effect, and 7% were negative (IDs 85, 145).[52] Studies focusing solely on Fairtrade yielded a higher proportion of positive findings (55%), but attributional evaluations and meta-analyses showed mixed or inconclusive results.

Gains for Representation (IDs 24, 74, 92, 115) were stronger than Influence (IDs 42, 74, 92), particularly among workers and women. Fairtrade International's KPIs show strong representation of producers. In 2024, they made up 77% of board members and 62% of committee members in Fairtrade's producer networks (PNs). Figure 11 (KPI 6.2 & 6.3) shows good board and committee membership among women but not youth.

Gains included improved worker representation, agency, and management-worker relations in regions with strong producer organisations and legal frameworks (IDs 42, 74, 115). Women held over 50% of leadership positions in Fairtrade certified organisations, supported by training and policy requirements (IDs 56, 139).

Notably, KPI 6.2 indicates that around a third of women producers serve as PN board or committee members. However, youth representation remains low at less than 10%, and neither measure shows the expected yearly growth despite this being a target (Figure 11). During FGDs 1 and 6, Fairtrade staff also highlighted challenges for women and youth enrolling with SPOs. Youth are increasingly less likely to engage in farming, and the link between SPO membership and land ownership, which is predominantly male, remains a barrier to progressing gender equality and social inclusion for female farmers. Furthermore, participation in decision making was inconsistent, with barriers such as lack of land titles and limited influence in leadership roles cited (IDs 36, 142, FGD 1). No spillover effects of participation on family dynamics were observed (ID 85).

Meta-analyses found Fairtrade farmers are more likely to participate in price negotiations and farm management decisions (ID 24), though decision making often focused on fund allocation rather than broader labour rights (IDs 40, 47). While worker committees were found to foster voice (ID 101), HLOs faced challenges, including restrictive labour reforms and certification costs, which limited union presence

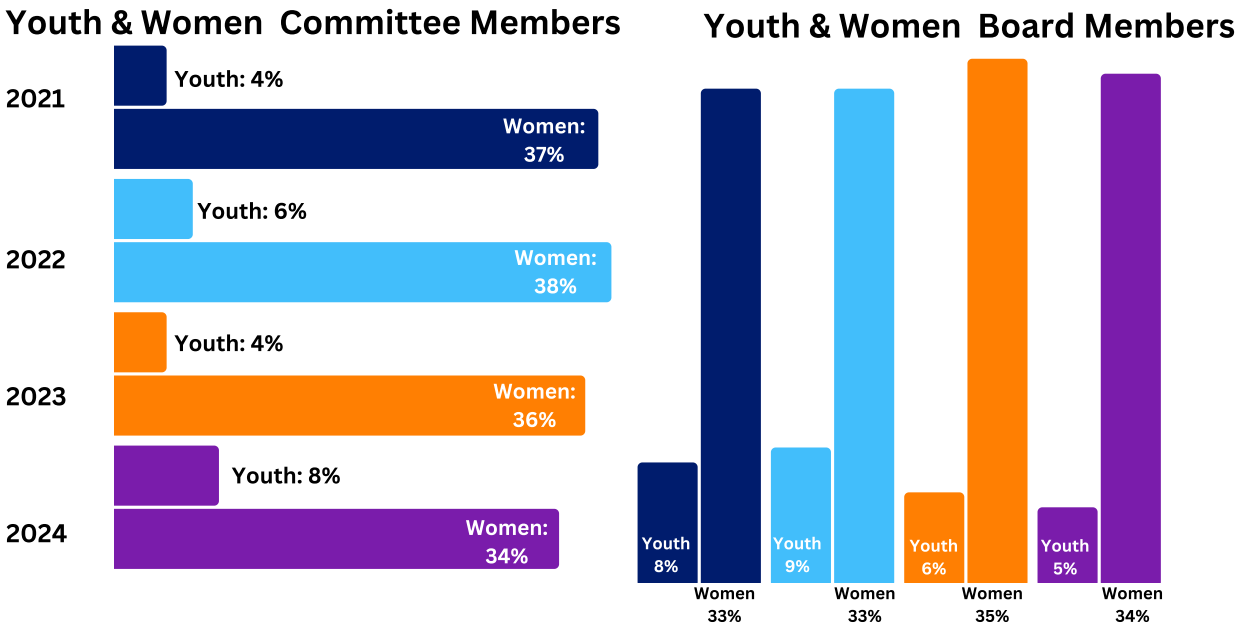
51 50% positive results, 50% mixed results.
52 The first negative finding was that Fairtrade certified farmers exhibited lower rates of joint production decision-making between male and female household heads compared to other VSS (ID 85). The second negative finding related to the representation of producers in VSS governance structures more broadly (ID 145).

and worker voice (ID 140). Nevertheless, regions with strong Fairtrade networks reported improved bargaining power and decision making compared to other VSS (ID 74). Another study pertained to the formation of Fairtrade farmer associations with transparent operations and took steps to improve their democracy and accountability, demonstrating member communication (ID 34).

While supply chain representation remained skewed towards buyers (ID 37), some studies noted improved farmer bargaining power and reduced transaction costs supported through collective action by associations and collaboration with export companies (ID 92). Producer integration into Fairtrade systems was positively viewed, though participation in VSS governance by stakeholders in developing countries remained limited (ID 145). Fairtrade's governance model, which includes producer networks and regional subsidiaries, sets it apart as a leader in stakeholder inclusivity (ID 143).

Fairtrade has consistently supported Representation, but its impact on Influence is context dependent. While notable gains in Representation are evident and results consistent between HLOs and SPOs[53], mixed findings for Influence and inconclusive results for supply chain participation[54] highlight limitations. Therefore, this outcome is rated **Amber**, reflecting Fairtrade's confidence in Representation but less certainty in achieving Influence.

Figure 11: KPIs for representation of women and youth (2021-2024) on PN boards and committees



Human & Environmental Rights: Reduction in violations across supply chains.

This indicator was evaluated in 26 studies, of which only one was attributional but demonstrated impact (ID 109). Overall, half of the results were positive (50%), 38% were mixed, and 12% showed no effect. Studies focusing solely on Fairtrade reported a higher proportion of positive findings (62%).

The results primarily addressed Human Rights, focusing on grievance mechanisms, child labour awareness and monitoring[55], gender-based violence (GBV), labour rights, migrant rights, and non-discrimination policies, with limited coverage of Environmental Rights.

Fairtrade's Standards have covered many Human & Environmental Rights-related criteria, with the HREDD requirements as the most recent additions (as recent as April 2024 for HLOs and traders). Figure 12 presents the 2023 FLOCERT audit results for HLOs and SPOs on Human & Environmental Rights as reflected in Fairtrade International's KPIs (4.1a, 3.1a). The figure highlights the non-conformities[56] across seven main domains.

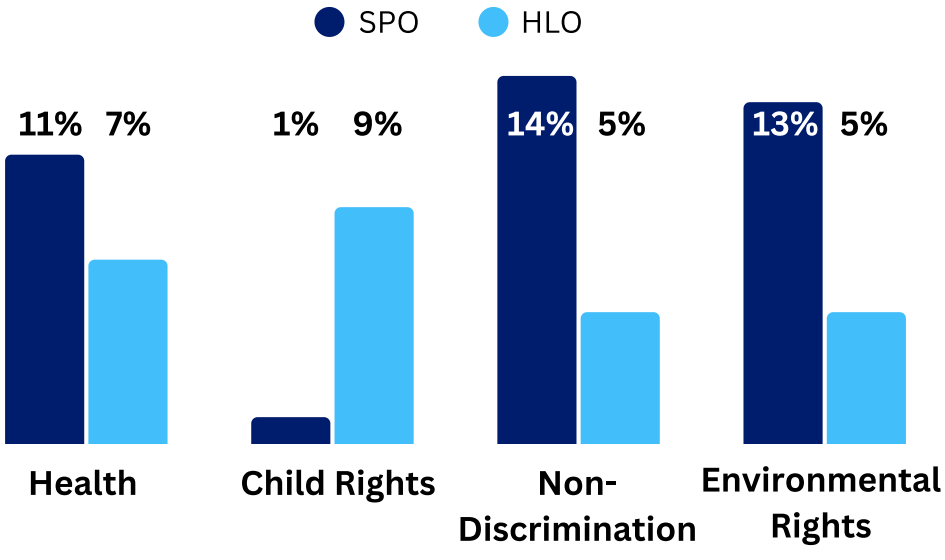
53 SPOs: positive 41%, mixed 27%, no effect 23%, negative 9%. HLOs: positive 47%, mixed 18%, no effect 29%, negative 6%.
54 For example, IDs 92 and 143 found increased participation, while IDs 37 and 145 found no effect or only limited participation.
55 Fairtrade's signature Youth-Inclusive Community-Based Monitoring and Remediation (YICBMR) system and Internal Control System (ICS). See ID 6 for specific details.
56 When a non-conformity is detected, it does not necessarily mean that there is a case of discrimination or rights violation. It may be, for example, that the organisation just does not have the required policies in place to avoid discrimination.

Overall, HLOs demonstrated consistently lower non-compliance rates, with child labour being the most affected area, although still below 10%. In contrast, SPOs showed higher levels of non-compliance, particularly in health (9%), discrimination (14%), and environmental (13%) domains. Despite variations in specific domains, over 90% of HLOs and SPOs met Fairtrade's Human Rights compliance criteria annually from 2021 to 2023, reflecting consistent application of those criteria. SPOs outperformed HLOs in best practice scores, with 21–26% meeting top audit standards yearly, compared to 12–14% for HLOs. From the mapped research evidence, positive results were frequently observed in training, awareness, and monitoring systems. Several studies reported reductions in child labour practices among certified groups compared to non-certified ones (IDs 30, 34, 55, 109).[57] Fairtrade's compliance audits also showed high adherence to child protection criteria, with only 2% non-conformities detected in SPOs (ID 55). However, challenges such as economic necessity and external crises (e.g., COVID-19) hindered complete eradication (ID 58). Mixed child labour findings often reflected variability in legal frameworks and regional enforcement (IDs 6, 58, 74, 113).

KPIs for HREDD indicated 'Non-Discrimination, including Gender Rights' had the highest level of non-compliance among SPOs (14%, KPI 4.1a), with much better results among HLOs (5%, KPI 3.1a). On the other hand, 17% of SPOs demonstrated best practices, which was more common than hired labour organisations (13%). Despite the relatively large proportion of SPOs demonstrating compliance issues, positive impacts were observed for increased awareness of and measures against GBV and the implementation of gender-inclusive policies (IDs 3, 108, 142). However, grievance mechanisms were under-utilised in HLOs due to limited worker awareness and cultural barriers, particularly for sensitive issues, such as sexual harassment (IDs 41, 49). Systemic challenges, including weak enforcement and accountability, resulted in inconsistent outcomes, especially in HLOs.

SPOs were more likely to show Environmental Rights non-compliance, though best practice was found in almost one-third of SPOs (29%). On the other hand, HLOs demonstrated much lower levels of non-compliance for Environmental Rights (Figure 12), though only 17% of audited HLOs demonstrated best practices. FGD 6 participants raised concerns about the accuracy of FLOCERT's environmental compliance audits. However, the mapped research provided examples of effective environmental monitoring, such as reduced deforestation in certified regions through satellite tracking and improved corrective measures in West Africa and Latin America (IDs 3, 78).[58] While Fairtrade International is attempting to embed geolocation data to capture deforestation (KPI 7.2a &7.2b), uptake of this indicator was poor.[59] Internal documents[60] indicate that Fairtrade International is actively exploring strategies to improve deforestation monitoring and align with EU legislation. One study raised concerns about Fairtrade's focus on indigenous rights in its Standards noting the absence of explicit Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) and inconsistent enforcement of indigenous rights (ID 133).

Figure 12: Distribution of Human & Environmental Rights non-compliance in SPOs and HLOs (2023 KPIs 4.1a, 3.1a).



Decent livelihoods, Labour rights, Civil rights <10%

57 ID 30: VSS, including Fairtrade, reduced the hiring of minors significantly ($p < 0.01$). ID 109: Fairtrade-only certified producers reported the lowest incidence of child labour with statistical significance compared to non-certified groups ($p < .05$).
58 ID 3: Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire; ID 78: Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Honduras, and Peru.
59 As of 2023, only 42 out of a total of 734 coffee and cocoa SPOs had have geolocation data ready to monitor deforestation. Only 12 SPOs were classified as deforestation-free.
60 AS.17 and AS.18.

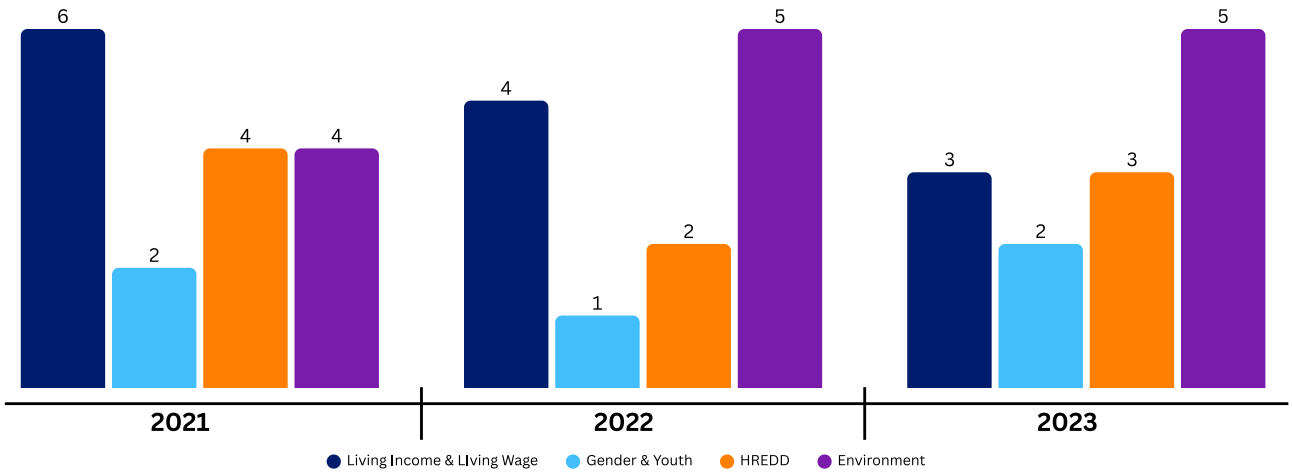
In conclusion, Fairtrade shows high compliance among POs in Human & Environmental Rights. This compliance appears to result in gains for raising awareness of Human Rights, particularly child labour, with some progress on GBV and related grievance mechanisms. However, challenges persist in enforcement, cultural barriers, and accountability, limiting consistent progress. Evidence remains mixed, and Fairtrade's effects on Environmental Rights are under-represented. Hence, this indicator is rated **Amber**, reflecting Fairtrade's initial successes but emphasising the need for stronger evidence to demonstrate accountability and reductions in violations.

Enabling Public Policies: Advocacy for fairer and more sustainable trade practices.

KPIs indicate the different categories of strategic partnerships[61] undertaken by Fairtrade International between 2021-2023, show a slight decrease over the years but markedly exceedthe target of ten compared to the baseline. The most represented themes were Environmental and Climate Change, along with Living Income & Wages, while Gender & Youth had the lowest representation (KPI 13.1, see Figure 13).

Evaluative evidence for Enabling Public Policies was scant. The indicator had the lowest number of supporting studies in the ToC (n=5), including three literature reviews (of which one is a systematic review, ID 51), one exploratory quantitative study (ID 86), and a Fairtrade-commissioned qualitative study covering various case studies (ID 5). Among these, 60% reported positive results, 20% mixed, and 20% negative (ID 51).

Figure 13: Number of Strategic Partnerships 2021-2023 (KPI 13.1)



The Fairtrade-commissioned case studies demonstrated positive outcomes in Brazil, Belgium, Ecuador, France, and Italy, and early progress in Sri Lanka and Tanzania (ID 5). For example, in Brazil, Fairtrade was integrated into the National Solidarity Economy Framework, promoting participatory certification and solidarity economy principles. In Italy, mandatory Fairtrade criteria were included in public procurement policy, the first such instance in Europe. At the regional level, Fairtrade principles influenced EU trade and sustainability policies, though differentiation from other ethical initiatives remained unclear (ID 5). In Africa, Fairtrade Africa (FTA) collaborated with the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO) to harmonise standards, supporting intra-African trade (ID 63). During FGD 7, reference was made to further work by FTA on completing a study about African Union Policies in 2024.[62] Additionally, a gender-responsive policy tool in Guatemala (ID 139) was developed through partnerships with international organisations, although it was not Fairtrade-specific.[63]

Mixed results were highlighted by Ethiopia's 2017 Coffee Policy Reform, which aimed to expand market opportunities for smallholders. This said, limited production capacity and lack of international trade knowledge prevented farmers from accessing global markets directly, underscoring the need for complementary capacity building initiatives (ID 86).

Negative findings were reported in a systematic review (ID 51), which concluded that while Fairtrade provides a robust sustainability framework, the organisation struggles to meet evolving policy benchmarks, such as the European Union's stricter HREDD regulations on zero deforestation and labour rights. Feedback and additional documents from staff also highlighted slow adaption to evolving environmental regulations from bodies such as the EU, e.g., the EU Farm to Fork Strategy and the EU Biodiversity Strategy.[64] Businesses perceived that

61 A long-term, high-impact collaboration advancing its objectives in Living Income, Living Wage, Gender, Youth, HREDD, and Environmental and Climate Change.
62 However, no related documents were submitted following FGD 7.
63 Recorded as a Level 3 relevance to the Fairtrade movement, i.e., a study that did not focus on Fairtrade but examined another/other VSS, acceptable evidence and low importance.
64 AS.9

Fairtrade certification met baseline compliance but fell short in preparing them for these types of regulatory demands, an observation also flagged by Fairtrade staff (FGD 5 and 7). This implies that Data & Intelligence interventions that lead to Analytics & Insights need to be reactive to public policies, whereas the ToC currently assumes Analytics & Insight leads to Enabling Public Policies. This shows that bidirectional links between both indicators could also highlight policies that are important as a contextual factor for the intermediate outcome.

During discussions on Enabling Public Policies, the low number of studies mapped against this indicator was noted but not unexpected. One staff member highlighted that public policy and advocacy work are under-resourced areas within the organisation, affecting both their capacity to make an impact and their ability to report and showcase achievements (FGD 7). Another colleague pointed out that although work is actively being carried out on the ground, with producer networks investing grant funding in capacity building for advocacy and developing advocacy strategies, Fairtrade has not been formally capturing and studying this progress (FGD 4). Additionally, it was mentioned that the challenge is not just the scarcity of resources for advocacy but also their uneven distribution across the organisation. Because advocacy is not effectively targeted, the ability of offices to influence global trade is curtailed and hampered: "This workstream is hindered by varying resource levels across the organisation. Some offices have it, others don't, and it isn't strategically based on countries that have the most influence on global trade." (FGD 4)

Overall, examples from literature demonstrate links between progress in public policies and sustainable livelihoods or fairer supply chains, though outcomes remain highly context dependent, relying on local political support and enforcement. Encouraging results are noted in specific case examples, but the evidence base lacks robust or comprehensive evaluations. As a result, this indicator is rated **Grey** , reflecting insufficient evaluative evidence and emphasising the need for further research.

Traceability & Transparency: Increased supply chain transparency for sustainable consumer choices.

This indicator was supported by 30 studies, with 53% reporting positive results, 33% mixed, 10% showing no effect, and one study (3%, ID 96) reporting negative findings. While the evidence base was predominantly quantitative, most studies provided exploratory evidence due to cross-sectional designs. However, the inclusion of one causal evaluation (ID 107), four systematic reviews (IDs 28, 51, 98, 128), and one meta-analysis (ID 15) strengthened the evidence base.

Consumer willingness to pay for Fairtrade products featured prominently with 9 out of 13 studies reporting positive results[65], though most relied on self-reported measures. Experimental findings demonstrated the effectiveness of sustainability labels in encouraging sustainable choices (ID 107).

That said, studies on purchasing behaviour (ID 112) highlight a gap between willingness and action. Additionally, metric tonnes sold, a measure of market size and demand, exhibit a declining trend over the four years for bananas, coffee, and sugar. Cocoa and flowers, on the other hand, show fluctuations, with both peaking in 2021 (KPI 8.1, see Figure 14).[66] Considering this alongside recurring perceptions of Fairtrade's value chain as a driver of consumer demand (ID 101), the expected translation to market growth does not appear to be fully materialising.

Table 3: Producer volume sold 2020-2023 (MT).

Year	Bananas	Coffee	Cocoa	Flowers	Sugar
2020	753,634	229,262	182,073	905,158	121,567
2021	755,946	221,139	242,130	1,149,335	183,885
2022	727,785	230,999	230,441	941,691	169,095
2023	694,871	202,979	225,383	929,257	140,536

Fairtrade's 'track and trace' system monitors certified materials throughout the supply chain (ID 131), but implementation of such systems faced challenges, including fragmentation in multi-origin products such as coffee and cocoa (ID 113), limited data-sharing protocols (ID 98), and resource constraints in rural areas (ID 135).

Limited access to technology and inadequate technical support further hindered adoption of traceability measures, especially among smallholders (ID 136). Governance practices, including public oversight in committee minutes, highlighted Fairtrade's comparative strengths in Transparency (ID 143), though gaps remain in disclosing complaints, sanctions, and audit reports (ID 113).

Despite these challenges, monitoring results indicated over 90% conformity with Fairtrade traceability requirements (ID 55). Chain-of-custody systems were identified as critical for maintaining product integrity across VSS (ID 145), and Fairtrade performed better than other VSS in promoting Traceability (ID 51). Fairtrade International's own monitoring data also shows a currently limited but quick adoption for digital chain-of-custody

65 IDs 7, 15, 28, 68, 75,100, 102, 107, 118. Mixed: IDs 58, 90, 106. Negative: ID 96.
66 Fairtrace (sales).

system, tracking only 1.4% in 2023 up to 21.4% of transactions in 2024 (KPI 11.1).[67] An encouraging sign of early adoption of a requirement which became binding in 2025.

Further ambitions to make Fairtrade products more traceable and to support supply chain due diligence reporting are clearly outlined in internal documents (e.g., on FairMarket).[68] Of eight studies focused on supply chain transparency, half reported positive results (IDs 55, 127, 136, 145), while the remainder highlighted mixed outcomes (IDs 51, 80, 131, 133).

The strong evidence for consumer willingness to pay underscores Fairtrade's role in promoting sustainable choices. While the literature has demonstrated some benefits of supply chain traceability, mixed findings imply areas for improvement in governance and system implementation. Despite this, Fairtrade's comparative advantage over other VSS and encouraging results from Fairtrade-specific studies[69] support a **Green** rating for this indicator, reflecting confidence in its role in advancing Traceability & Transparency in supply chains.

Other long-term outcomes:

Only three unintended long-term outcomes were recorded: two positive and one negative result. The positive outcomes included the finding that a combination of the Fairtrade label with carbon-neutral labels (e.g., USDA Organic and the Carbon Trust) shows positive interaction effects revealing potential for joint market strategies (ID 7), and the contribution of Fairtrade price floors to a statistically significant reduction in coffee mill closures in Costa Rica by providing price stability (ID 124).

The negative outcome involved challenges articulated by female workers, including difficulty in ensuring suitable childcare during working hours and limited ability to participate in community activities (ID 8). Though these are negative effects in themselves, they are a consequence of increased employment opportunities for females (ID 8).[70]

IMPACTS

The 14 intermediate and long-term outcomes (explained in the previous sections) are articulated in the ToC to drive change at the impact level. As with long-term outcomes, all results are considered when assigning the traffic light rating to each impact area's evidence base.

Green	Fairtrade can have **strong confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Amber	Fairtrade can have **moderate confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Red	Fairtrade **cannot have confidence** it is creating positive change in this ToC area.
Grey	There is **not enough evidence** to determine Fairtrade's effect in this ToC area.

Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods: Empowering producers with dignified livelihoods, financial security, resilience, and control over their futures.

This impact area was assessed across 43 studies, including nine attributional impact evaluations[71] and nine systematic or meta-analyses.[72] However, no causal evaluations were identified, and exploratory methods accounted for 66% of quantitative results, limiting the strength of conclusions.

Results for livelihoods were mixed: 40% positive, 40% mixed, 19% no effect, and 2% negative (ID 42). Studies focusing exclusively on Fairtrade showed slightly higher positive outcomes (50%), but high-quality reviews found negligible impacts, reflecting a lack of consensus on Fairtrade's contribution to livelihoods improvement. Results mapped covered financial security, household expenditure, poverty reduction, quality of life (QoL), education, food security, and resilience to economic and climate shocks. Climate resilience was less frequently reported due to overlaps with Climate-Resilient Practices and Environmental Sustainability (IDs 53, 84, 142). Evidence on HLOs and workers' livelihoods was limited (n=12) due to overlap with the Decent Work impact area.

Improvements were most evident in early-stage results, such as compliance with decent livelihood criteria[73] (78% of POs

67 Percentage of transactions which are tracked on a Fairtrade digital platform - FairInsight, CODImpact - with known chain of custody model.
68 AS.12 and AS.14.
69 Positive effect: 60%, mixed effect: 30%, no effect: 10%.
70 ID 8 generally recorded progress along the Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway, including at impact level, e.g., for Gender Equity and Social Inclusion.
71 IDs 13, 36, 47, 104, 109, 110, 113, 114, 116. These comprised PSM and some application of instrumental variable analysis to control for confounders.
72 IDs 10, 24, 83, 84, 99, 119, 122, 128, 142.
73 Examples of Fairtrade requirements for Decent Livelihoods: wages are aligned with laws and Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs); pay rates for production-based work is proportionate to other workers' pay, minimum wage if it exists, or regional average; wages have been specified for all employee functions; wages rise gradually towards living wages. ID 55.

meeting Standards, ID 55). Positive outcomes were noted for healthcare, community infrastructure, and education, including increased household spending on education and improved educational attainment for workers' and their children (IDs 8, 35, 47, 56). However, disparities persisted with gains noted in some regions (Latin America) but not in others (Africa) (IDs 122, 35). Impact was tied to the broader economic situation (ID 35) and progress for cooperative workers and farmers but not farm workers (ID 47). In some contexts, boys benefitted more from increased investments in education than girls (ID 122).

Financial resilience was highly context dependent[74], and positive results were found about half of the time.[75] Certified farmers reported modest gains in income and spending on essentials, such as housing and transport (ID 13). However, these gains were constrained by price volatility, certification costs, and market pressures (IDs 58, 141). Positive results in financial security and stability (IDs 22, 84, 101) often depended on farm management practices, yield levels and external market conditions beyond price fluctuations, double certification, and a social context that aligns with the demands of the scheme's criteria (IDs 109, 128, 131).

Reliance on single crops (ID 128) and external pressures, including large households, diluted financial benefits (ID 94).

Food security results were similarly inconsistent. Positive results included improved dietary diversity (ID 114) and access to adequate food (ID 32). However, food scarcity among certified farmers in Honduras (ID 85) and insufficient Fairtrade income to cover basic food needs in Ecuador (ID 80) were also found. Global reviews noted limited certification impacts on food security (IDs 74, 99) with improvements failing to address structural vulnerabilities (IDs 74, 99).

While poverty is not explicitly included in the Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods indicator, nor in Fairtrade's ToC overall, there is a reference to Sustainable Development Goal 1: *"End poverty in all its forms everywhere."*[76] However, external research continues to assess poverty as an impact area within Fairtrade's scope, suggesting that Fairtrade's shift away from explicitly targeting poverty is not aligned with the focus of external studies. This probably reflects Fairtrade's historic association with poverty reduction and indicates a need for clearer communication around this shift. Poverty reduction was largely unachieved. Most certified farmers remained below poverty thresholds (IDs 83, 85, 114). A total of 71% of Ivorian cocoa farmers live below the national poverty line (ID 83), for example. Volatile markets and high certification costs undermined income gains (ID 58), while living standard improvements were modest and often reversed over time (IDs 24, 58, 141). Fairtrade-only certification was insufficient to reduce poverty without additional support (ID 109).

Studies evaluating HLOs showed comparable positive results to SPOs (42% vs. 45%). Evidence for HLOs reflected SPO trends, including persistent challenges in financial independence and well-being (IDs 42, 74), though some improvements in quality of life were noted (ID 37). The single negative finding mapped against this impact area related to debt cycles identified in Fairtrade certified plantations in India, which adversely effected economic empowerment (ID 42). The few studies on HLOs contain limited conclusions on workers' livelihoods.

Resilience outcomes were more promising with farmers maintaining stable incomes during crises, supported by Premium-financed initiatives, income diversification strategies and disaster risk management plans (ID 31). Additional certification support, such as uptake of climate-resilient and sustainable agricultural practices and direct grants or loans, further enhanced resilience (IDs 31, 32, 53, 84, 142). However, the long-term sustainability of this impact remains insufficiently evaluated and most resilience measures were self-reported.

Fairtrade's impact on livelihoods shows progress related to investments in essential services and infrastructure (e.g., health and education). Some progress was also observed in financial resilience and dietary diversity, but poverty reduction and ensuring food security showed minimal progress. Positive findings are often contingent on favourable contexts (e.g., strong PO, representation, and influence). The lack of causal evidence and reliance on attributional and exploratory studies highlights a critical need for stronger impact evaluation in this area, especially considering that Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods is a key focus of Fairtrade International's objectives.[77] Therefore, this impact area is classified as **Amber**, reflecting the mixed evidence and a need for robust evaluative research.

Decent Work: Access to fair income, safe working conditions, and rights protections.

This impact area was assessed by eight studies, reflecting significant overlap with Improved Labour Conditions and Human & Environmental Rights as well as other areas of the ToC. Results focused on broad measures, such as job security, health at work, living conditions, wages, and the overall decent work domain (IDs 74, 88). No studies reported consistently positive impacts, 63% showed mixed results, while 38% found no effect from Fairtrade or other certification schemes.

Specific encouraging findings were noted in quality of life domains, including housing and farm amenities (IDs 49, 88), and employment terms, such as contracts (ID 49). However, evidence on wages and income stability was mixed (IDs 88, 140). Some investigations found working conditions remained problematic, with verbal abuse, seasonal contracts, and labour-intensive roles reported (IDs 35, 49).

74 IDs 8, 13, 22, 36, 42, 54, 74, 80, 84, 85, 101, 119, 140, 142.
75 IDs 8, 13, 22, 36, 54, 101, 142.
76 SDG 1 and others are listed as SDG impacts under Fairtrade's interactive ToC.
77 "Our mission is to connect disadvantaged producers and consumers, promote fairer trading conditions and empower producers to combat poverty, strengthen their position and take more control over their lives." https://www.fairtrade.net/en/about/about-fairtrade-international.html#:~:text=Our%20mission%20is%20to%20connect,change%20and%20improve%20their%20situation. Accessed [07/01/2025].

Mixed results, or evidence of no effect on working conditions, were linked to weak enforcement of existing labour laws (e.g., the Plantation Labour Act, ID 42) and over-reliance on local policies and unions to create an enabling environment for Fairtrade to have impact (ID 88). Other barriers included limited oversight by government and Fairtrade bodies, poor union strength, and HLO resource constraints (IDs 42, 88, 89, 140). While Fairtrade's Standards are stricter than other VSS (IDs 74, 89), the evidence does not demonstrate consistent, meaningful improvements in Decent Work.

The lack of positive outcomes may stem from limited high-quality quantitative evaluative evidence, as most mapped results relied on qualitative data or unrobust quantitative exploratory methods. As such, this domain is rated **Grey**, reflecting insufficient evidence to substantiate impact.

Gender Equity and Social Inclusion: Equity and inclusion through equal opportunities, empowerment, and pathways for women, youth, and marginalised groups.

This impact area was evaluated through 26 studies and focused predominantly on women, with limited exploration of other marginalised groups. Themes included gender equity, economic opportunities, land rights, labour division, wage equality, and income benefits. Overall, findings were of limited support: 23% reported positive outcomes, 38% showed mixed results, and 38% found no effect.

Encouraging outcomes included increased participation of women in education (ID 25), SPOs (ID 24), and in VSS supply chains (ID 136). Gains were also noted in gender inclusivity, equitable labour division (ID 42), and stability in women's employment (ID 8), often driven by targeted projects, such as women's healthcare, and educational investments (ID 58). While some projects, particularly those implemented alongside NGOs, achieved slow yet progressive localised impacts (ID 139), sustained empowerment was hindered by a lack of follow-through mechanisms (ID 98). Overall, noted benefits were modest, with entrenched gender norms frequently limiting broader systemic change in areas such as decision making in SPOs or labour equity in HLOs (IDs 24, 40, 42, 58). An additional concern was raised by Fairtrade staff who reflected that inequalities may pertain due to existing structures, e.g., the fact that SPO membership is linked to land ownership which is predominantly male (FGD 1).

It should be noted that neither Fairtrade's ToC nor its current strategic plan explicitly outlines social normative change. However, having an impact area that covers 'Gender Equity' is an inherent suggestion that Fairtrade does have a role to play in social norms transformation to ensure progress in areas such as equity in pay, position, and influence. Consequently, Fairtrade's limited capacity to transform social norms was covered in literature (IDs 24, 40, 42, 58) and was a recurring theme in discussions with staff (FGD 1, FGD 6). In comparison, while there is a large base of studies on gender, migrants and other marginalised groups remained under-represented, with only one study reporting minor improvements for migrant workers but highlighting ongoing disadvantages due to weak enforcement (ID 37).

At the early stage, Fairtrade's social inclusion criteria (non-discrimination with sub-categories defined as gender and other vulnerable groups), while stringent, were the second most common areas of non-compliance among POs (10%, ID 55). In 2023, 14% of SPOs showed non-compliance in non-discrimination, compared to 5% of HLOs (see Figure 12). Better training and enforcement mechanisms contributed to Fairtrade's comparatively enhanced performance against other VSS (ID 119), but implementation gaps persisted.

Results on income and wage equity were mixed. Fairtrade certification increased control over assets for women in Uganda (ID 10), and equal pay enforcement was recorded in Ecuador (ID 8). Gains in women's income were also demonstrated (ID 136). However, wage disparities and unequal benefit distribution often disadvantaged women and other marginalised groups (IDs 21, 99, 118).

The evidence for this area was predominantly qualitative, with most quantitative evaluations providing exploratory findings. Only one attributional impact evaluation was mapped, which showed mixed results (ID 36). Systematic reviews and meta-analyses offered limited supportive evidence[78], with just one review yielding consistently positive findings (ID 119). Most studies had relatively short implementation and evaluation timelines, which could limit the ability to observe long-term changes in gender equity and social inclusion. Hence, longer-term evaluation could be a priority of this impact area (IDs 119, 142).

Fairtrade shows a strong commitment to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, but its impact is inconsistent and highly context dependent. While progress is evident, it is early-stage and in a specific area (e.g., committee representation). Impact in the overall domain of Gender Equity and Social Inclusion appears limited by entrenched norms and systemic barriers. Evaluation of other marginalised groups remains significantly lacking. Therefore, this area is rated **Red**.

78 IDs 10, 98, 99, 119, 142.

Environmental Sustainability: Protecting natural resources and building farmers' resilience.

This impact area was explored in 20 studies, including 7 quantitative studies and 13 reviews, with a focus on SPOs. Key indicators mapped included deforestation, land use, biodiversity, soil health, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, with deforestation and land use analysed most frequently. Overall, 35% of findings were positive, 40% mixed, 15% showed no effect, and 10% were negative (IDs 83, 85).

Progress was more evident in climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and pollution reduction. Positive results were reported for global warming potential, terrestrial ecotoxicity, and practices such as soil conservation and carbon sequestration (IDs 24, 76, 99, 136). An additional study[79] revealed that Fairtrade Organic and In Conversion (FOIC) cotton farmers in India recorded significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions, exhibited higher water efficiency and recorded reduced use of highly hazardous pesticides leading to improved ecological conditions. These improvements reflect measurable reductions in emissions and toxicity and enhanced resilience to climate shocks as well as reduced biodiversity loss. This said, findings for advanced late-stage impacts, such as deforestation, land use, water management, and soil health were either not significant or they were inconclusive.

Deforestation and land use findings were variable. Two reviews, including one meta-analysis, reported reductions in deforestation (IDs 24, 136), while another study observed mixed progress, with reductions in Colombia and Ghana but continued deforestation in Honduras (ID 78). Conversely, Fairtrade Organic certification was linked to increased land use footprints (ID 76). Barriers, such as limited enforcement, weak forest conservation standards, and economic pressures constrained progress (ID 133). Both negative results for this impact area were associated with deforestation increases from farming expansion by certified producers, including Fairtrade, Fairtrade Organic and other VSS (IDs 83, 85).

Evidence quality varied. Across the seven systematic reviews 43% reported positive outcomes[80], but more robust studies using satellite imagery and life cycle analysis yielded mixed results (IDs 76, 78). Most studies relied on exploratory quantitative methods, often limited by self-reported data, to verify results. Studies focusing exclusively on Fairtrade showed a similar distribution of positive and mixed results but no negative outcomes.[81]

Fairtrade staff specialising in climate adaptation and agroecology raised concerns about Fairtrade's limited focus on Environmental Sustainability and capacity constraints, particularly at the governance level (FGD 5). They noted that environmental standards are insufficient, especially for products with outdated criteria, aligning with findings from reviewed studies (IDs 9, 56, 133).

Evidence also indicates trade-offs between economic and environmental outcomes, with financially stressed farmers prioritising short-term survival over sustainability (IDs 10, 53, 78, 199). Fairtrade's historical focus on socio-economic benefits rather than environmental impact reinforces this issue. A 2025 study submitted after the FGD concluded: *"Sustainability standards (Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, Cocoa Life) in Ghana's cocoa sector led to socioeconomic benefits but not to ecological benefits for the plot environment."*[82] It was argued that this limited environmental focus can challenge Fairtrade's relevance as regulatory changes increasingly demand mandatory sustainability throughout the supply chain (ID 51, FGD 5, internal documents). (For more details, see Part 3: Pathway 4 on Climate & Agricultural Practice.)

Based on the reviewed studies, Fairtrade has made progress in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and pollution reduction, but critical challenges remain for advanced late-stage impacts, such as reduced deforestation and improved land use footprints. These challenges were strongly endorsed by participants in FGD 5. The overall findings reflect the complexity of Environmental Sustainability, heavily influenced as it is by external and contextual factors. While the evidence highlights promising contributions, it remains inconclusive overall. This indicator is rated **Amber**, recognising progress but emphasising the need for evidence of longer-term impact and more strategic focus.

Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains: Supporting sustainability across broader supply chains beyond Fairtrade.

This impact area was evaluated across 19 studies, with 53% reporting positive outcomes, 21% mixed, 11% showing no effect, and 16% demonstrating negative effects (IDs 16, 19, 136). Fairtrade-specific studies (n=7) reported 86% positive results and 14% mixed, outperforming other VSS. Although only five quantitative studies contributed to the evidence base, these included robust causal designs (IDs 124, 129). Results from one systematic review (ID 51) was also mapped to this impact area.

Fairtrade and other VSS demonstrated meaningful improvements in supply chain practices. Key benefits included enhanced incomes and wages for SPOs and farmers, decentralised governance in Colombia's coffee sector (ID 92), and improved collaboration between farmers and midstream actors, strengthening resilience. A study on global trade highlighted Fairtrade's influence in promoting equity, inclusion, and sustainable development among buyers and traders (ID 58). For commodities such as bananas, tea, and cotton, export

79 AS.7.
80 IDs 10, 14, 24, 83, 98, 99, 119.
81 Fairtrade-only studies: 33% positive, 50% mixed, and 17% no effect.
82 AS.19.

values and volumes increased under VSS, with traders in low-income countries benefitting significantly when trading with high-income destinations (ID 135).

A high-quality (causal) difference-in-difference evaluation (ID 124) reported a 2.2% income gain for farm owners under Fairtrade certification, though intermediaries experienced negative impacts. Compliance evidence revealed 91% adherence to fair pricing among Fairtrade traders, with 18% exceeding minimum requirements (ID 55). However, compliance in areas such as payment schedules, engagement, and contract terms was less robust, with 17–19% of traders non-compliant (ID 55).

Mixed evidence arose when comparing alternative models, e.g., profit-sharing models often outperformed certification in equitable value distribution (ID 23). Broader evaluations of VSS cited limited capacity to address large-scale supply chain issues, such as deforestation, climate change, and labour rights violations (ID 145), partly due to weak enforcement mechanisms and limited certification uptake (ID 132). Negative results stemmed primarily from non-Fairtrade certifications, such as organic initiatives (IDs 16, 19, 136).

While this area lacked breadth in quantitative studies, robust methodologies provided compelling evidence of Fairtrade's impact. The findings mapped reflect inherent challenges in evaluating complex, multifaceted systems, such as supply chains. When focused specifically on Fairtrade, results were overwhelmingly (86%) positive, with limitations primarily relating to sustaining effects and ensuring broader impacts. Thus, this outcome area has been rated **Green**, with Fairtrade demonstrating clear added value in Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains.

Other impact:

At the impact layer, only one unintended positive finding was mapped. This concerned an evaluation of another VSS for which cooperative membership was found to foster increased trust and social cohesion in the community (ID 22).

FINDINGS: PART 3

TOC PATHWAYS

Part 3 provides a more methodologically dense analysis, intended as a reference point for readers seeking to understand the evidence base underpinning the pathways and, in turn, providing transparency to conclusions and recommendations. Departing from the narrative style used in earlier sections, it is designed for an audience familiar with evaluation frameworks to support ToC revisions and insights for further intervention refinement and design.

Fairtrade aims to achieve impact holistically across multiple levels (e.g., individual, organisational, supply chain), addressing diverse stakeholders, including farmers, workers, producers, local communities, ecosystems, and supply chains. This complexity is reflected in Fairtrade International's ToC, which comprises 78 interconnected pathways linking interventions to intermediate outcomes, long-term outcomes, and impacts (connecting 6 interventions and 19 indicators in total). This complexity is also mirrored in the external literature, which highlights the importance of inter-related and non-linear pathways for capturing the impacts of certification (IDs 98, 113).

The complexity of Fairtrade's ToC posed challenges for our analysis. To address this, we allowed pathways of change (starting at the late level) to emerge from the evidence, prioritising those well supported by studies and presenting them as existent pathways, e.g., based on economic and livelihood indicators. For less supported change trajectories, we articulated emergent pathways in consultation with Fairtrade International's Global Impact Team. Where we combined pathways articulated in the ToC based on overlap between indicators and concepts, we underpinned this by theoretical frameworks, such as Rubio-Jovel (2023).[83] These pathways were subsequently presented during FGDs with Fairtrade staff, allowing for reflection and triangulation (see more in Annex 1 under Phase IV Triangulation).

In total, we focused on five key pathways:

1. The Economic Pathway (existing pathway)
2. The Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway (emergent pathway)
3. The Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway (emergent pathway)
4. The Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway (existing pathway)
5. The 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway (emergent pathway)

In this section of the report, we showcase each pathway on a three-page infographic. Firstly, we present and narrate the pathway as shown in the ToC and discuss relevant evidence. Secondly, we present the interlinkages between indicators, using traffic light rankings from the Evidence Map to highlight the strength of linkages with more detail on each linkage (including reference to supportive evidence). New (hypothesised) linkages are marked with dotted lines, and linkage strength follows the traffic light system:

- **Red**: Negative or no effect evidence or linkage, i.e., there is no connection or a negative relationship.
- **Amber**: Weak and inconsistent evidence of a linkage.
- **Green**: Strong and consistent evidence of a linkage.
- **Grey** represents insufficient evidence evaluating a linkage and a rating was not given.

Blue shades are used for representation of Fairtrade's current ToC, namely **interventions** and **linkages** articulated in the ToC flowing from interventions to outcomes and impact areas.

The final page of each pathway describes factors influencing the change trajectory, presenting failure points, barriers and enablers.

While the five pathways are described individually, they are inter-related within Fairtrade International's broader ToC. For example, Strong Producer Organisations (Pathway 3) link to the Economic Pathway (Pathway 1) and Climate & Agricultural Practice (Pathway 4), while overlapping drivers—such as Freedom of Association connect Pathway 2 (Social Inclusion & Agency) with Pathway 3. 'Fairtrade as a System' (Pathway 5) acts as an enabling environment, influencing all other pathways and, in particular, interacting with the Economic Pathway through the supply chain.

These high levels of interrelation and dependence between pathways highlight the need for Fairtrade International to maintain an integrated Theory of Change.

83 Rubio-Jovel, K. (2023). The voluntary sustainability standards and their contribution towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: A systematic review on the coffee sector. Journal of International Development, 35, pp.1013–1052. Aivable at: DOI:10.1002/jid.3717

Pathway 1: Economic Pathway

The Economic Pathway is based on an existing results chain within Fairtrade's ToC, as shown in Figure 14. The pathway starts at the intervention level with Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms and Standards & Certification, aiming to secure Premium incomes and investments through Premium Investments. Price Stability and Premium Investments are interconnected, as Price Stability underpins Premium incomes and investment opportunities. Data & Intelligence interventions and Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms contribute to Price Stability, while Price Stability and Premium Investments drive Economic Gains, supporting living income and living wages. Ultimately, these gains contribute to Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods and Decent Work conditions, which align with the ToC's intended impact.

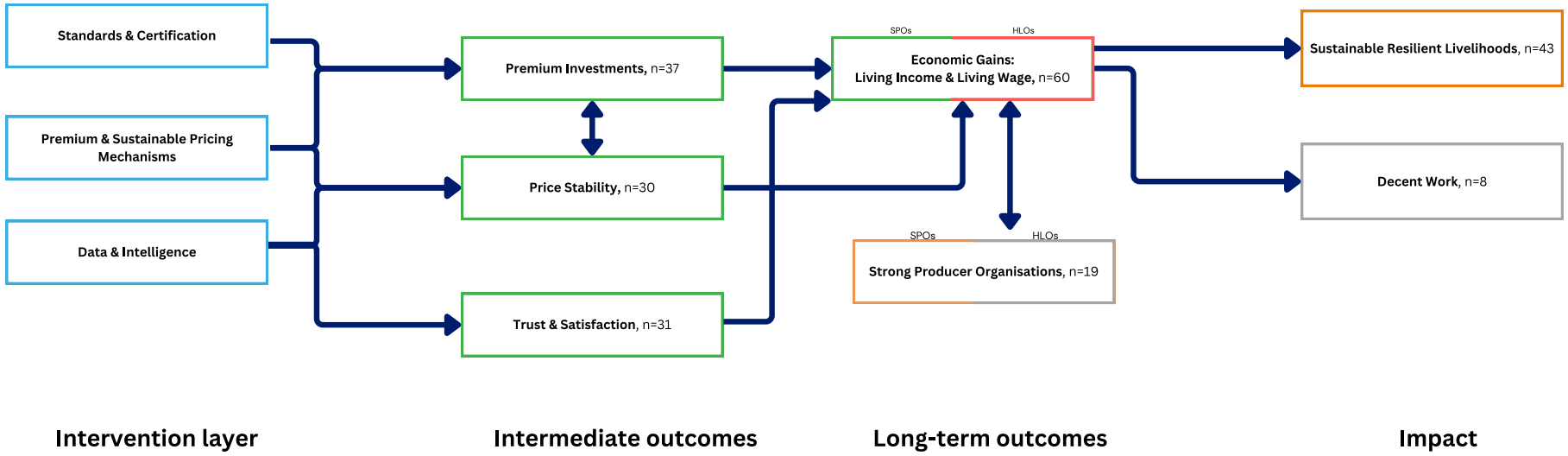
Pathway 1 shows clear coherence and a trajectory for change, with most individual indicators supported by numerous studies. Overall, the Economic Pathway is well supported by the literature, with 48 studies linking one or more indicators along the change trajectory. Evidence shows that 70–86% of intermediate outcome indicators, 50% of long-term outcome indicators, and 40% of Sustainable Resilient Livelihood impact-level findings were positive. Still, no positive results were identified for Decent Work.

Figure 15 summarises the evidence on proposed linkages and the overall pathway, highlighting that Pathway 1 operates differently for SPOs and HLOs. For SPOs, livelihood improvements are primarily driven by price guarantees and Fairtrade Premium Investments. At the same time, Producer Support (i.e., capacity building) may further enhance Economic Gains through improved yields and quality and reduced production costs (IDs 18, 66). For HLOs, workers experience fewer income and wage benefits (IDs 42, 43, 49, 74), making Premium Investments more directly relevant to livelihoods. Fairtrade staff highlighted the variable nature of the Premiums received by workers in HLOs (FGD 3). They also commented that Premium per worker varies by product, making commodity type a key contextual factor in Premium Investment impact within HLOs. They also highlighted that some HLO products (such as Flowers) don't use the FMP (FGD 3).

For HLOs, the pathway depends on the intersection between worker agency and organisational strength (i.e., Pathway 3), as economic and livelihood gains depend on workers' bargaining power. Market size, represented through Trust & Satisfaction, is also shown to be an important determinant, particularly in relation to Economic Gains for farmers and SPOs (i.e., Pathway 5). In both cases, the strength of organisations is assumed crucial, as organisational capacity influences the targeting of Premiums, prices and the ability to translate economic improvements into better livelihoods (i.e., Pathway 3). However, this linkage in the ToC has not been researched in depth. The connection between the Economic Pathway and these other pathways (Pathways 3, 4 and 5) is illustrated through translucent indicators and links in Figure 14, as they are articulated in the current version of the ToC.

Based on mapped evidence, we next assess Pathway 1's linkages, introduce new connections, and evaluate its clarity, coherence, and feasibility.

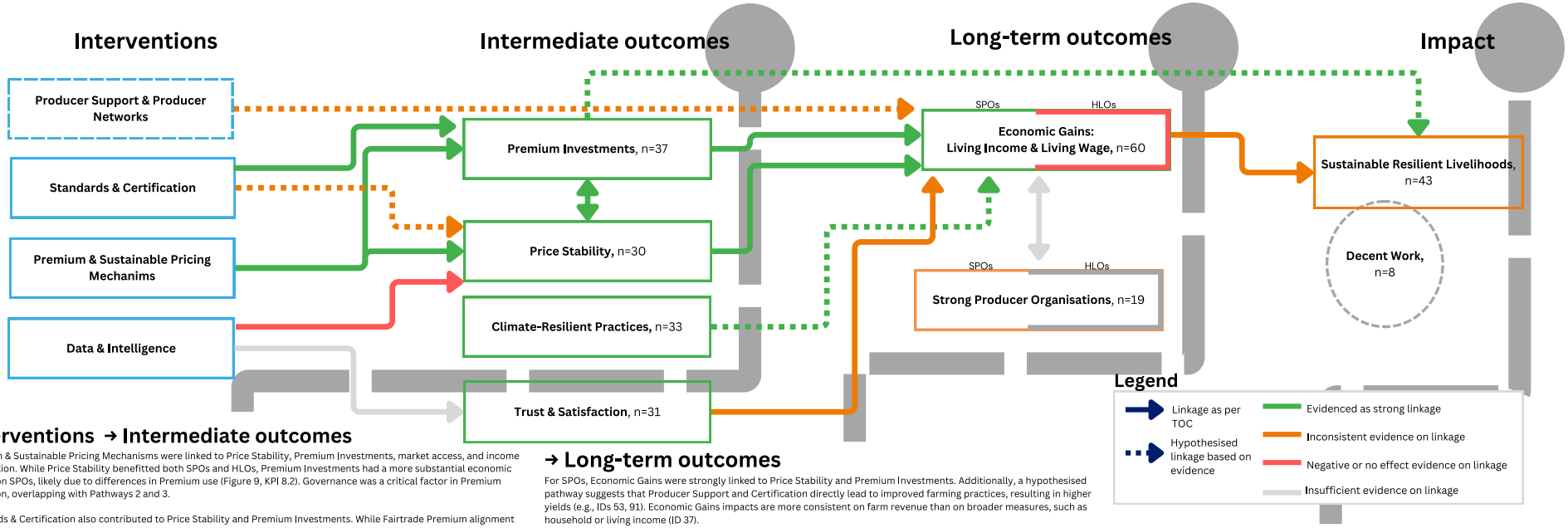
Figure 14: Economic Pathway - as shown in TOC



In reviewing the evidence mapped to this pathway, support for linkages varies, particularly at the long-term outcome and impact levels and for HLOs. As shown in Figure 15, we question the relevance of Decent Work in this (and other pathways), as wages and livelihoods are already addressed under Improved Labour Conditions, Human & Environmental Rights, and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. We propose new linkages between indicators and interventions based on the reviewed literature - which are indicated with dotted lines in the Figure and further outlined as hypothesised linkages in the table below Figure 15. A key finding is that for SPOs, the pathway interacts strongly with climate resilience through improved yields arising from improved agricultural practices, which is a hypothesised link and interaction with Pathway 4.

Despite minor refinements and variable evidence at more advanced ToC stages (i.e., further towards impact level on the right), the Economic Pathway, as proposed by Fairtrade, demonstrates strong logic and coherence. However, its relevance could be strengthened by differentiating its application to HLOs and SPOs, as evidenced by the Living Income group's adoption of a tailored Living Income ToC (AS.1).

Figure 15: Updated version of the Economic Pathway based on the reviewed evidence.



Interventions → Intermediate outcomes

Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms were linked to Price Stability, Premium Investments, market access, and income distribution. While Price Stability benefitted both SPOs and HLOs, Premium Investments had a more substantial economic impact on SPOs, likely due to differences in Premium use (Figure 9, KPI 8.2). Governance was a critical factor in Premium utilisation, overlapping with Pathways 2 and 3.

Standards & Certification also contributed to Price Stability and Premium Investments. While Fairtrade Premium alignment and price floors were key determinants of impact, no evidence established a role for Data & Intelligence in Price Stability.

Through capacity building, Producer Networks boosted Economic Gains by enhancing quality, yields, and income. Hence, this intervention is proposed as a key activity in the Economic Pathway. While yields are factored into living wages and income benchmarks, their role in Economic Gains could be more explicit.

Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms → Price Stability
Strong linkage: Fairtrade's Pricing Mechanisms evidently improved prices (IDs 41, 85, 86, 103, 104). Also, stabilised incomes in volatile markets (IDs 23, 37) though linkages appeared to vary in some contexts (IDs 32, 78).

Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms → Premium Investments'
Strong linkage: Premium Investments short-term benefits well established (e.g., IDs 8, 10, 43, 78, 116, and many more), though targeting was not always equitable.

Standards & Certification → Premium Investments'
Strong linkage: Certification was associated with Premium Investments and its equitable distribution (IDs 115, 118, 142).

Standards & Certification → Price Stability
Hypothesised inconsistent linkage: Two studies (IDs 82, 113) suggest a link to Price Stability, though certification costs may be a barrier (ID 30).

Data & Intelligence → Price Stability
No linkage: No studies found that Fairtrade International's Data & Intelligence interventions lead to Price Stability, though it was identified as a barrier (IDs 35, 78).

Data & Intelligence → Trust & Satisfaction
Lack of evidence for linkage: Only one study reported on this link, indicating that stakeholders are expressing positive views on the benefits of using the child labour monitoring system (ID 6). Overall, there is insufficient evidence.

Premium Investments → Price Stability
Strong linkage: Several studies demonstrated interlinkage, and support between these two intermediate outcomes (IDs 40, 78, 85, 113).

→ Long-term outcomes

For SPOs, Economic Gains were strongly linked to Price Stability and Premium Investments. Additionally, a hypothesised pathway suggests that Producer Support and Certification directly lead to improved farming practices, resulting in higher yields (e.g., IDs 53, 91). Economic Gains impacts are more consistent on farm revenue than on broader measures, such as household or living income (ID 37).

For HLOs, linkages and impacts were weak. While some wage increases were reported (ID 118), wages often fell short of meeting basic needs or living wage standards (IDs 8, 42, 43, 49, 74). Disparities in Premium Investment allocation resulted in fewer direct benefits for workers than SPOs, with weaknesses in distribution and oversight undermining Premium effectiveness. Because of these disparities, Economic Gains are shown in green for SPOs and red for HLOs.

The translucent indicators represent linkages between Economic Gains and other key pathways. Trust & Satisfaction, part of Pathway 5 (Fairtrade as a System), highlights market size. At the same time, the role of Strong Producer Organisations implies interaction with Pathways 2 and 3 — both links are outlined in Fairtrade's current ToC. Pathway 4, through Climate-Resilient Practices, is also represented with a new hypothesised linkage.

Premium Investments → Economic Gains:
Strong linkage: Premium Investments are linked to Economic Gains (IDs 24, 54, 101, 122, 128).

Price Stability → Economic Gains:
Strong linkage: Price Stability is linked to Economic Gains (e.g., IDs 30, 79, 104, 113, 124, and more).

Economic Gains → Strong Producer Organisations (and vice versa)
Lack of evidence for linkage: Some studies (IDs 3, 34, 86) link strong SPOs with commercial success—e.g., higher yields, increased sales, and improved financial health. This was not observed for HLOs. Further research is needed to understand the links direction.

Climate-Resilient Practices → Economic Gains
Hypothesised linkage: Several studies suggest that improved (climate-resilient) farming practices, supported through certification and producer assistance, increased income through higher yields and improved productivity (e.g., IDs 31, 54, 83, 94, 117, and more). Showing a linkage with Pathway 4.

Trust & Satisfaction → Economic Gains
Inconsistent linkage: Some studies (IDs 54, 56, 101) suggest that increased Trust & Satisfaction and resulting demand may lead to Economic Gains. Others (IDs 51, 131) found no clear link to improved incomes. The strongest evidence (IDs 3, 18, 40, 118, 133) points to market size and conditions as barriers to economic gains, but this does not demonstrate Fairtrade's effect through Trust & Satisfaction.

→ Impact

Impact on the economic components of livelihoods showed mixed results. Some linkages indicated increased income and financial security for farmers, but VSS did not reduce poverty, and no significant improvements were observed among workers (e.g., IDs 9, 83, 113, 116, and more). As with Economic Gains, livelihood benefits for HLOs remained limited. However, Premium Investments had a strong direct impact on the livelihoods of workers by improving individual and community assets. (See Part 2: Economic Gains).

There was an overlap between Decent Work and other pathway indicators. In this pathway, measures such as wages, living income, and financial health were typically mapped to Economic Gains or Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. As a result, linkages to Decent Work were not examined in this or other pathways due to a lack of evidence across the eight studies assessing this impact.

Resilience to climate-related shocks was less frequently reported (e.g., IDs 53, 84, 142) but showed positive outcomes where improved practices enhanced resilience (ID 53). Grants and loans also contributed to resilience (ID 32), indicating that both the Economic Pathway and the Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway influence this component of livelihoods.

Economic gains → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods:
Inconsistent linkage: Various studies suggest improvements in Economic Gains positively impact Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods (IDs 31, 54, 56, 86, 101), but a larger number report inconsistent results (e.g., IDs 24, 35, 94, 104, 113, and more).

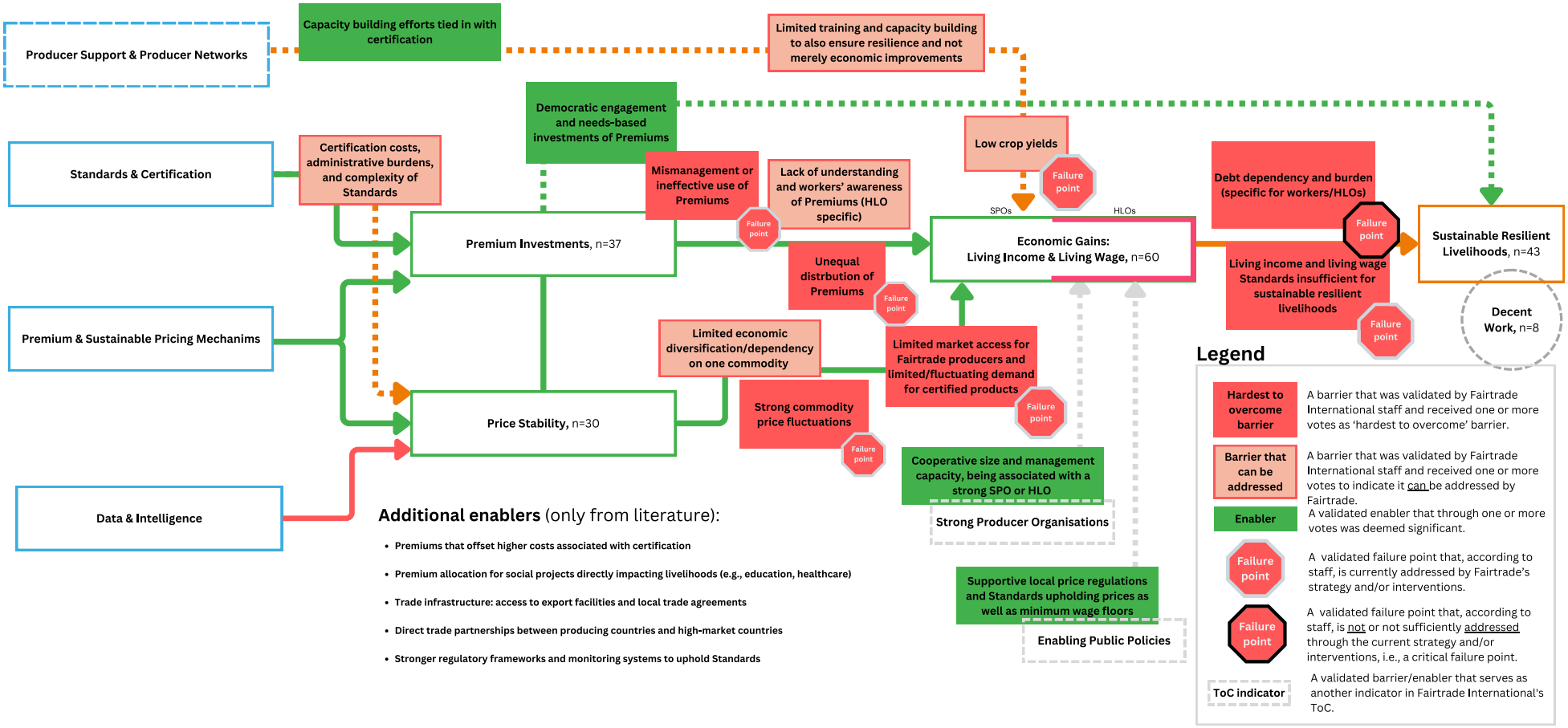
Premium Investments → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods
Hypothesised strong linkage: Premium Investments were shown to directly support livelihoods through community or worker assets, such as healthcare, education and transportation services (IDs 8, 24, 37, 101).

Figure 16 below presents factors that influence the pathway, mapped onto the updated version of the Economic Pathway. Among these factors, debt dependency, where workers rely on loans from management to meet basic needs like education, perpetuating a cycle of indebtedness, was identified as a critical failure point and barrier that Fairtrade does not adequately address in its current strategy.

Limited market access for Fairtrade producers and limited and/or fluctuating demand for certified commodities was recognised as both a failure point and as one of the most significant barriers to overcome - with one participant clarifying: *"I think the system as a whole is working to improve that, but we're not being very successful in changing the situation."* (FGD 3) Another key challenge is that income and wage standards often fall short of ensuring Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, particularly for commodities (e.g., tea and flowers). FGD participants also noted that wage gaps varied by region but were set per product. This was seen as an underlying reason for this barrier (FGD 3). Participants reflected that work is taking place to address this barrier, such as the new pricing tools (Living Income Reference Price and Wage Floors, for example) and generally felt that as the Living Wage system is relatively new (2020-2021), it may be too early to see results in the literature.

Significant enablers validated by Fairtrade staff included cooperative size and management capacity (see more on this in Pathway 3) and targeted capacity building efforts tied in with certification, such as strategic Premium use, democratic engagements and needs-based investment of Premiums. One participant of FGD 3 also elaborated on the effectiveness of supportive local price regulations, minimum wage floors and standards upholding prices, providing examples from Ethiopia, where the government raised the minimum wage for agricultural workers by 20-25%, as well as wage increases in the Dominican Republic. Additional enablers that derived from the literature review, but were not discussed during FGD 3, are also presented in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Economic Pathway – Failure Points, Barriers, and Enablers.



Pathway 2: Social Inclusion & Agency

Pathway 2 emerged from integrating the Diversity & Inclusiveness and Freedom of Association results chains, given the substantial overlap between these indicators and the limited number of studies examining them separately. This pathway, supported by 31 studies, centres on fostering equitable, participatory systems that uphold Human & Environmental Rights, contributing to Livelihoods, Decent Work, Gender Equity and Social Inclusion. Figure 17 presents the pathway with its current interlinkages in the ToC.

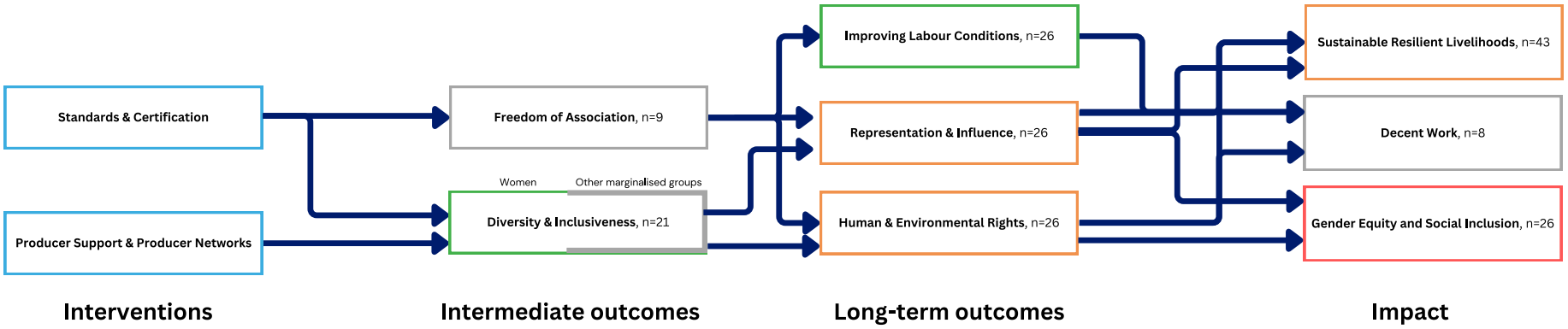
Fairtrade International's ToC proposes that Standards & Certification, along with Producer Support and Producer Networks, directly influence Diversity & Inclusiveness, while Standards solely impact Freedom of Association. However, the evidence base for improvements along this pathway is mixed. Across Fairtrade's ToC, intermediate outcomes showed positive results in 11–57% of cases, while long-term outcomes ranged from 44–64%. At the impact level, positive findings were limited, with 40% for Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, 23% for Gender Equity & Social Inclusion, and no positive results for Decent Work, highlighting weaknesses in worker empowerment. Freedom of Association exhibited weak bargaining power and limited representation in HLOs, negatively impacting collective bargaining outcomes.

Results described in Figure 18 show that while this pathway emerged organically due to high conceptual overlap between indicators, coherence remains a challenge. Freedom of Association and Diversity & Inclusiveness focus on democratic participation within organisations, with one focused on vulnerable groups and the other on producers. At the impact level, Gender Equity and Social Inclusion has a gender-focused label, yet its scope includes all marginalised groups, including farmers and workers. Fairtrade should consider this pathway's focus on women and the need to separate minorities from workers and farmers. Feedback from FGD 1 reinforced this, revealing that traditional gender roles, cultural norms, discrimination, and power dynamics influenced all marginalised groups similarly. This lack of differentiation affects research focus, as existing studies have to date prioritised women's empowerment and female leadership while giving less attention to the broader worker representation and inclusion of other marginalised groups.

Figure 19 shows that structural factors can also influence this pathway's effectiveness. For example, SPO membership, often linked to land ownership, creates barriers to women's participation, as noted by Fairtrade staff in FGD 1. In contrast, HLOs face entrenched hierarchies and weak enforcement mechanisms, which hinder progress on rights equity, wage improvements, and Premium distribution. While cooperative models in SPOs have shown promise in improving decision making and resource allocation, the same is not observed in HLOs, where representation remains fragmented and economic independence is constrained. Despite positive impacts in Improved Labour Conditions, Decent Work outcomes in HLOs remain challenging with hardly any evidence of progress.

This pathway also appears to interact with Fairtrade's financial mechanisms outlined under the Economic Pathway (Pathway 1), as economic empowerment can reinforce social inclusion and agency and vice versa (IDs 8, 22, 139). Additionally, it intersects with monitoring systems and organisational capacity (Pathway 3), where the strength of producer organisations influences inclusion efforts. The effectiveness of social inclusion initiatives ultimately depends on the structural conditions of SPOs and HLOs, with cooperative models showing more promise for equitable participation. However, insufficient evidence was available to examine linkages to these pathways.

Figure 17: Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway - as shown in ToC

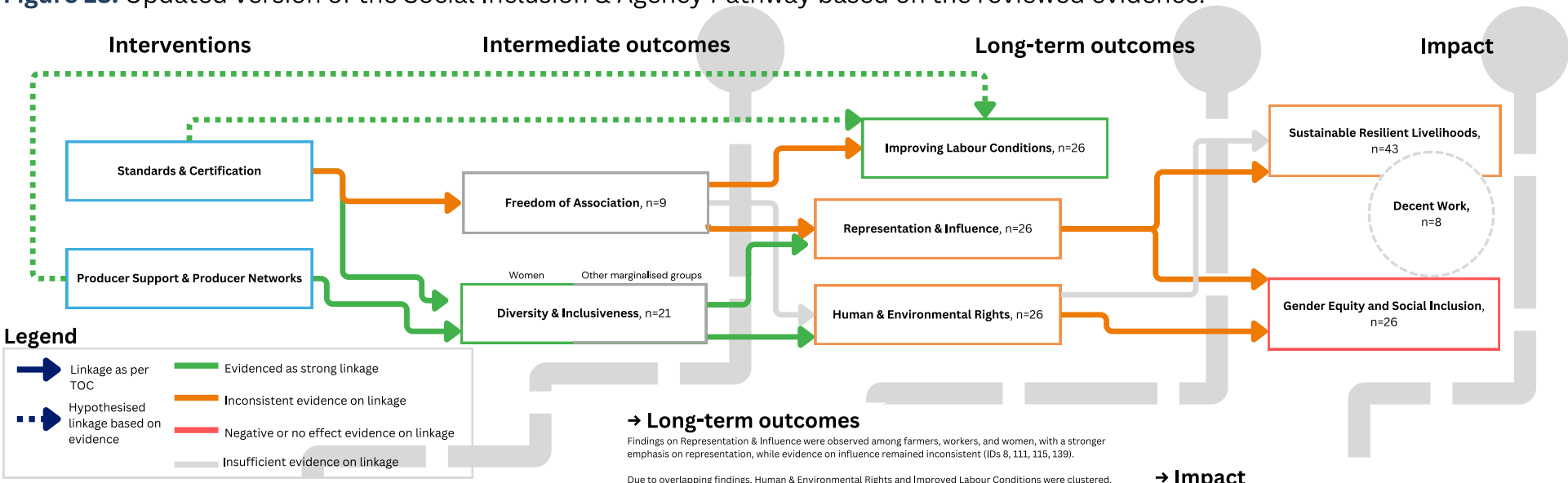


The unique focus of Pathway 2 is Gender Equity and Social Inclusion, but progress at the impact level is limited, and the apparent change trajectory outlined in the ToC is not well supported. Linkages from long-term outcomes to impact are weak or inconsistent, with Representation & Influence showing limited evidence of connection to Gender Equity and Social Inclusion or Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. Evidence indicates that livelihood improvements are primarily economically driven (see Pathway 1).

Diversity & Inclusiveness emerged as the main driver for change at the intermediate outcome level. However, FGD 1 and 6 participants raised concerns that Fairtrade International has done insufficient work on this outcome to date. Freedom of Association, which is only referenced in Standards without additional interventions, also showed weak evidence and inconsistent research focus.

Decent Work overlaps with Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods and is closely tied to Improved Labour Conditions within the Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway. Still, no evidence was found linking Improved Labour Conditions to Decent Work. Some studies indicate mixed progress for Representation & Influence with worker representation, union engagement, and labour negotiations cumulating in variable results for Decent Work at the impact level.

Figure 18: Updated version of the Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway based on the reviewed evidence.



Interventions → Intermediate outcomes

Freedom of Association and Diversity & Inclusiveness demonstrate significant overlap as the outcomes of the former are re-specified by the target groups defined under the latter (women, youth, and minorities). Fairtrade Certification and Producer Support and Networks effectively promote diversity and capacity building, with promising early results. However, evidence on leadership, influence, and collective bargaining remains unclear.

Notably, most results for Diversity & Inclusiveness focus on female empowerment, with limited attention to other marginalised groups. (See Part 2: Diversity & Inclusiveness, page 20).

Standards & Certification → Freedom of Association
Inconsistent linkage: The ToC links Certification to Freedom of Association, but evidence was limited (IDs 10, 34, 55). While unions were generally permitted, they were often discouraged (IDs 49, 56, 115), and collective bargaining remained weak due to limited representation and power imbalances (IDs 43, 89). Workers had low union awareness and did not prioritise association (IDs 8, 115). FGD 1 confirmed the lack of focus, suggesting the need for interventions beyond Standards, while FGD 6 noted that Freedom of Association is often politically and context dependent.

Standards & Certification → Diversity & Inclusiveness
Strong linkage: Standards & Certification, when combined with Producer Support, strengthened women's inclusion through gender committees, leadership opportunities, decision-making roles, and broader empowerment (IDs 8, 21, 22, 31, 40, 56). However, challenges remained, particularly within HLOs (IDs 37, 45, 89). Fairtrade staff (FGD 1) acknowledged gaps in Standards related to Diversity & Inclusiveness, noting that while Producer Networks address this area, it is not clearly articulated in the current Fairtrade strategy.

Producer Support & Producer Networks → Diversity & Inclusiveness
Strong linkage: Capacity building is pivotal in promoting women's inclusion and empowerment, with several gender-focused initiatives contributing to positive outcomes (IDs 8, 119, 137, 139, 142, 144). During FGDs, staff reported positive feedback from Producer Networks on the support received (FGD 1), corroborated by KPI 5.1, which showed 87% of SPOs were satisfied or very satisfied in 2024. KPI 6.1 also shows a high percentage of women's participation in committees and as board members.

→ Long-term outcomes

Findings on Representation & Influence were observed among farmers, workers, and women, with a stronger emphasis on representation, while evidence on influence remained inconsistent (IDs 8, 111, 115, 139).

Due to overlapping findings, Human & Environmental Rights and Improved Labour Conditions were clustered. Monitoring systems and grievance mechanisms under Human & Environmental Rights are primarily interventions, while other findings highlight working condition violations. Environmental outcomes under this indicator were minimally evidenced.

Freedom of Association → Improved Labour Conditions
Inconsistent linkage: Some studies (IDs 49, 89) showed an inconsistent link between Freedom of Association and Improved Labour Conditions, with outcomes dependent on Producer Organisations (see Pathway 3).

Standards & Certification → Improved Labour Conditions
Hypothesised strong linkage: Multiple studies provide evidence of improved labour conditions directly linked to Certification (e.g., IDs 8, 43, 54, and others).

Producer Support & Producer Networks → Improved Labour Conditions
Hypothesised strong linkage: Improved Labour Conditions was also found to be directly driven by Producer Support and capacity building efforts tied in with Certification (e.g., IDs 36, 37, FGD 1 and more).

Freedom of Association → Representation & Influence
Inconsistent linkage: Freedom of Association impacted Representation & Influence (IDs 8, 56, 115), but gains did not always translate into greater influence (IDs 37, 43)

Diversity & Inclusiveness → Representation & Influence
Strong linkage: Representation & Influence appears primarily driven by Diversity & Inclusiveness (IDs 8, 56, 74, 84, 139, 144).

Freedom of Association → Human & Environmental Rights
Lack of evidence for linkage: None of the five studies examining both indicators assessed the linkages or tested related assumptions between them.

Diversity & Inclusiveness → Human & Environmental Rights
Strong linkage: Capacity building on Diversity & Inclusiveness improved labour rights awareness, land rights, grievance mechanisms, and non-discrimination policies (IDs 56, 139, 142, 144).

→ Impact

At the impact level, linkages were weak, inconsistent or not sufficiently evidenced. Gender Equity and Social Inclusion, as the key indicators for this pathway, yielded low levels of supportive evidence (only 23% positive results), and outcomes articulated in the ToC as driving this impact indicator showed inconsistent or unsupported linkages.

For Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, evidence of linkage was inconsistent for Representation & Influence and absent for Human & Environmental Rights. As noted in Pathway 1, Decent Work overlaps with other areas of the ToC. This pathway incorporates Decent Work indicators under Improved Labour Conditions and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods and, therefore, does not evaluate them as separate linkages.

Representation & Influence → Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
Inconsistent linkage: A few studies evidenced that Representation & Influence can drive Gender Equity (IDs 8, 139), yet some showed partial progress (IDs 24, 56) or no impact (IDs 42, 115), particularly for HLOs.

Human & Environmental Rights → Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
Inconsistent linkage: Only one study surfaced that supports this link (ID 8), while others show partial progress or no impact at impact level (IDs 35, 56, 108, 142). Gender norms seem too deeply entrenched in many cultures Fairtrade works with (see next page).

Representation & Influence → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods
Inconsistent linkage: A few studies support a linkage between Representation & Influence and improved Livelihoods (IDs 56, 101, 139). Others show no or inconsistent effects (IDs 8, 24, 42, 74, 133).

Human & Environmental Rights → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods
Linkage: No studies established a direct connection with Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods.

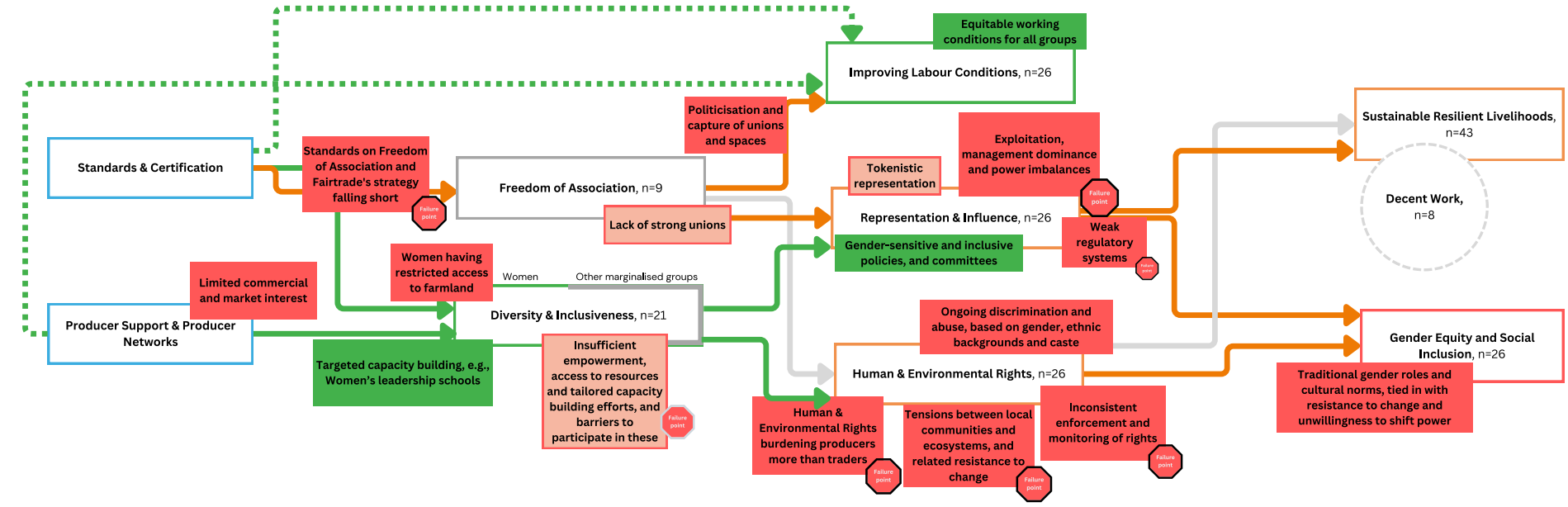
Participants in FGD 1 acknowledged that Pathway 2 made sense but highlighted its complexity, noting that: *"it is never as linear as depicted in the ToC."* (FGD 1) Barriers related to power dynamics and inclusion were often interconnected, with entrenched cultural norms and resistance from dominant groups unwilling to cede power limiting progress (FGD 1). Persistent challenges, such as discrimination, exploitation, and power imbalances along the supply chain further constrained impact. Fairtrade staff, particularly those working with HLOs, highlighted management interference as a key obstacle to Freedom of Association, Representation & Influence, and validated findings from the literature review (e.g., IDs 43, 89, 140, and more).

Participants in FGDs were unsurprised by the limited impact on gender outcomes, questioning whether certification alone could effectively address such a complex issue: *"I think it is likely that there are better results in the social inclusion space than in gender specifically, which is typically one of those 'wicked' developmental problems."* (FGD 1)

Regarding Freedom of Association, participants noted that intervening through Standards alone is insufficient. The limited number of studies on this topic (n=9) and the low share of positive results (27%) suggest that additional support and strategic interventions are needed (FGD 1). The challenges faced by HLOs in forming associations and unions as vehicles for change, which are well documented in the literature (IDs 42, 49, 56, 115), were recognised by Fairtrade staff: *"We have difficulty ensuring freedom of association in HLOs, particularly for some products, such as tea."* (FGD 1) However, Fairtrade KPI data reported full compliance with Freedom of Association, highlighting a discrepancy between formal compliance and practical implementation.

Although not visualised in the figure below, economic factors were identified as key influences on Pathway 2. Lack of transparency in Premium allocation hindered equitable benefit distribution, while needs-based Premium investments and the inclusion of marginalised groups in decision making were seen as catalysts for equity. Additionally, equitable market access and expanded economic opportunities were identified as enablers of financial empowerment.

Figure 19: Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway – Failure Points, Barriers, and Enablers



Legend

- **Hardest to overcome barrier** — A barrier that was validated by Fairtrade International staff, and received one or more votes as 'hardest to overcome' barrier.
- **Barrier that can be addressed** — A barrier that was validated by Fairtrade International staff, and received one or more votes to indicate it can be addressed by Fairtrade.
- **Enabler** — A validated enabler that through one or more votes was deemed significant.
- **Failure point** — A validated failure point that, according to staff, is currently addressed by Fairtrade's strategy and/or interventions.
- **Failure point** — A validated failure point that, according to staff, is not or not sufficiently addressed through the current strategy and/or interventions, i.e., a critical failure point.
- **ToC indicator** — A validated barrier/enabler that serves as another indicator in Fairtrade International's ToC.

Additional enablers (only from literature):

- Transparent Premium investments in education, health, and infrastructure
- Peer support networks and collaborations around inclusion and agency

Pathway 3: Strengthened Producer Organisations

The Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway (see Figure 20) is an emergent pathway consolidating three existing pathways critical to producer organisations (SPOs and HLOs) or with thematic overlaps. Evidence evaluating linkages in this pathway comes from 22 studies.

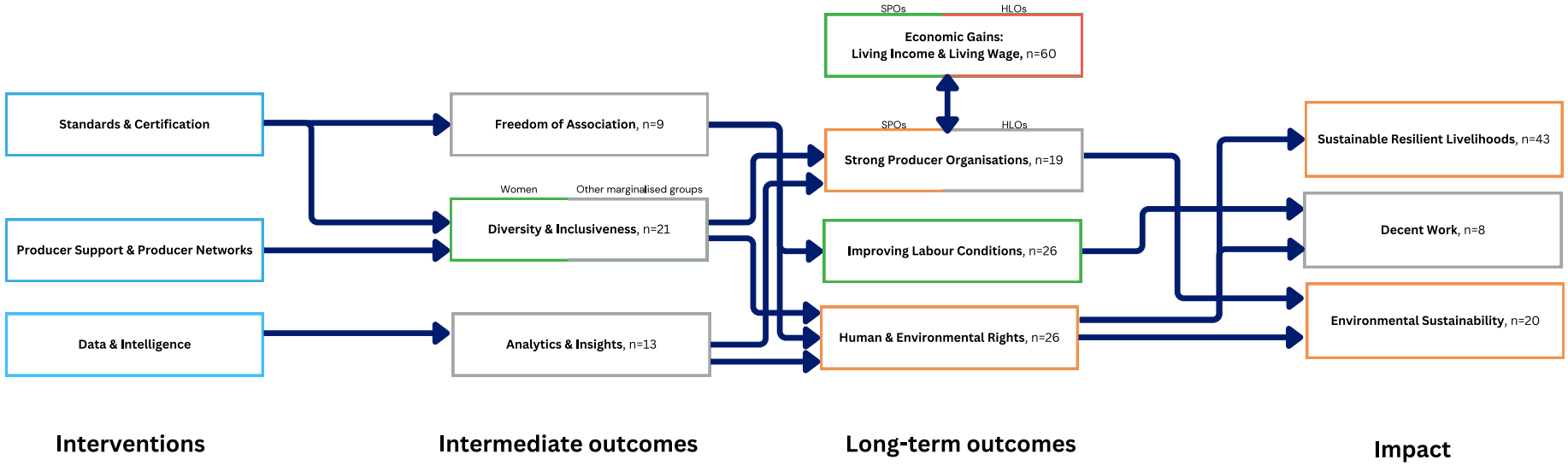
Pathway 3 begins with Standards & Certification, Producer Support & Producer Networks, and Data & Intelligence interventions. These inputs strengthen POs at the long-term outcome level by enhancing diversity and inclusivity, meaningful association, bargaining power, and effective decision making. Strong POs are expected to impact Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Environmental Sustainability. While this pathway aligns closely with Pathway 2 (Social Inclusion & Agency), it uniquely focuses on organisational development rather than individual empowerment.

Comparing Pathways 2 and 3: Pathway 3 incorporates Strengthened POs and Analytics & Insights while excluding Representation & Influence. At the impact level, Pathway 3 addresses Environmental Sustainability instead of Gender Equity and Social Inclusion. The previous recommendations on overlaps between Decent Work, Improved Labour Conditions, and Human & Environmental Rights remain relevant. Support for indicators within this ToC is varied. At the intermediate outcomes level, positive results ranged between 11–57%, with long-term outcomes showing more positive results at 50–64%. However, at the impact level, results were notably lower (0% for Decent Work, 35% for Environmental Sustainability, and 40% for Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods). Limited evidence was found for indicators, such as Freedom of Association and Diversity & Inclusiveness, which did not link directly to PO strength. Instead, evidence suggested direct effects from capacity building, certification, and economic interventions. The translucent Economic Gains indicator indicates the linkage between Strengthened POs and the Economic Pathway.

Disaggregating Pathway 3 to reflect capacity building, improvements, and gains would strengthen its logical structure. Currently, Fairtrade International's ToC combines these elements under one long-term indicator, merging SPOs and HLOs. The absence of a precise results chain for POs led to many intermediate unintended outcomes (e.g., capacity strengthening on labour rights and supply chains) being mapped outside the ToC as other outcomes. Despite this, Fairtrade staff demonstrated an understanding of the SPO results chain, as articulated by an FGD 6 participant:

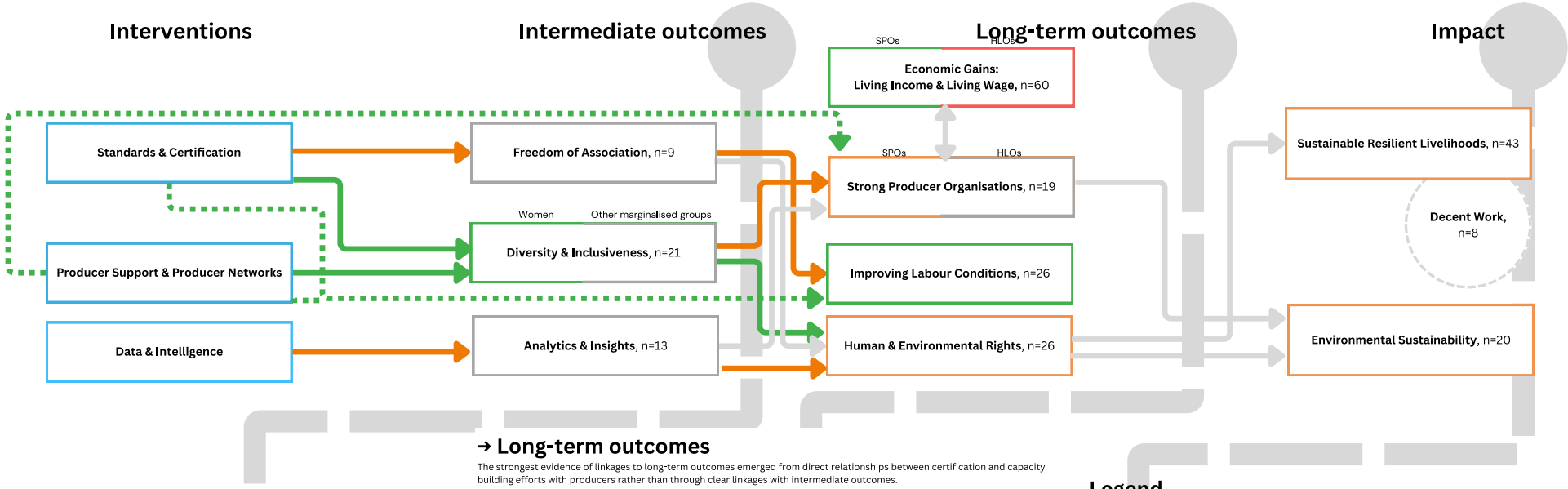
> *"I think it's the combination of those different interventions on capacity strengthening that, in the end, contribute towards these stronger producer organisations. [...] We envision producer organisations as a building of a house and the foundation. [...] You can do whatever you want on production, productivity, human rights, freedom of association, whatever you want. But if you don't have the foundations of a strong organisation that can actually work with those elements, then all of those efforts get lost, right? So, there's like prerequisite efforts into strengthening the normal capacity of producer organisations as such and then, from there, you can build on all the other elements of the Theory of Change. And so somehow, I wonder how do we reflect that and demonstrate that much more?"*

Figure 20: Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway - as shown in ToC



Strong Producer Organisations (SPOs and HLOs) are considered pivotal to Fairtrade's work, yet the reviewed literature provides limited evidence of their role. Overall, linkages within the Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway were inconsistent and weak, revealing a significant evidence gap in demonstrating how long-term outcomes progress to impact. As noted previously, enhancing linearity and linkages within the pathway could be achieved by introducing a dedicated intermediate outcome and impact indicator focused on strengthening POs. More detail on the linkages can be found in the table under Figure 21.

Figure 21: Updated version of the Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway based on the reviewed evidence.



Interventions → Intermediate outcomes

Freedom of Association was not sufficiently evidenced, with research gaps in equitable worker representation and bargaining rights and inconsistent findings on whether Standards & Certification alone drive progress.

However, when combined with Producer Support, Standards & Certification appear to impact positively on Diversity & Inclusiveness, particularly for SPOs. Analytics & Insights remain an understudied area of the ToC, though some evidence suggests that Data & Intelligence interventions may drive progress.

Standards & Certification → Freedom of Association
Inconsistent linkage: The ToC links Certification to Freedom of Association, but evidence was limited (IDs 10, 34, 55). While unions were generally permitted, they were often discouraged (IDs 49, 56, 115), and collective bargaining remained weak due to limited representation and power imbalances (IDs 43, 89). Workers had low union awareness and did not prioritise association (IDs 8, 115). FGD 1 confirmed the lack of focus, suggesting the need for interventions beyond Standards, while FGD 6 noted that Freedom of Association is often politically and context dependent.

Standards & Certification → Diversity & Inclusiveness
Strong linkage: Standards & Certification, when combined with Producer Support, strengthened women's inclusion through gender committees, leadership opportunities, decision-making roles, and broader empowerment (IDs 8, 21, 22, 31, 40, 56). However, challenges remained, particularly within HLOs (IDs 37, 45, 89). Fairtrade staff (FGD 1) acknowledged gaps in Standards related to Diversity & Inclusiveness, noting that while Producer Networks address this area, it is not clearly articulated in the current Fairtrade strategy.

Producer Support & Producer Networks → Diversity & Inclusiveness
Strong linkage: Capacity building is pivotal in promoting women's inclusion and empowerment, with several gender-focused initiatives contributing to positive outcomes (IDs 8, 119, 137, 139, 142, 144). During FGDs, staff reported positive feedback from Producer Networks on the support received (FGD 1), corroborated by KPI 5.1, which showed 87% of SPOs were satisfied or very satisfied in 2024. KPI 6.1 also shows high percentage of women's participation in committees and as board members.

Data & Intelligence → Analytics & Insights
Inconsistent evidence: Fairtrade's KPI data shows rapid adoption of digital chain-of-custody, rising from 1.4% in 2023 to 21.4% in 2024 (KPI 11.1). However, evidence from the literature for this linkage was inconsistent. While two studies (IDs 6, 55) reported positive outcomes in auditing processes and community engagement, others highlighted pitfalls in auditing systems (IDs 48, 145).

→ Long-term outcomes

The strongest evidence of linkages to long-term outcomes emerged from direct relationships between certification and capacity building efforts with producers rather than through clear linkages with intermediate outcomes.

Diversity & Inclusiveness → Strong Producer Organisations
Inconsistent linkage: While two studies (IDs 56, 139) showed that gender-focused capacity building initiatives led to the adoption of gender-inclusive policies and stronger organisations, other studies did not evidence this linkage (IDs 32, 34, 36, 54).

Analytics & Insights → Strong Producer Organisations
Lack of evidence for linkage: Two studies reported improvements in record keeping and general organisational strengthening (IDs 35, 85). Further understanding on the exact linkage does, however, remain unclear and warrants focused research. One producer network representative articulated the need for more support on Analytics & Insights (FGD 6).

Producer Support & Producer Networks → Strong Producer Organisations
Hypothesised strong linkage (for SPOs): Several studies (IDs 3, 34, 56) showed that capacity strengthening initiatives and producer collaboration led to stronger SPOs, but no evidence was found for HLOs.

Freedom of Association → Improved Labour Conditions
Inconsistent linkage: Some studies (IDs 49, 89) showed an inconsistent link between Freedom of Association and Improved Labour Conditions, with outcomes dependent on producer organisations.

Standards & Certification → Improved Labour Conditions
Hypothesised strong linkage: Multiple studies provide evidence of Improved Labour Conditions directly linked to Certification (e.g., IDs 8, 43, 54, and others).

Producer Support & Producer Networks → Improved Labour Conditions
Hypothesised strong linkage: Improved Labour Conditions were directly driven by Producer Support and capacity building efforts linked to Certification, as evidenced by several studies (IDs 34, 36, 37) and FGD 1.

Freedom of Association → Human & Environmental Rights
Lack of evidence for linkage: None of the five studies examining both indicators assessed the linkages or tested related assumptions.

Diversity & Inclusiveness → Human & Environmental Rights
Strong linkage: Capacity building on Diversity & Inclusiveness improved labour rights awareness, land rights, grievance mechanisms, and non-discrimination policies (IDs 56, 139, 142, 144).

Analytics & Insights → Human & Environmental Rights
Inconsistent linkage: Community engagement in monitoring child labour practices showed positive linkages (ID 6), while other studies revealed auditing system pitfalls, weak grievance systems (ID 145), and limitations in deforestation monitoring tools (ID 133). The evidence supports a connection, but results were not consistently positive.

Economic Gains → Strong Producer Organisations (and vice versa)
Lack of evidence for linkage: Some studies (IDs 3, 34, 86) noted that strong SPOs also booked commercial success, such as better yields, increased sales, improved market responsiveness, enhanced organisational financial health. This was not evidenced for HLOs and more focused research is required to unpack the effects and direction of linkages.

Legend

- Linkage as per TOC
- Hypothesised linkage based on evidence
- Evidenced as strong linkage
- Inconsistent evidence on linkage
- Negative or no effect evidence on linkage
- Insufficient evidence on linkage

→ Impact

The impact level contribution of the Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway remains limited with linkages largely unevidenced. As highlighted in Pathway 1, Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods are primarily economically driven, with no evidence of a linkage with Human & Environmental Rights.

Similarly, as noted in Pathway 2, no evidence connects Improved Labour Conditions to Decent Work despite significant conceptual overlap between these two indicators. Decent Work is presented alongside Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, as it is for Pathways 1 and 2, due to significant overlap with other areas of the ToC.

Human & Environmental Rights → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods
Lack of evidence for linkage: No studies established a direct connection between Human & Environmental Rights and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods.

Strong Producer Organisations → Environmental Sustainability
Lack of evidence for linkage: Despite high compliance with Fairtrade's environmental Standards (ID 55) and benefits, such as soil analysis, organic fertilisers, insect traps, and improved waste management from strong SPOs (ID 85), no studies examined the link between Producer Organisations and Environmental Sustainability.

Human & Environmental Rights → Environmental Sustainability
Lack of evidence for linkage: One study (ID 78) showed satellite-based deforestation monitoring improved enforcement of environmental Standards, reducing deforestation in Colombia and Ghana, but significant deforestation persisted in Honduras. While promising, this evidence is insufficient to fully support the linkage further research is required.

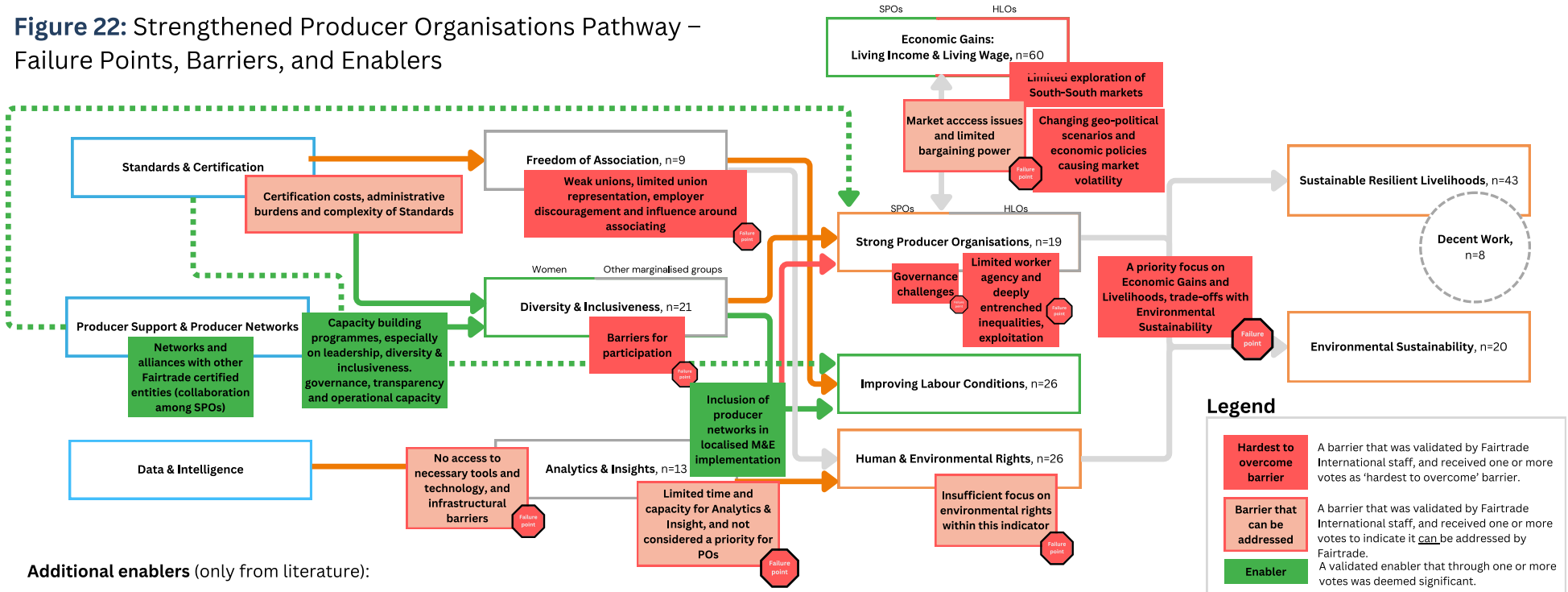
Figure 22 presents various factors influencing progress along Pathway 3. Freedom of Association was considered by Fairtrade staff as hard to improve historically (FGD 1 and FGD 6). Weak unions, limited representation, and employers actively discouraging associations or influencing their activities and decision making were identified as critical failure points not sufficiently addressed through the current strategy (FGD 6).

One participant from FGD 6, associated with a producer network, highlighted that both Freedom of Association and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) are formally supported by Standards and Certification. Still, this support has not fully translated into producer activities. This observation echoed sentiments from FGD 1, where participants emphasised that Standards alone are insufficient to ensure Freedom of Association. It was repeatedly noted that Freedom of Association depends on the political and socio-cultural context, varying significantly by region. Addressing this issue requires a nuanced approach considering these contextual differences (FGD 6).

Challenges also emerged around the Strong Producer Organisations indicator. Governance challenges were deemed a critical failure point, with limited worker agency, entrenched inequalities, and exploitation posing significant challenges, particularly for HLOs. During FGD 6, the definition of 'strong producer organisations' was questioned. One participant noted that: "*a more cohesive SPO does not always mean that they are economically stronger.*" This highlights how market access issues, limited bargaining power, restricted South-South export opportunities, and market volatility (influenced by geopolitical and economic policy changes) are validated barriers.

A general consensus was that POs must balance economic gains with other ToC areas, such as Environmental Sustainability, and trade-offs were acknowledged. FGD participants emphasised that the journey to empowerment and becoming a 'strong' PO was a cyclical and ongoing process (FGD 6). Enablers identified included dedicated capacity building, collaboration and networks among producers, and inclusion in Data & Intelligence efforts.

Figure 22: Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway – Failure Points, Barriers, and Enablers



Additional enablers (only from literature):

- Community engagement strengthens SPOs
- Size of organisations, both in terms of membership numbers and land area
- Fairtrade's use of FLOCERT, including announced and unannounced audits
- Premium investments into organisational development

Additional barriers (only from literature):

- Pressure from VSS mainstreaming which diluted the distinctiveness and financial benefits of Fairtrade certification
- Structural auditing challenges (e.g., time constraints, conflicts of interest, lack of transparency)
- Certification appears to be weak and insufficiently widespread to achieve environmental sustainability
- Variability in local enforcement and support structures to uphold VSS

Pathway 4: Climate & Agricultural Practice

The Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway is shown as articulated in Fairtrade International's ToC (Figure 23). It originates from three key interventions: Standards & Certification, Producer Support & Producer Networks, and Data & Intelligence. These interventions aim to enhance the capacity for Climate-Resilient Practices, support their adoption and enforcement, and strengthen producer organisations while promoting environmental rights. Through these mechanisms, the outcomes in the ToC link to Environmental Sustainability.

Twenty-four studies examined linkages across intermediate, long-term, and impact levels (n=24). Capacity and practice adoption results were promising, with 58% of studies showing positive findings. However, only 35% of studies on Environmental Sustainability reported positive impacts despite encouraging early-stage outcomes (e.g., biodiversity conservation, soil degradation prevention, carbon sequestration). Later-stage impacts, including reduced deforestation, were less favourable.

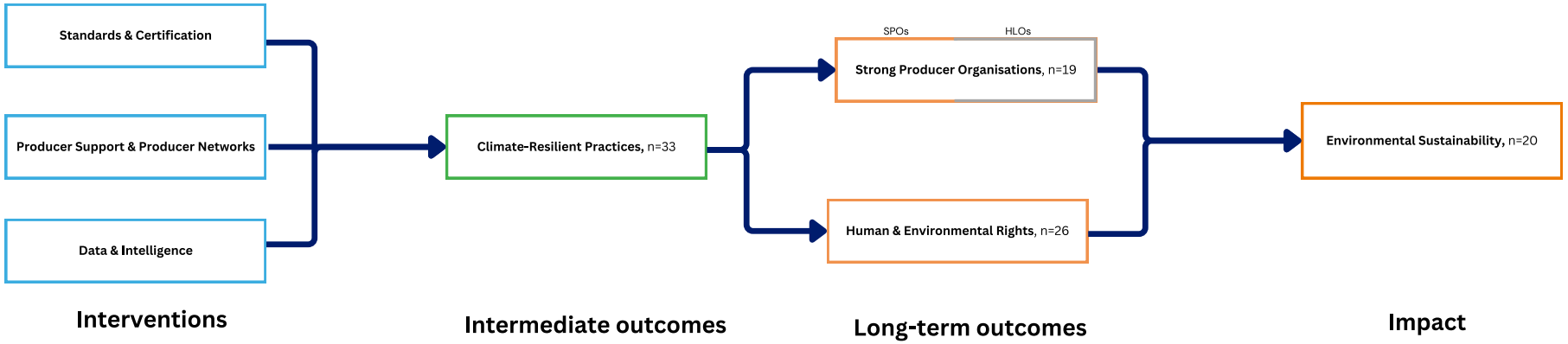
While the pathway shows potential, progress is uneven. Certification and Producer Support link strongly to Climate-Resilient Practices, yet these alone do not drive Environmental Sustainability. FGD 5 participants criticised Fairtrade's environmental Standards, noting that key requirements are introduced too late (e.g., year three or six) instead of being core from the outset. Literature findings reinforce this, showing Fairtrade's environmental Standards lack detail and strong enforcement (IDs 9, 56, 133), resulting in inconsistent impact level gains.

According to FGD 5 participants, Fairtrade must place a greater emphasis on climate and environmental issues and better integrate these into Standards. The organisation must adapt more quickly to evolving environmental regulations and monitoring systems, or risk limiting market access and failing to meet stakeholder needs. This underscores the critical role of Data & Intelligence in this pathway and the potential link to supply chain transparency as represented in Pathway 5 ('Fairtrade as a System').

Figure 24, on the next page, shows that the Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway lacks clear articulation along the entire change trajectory. Pathway 4 lacks a dedicated environmental indicator at the long-term outcomes level, limiting the representation of environmental outcomes. Mapped evidence against Stronger Producer Organisations and Human & Environmental Rights showed few environmental and climate-related findings, resulting in direct hypothesised linkages between Standards and Climate-Resilient Practices and Environmental Sustainability. Similarly, clusters of short-term environmental benefits (e.g., biodiversity conservation) may be more accurately represented as long-term outcomes. FGD 5 participants identified this as a critical gap. Another challenge with pathway coherence was the underestimation of agricultural practices in the ToC, as they are not clearly labelled in indicator titles.

Evidence suggests that Pathway 4 is interlinked with the Economic Pathway (Pathway 1), where improved agricultural practices drive Economic Gains and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods through higher yields and better product quality (e.g., ID 31, see linkage and translucent indicators on the next page). However, trade-offs between environmental and socio-economic outcomes were also observed (IDs 10, 53, 78, 199). Reframing economic outcomes as a driver or assumption could strengthen this pathway.

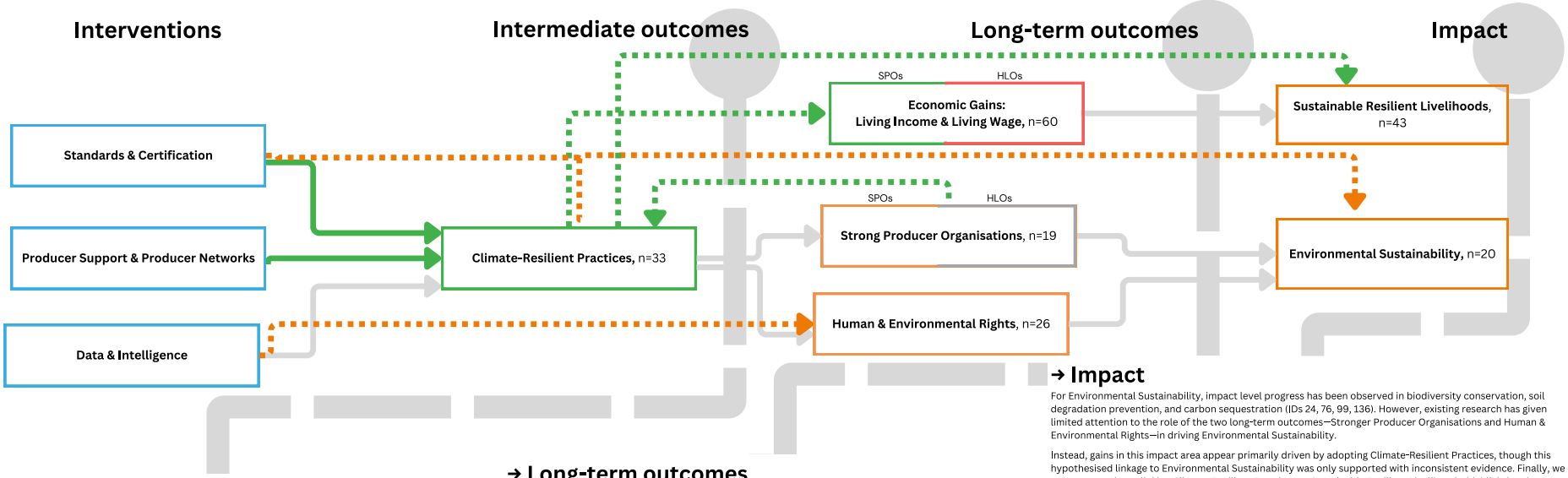
Figure 23: Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway - as shown in TOC



There was strong evidence for the link between Producer Support & Producer Networks and Climate-Resilient Practices and good support for the connection between Standards & Certification and climate practices. The analysis also suggested a direct linkage between Certification, Climate-Resilient Practices and Environmental Sustainability. This, alongside several other relationships suggested by studies reviewed but not included in Fairtrade International's current ToC, is shown with dotted lines.

Stronger Producer Organisations and Human & Environmental Rights did not adequately capture environmental impacts. Few studies examined the environmental components of these indicators, and none explored their linkages. That said, the evidence suggests that organisational capacity plays a key role in driving the adoption of Climate-Resilient Practices. This linkage appears more plausible but is constrained by the current ToC structure, which positions Stronger Producer Organisations as a long-term outcome (see Pathway 3).

Figure 24: Updated version of the Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway based on the reviewed evidence.



Interventions → Intermediate outcomes

The ToC predicts that Standards & Certification, Producer Support & Producer Networks, and Data & Intelligence drive Climate-Resilient Practices, the sole intermediate outcome of this pathway. The terminology used in this intermediate outcome was critiqued by Fairtrade staff (FGD 5), who called Climate-Resilient Practices a "*hijacked and unproven concept*". At the same time, FGD 5 described Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) as outdated and merely compliance-driven. The indicator should be updated to align with current terminology.

Evidence suggests that Certification, when paired with capacity strengthening, improves producers' awareness and technical skills, fostering sustainable agricultural practices. However, while the Standards-to-practices linkage was also supported, the authors and FGD 5 noted that Standards remain inadequate to impact Environmental Sustainability.

FGD participants stressed the importance of environmental data for supply chains: "*Commercial partners need data because they are required to report environmental or sustainability data to comply with EU regulations for example.*" (FGD 5). This highlights the role of Data & Intelligence in the environmental pathway, though as a compliance requirement. No evidence for a direct influence on Climate-Resilient Practices was found, but some studies indicated a link between Data & Intelligence intervention and Environmental Rights.

Standards & Certification → Climate-Resilient Practices
Strong linkage: Standards promote both skill development and uptake of some Climate-Resilient Practices (e.g., IDs 31, 83, 86, 130, 138, and more). However, literature and FGD 5 participants suggested that Fairtrade Standards on Climate-Resilient Practices were not sufficient to fully impact Environmental Sustainability.

Producer Support & Producer Networks → Climate-Resilient Practices
Strong linkage: Producer Support enhances skills for sustainable agriculture, willingness to adapt, and climate awareness (IDs 24, 34, 35, 40, 138). In some cases, this directly led to practice adoption (ID 34), though often capacity gains were linked to specific practices (IDs 35, 40, 54, 56).

Data & Intelligence → Climate-Resilient Practices
Lack of evidence for linkage: Few studies (n=10) examined Data & Intelligence, and none established a direct connection to Climate-Resilient Practices.

→ Long-term outcomes

At the long-term level, Pathway 4 includes Stronger Producer Organisations and Human & Environmental Rights but lacks a dedicated environmental indicator. Consequently, we mapped few environmental outcomes at this stage. The clustering of direct environmental benefits (e.g., water conservation) with long-term environmental impacts (e.g., deforestation) suggests that introducing a specific environmental long-term outcome could improve pathway coherence. Furthermore, evidence indicates that Stronger Producer Organisations influence the adoption of Climate-Resilient Practices, which contradicts the opposite causal direction proposed in Fairtrade International's ToC.

The interconnection between Climate & Agricultural Practices and the Economic Pathway also starts at the long-term indicator level through Economic Gains (a translucent indicator). Agricultural practice improved yields and, in some cases, quality, increasing economic returns. However, several studies (IDs 10, 53, 78) show that environmental practices and economic gains can be in tension, suggesting that economic factors may either enable or block progress along this interrelated pathway.

Climate-Resilient Practices → Strong Producer Organisations
Lack of evidence for linkage: Fairtrade International's ToC hypothesised a link from Climate-Resilient Practices to Strong Producer Organisations, but no evidence was found to support this link.

Climate-Resilient Practices → Human & Environmental Rights
Lack of evidence for linkage: No literature specifically explored the relationship between these indicators.

Strong Producer Organisations → Climate-Resilient Practices
Hypothesised strong linkage: Evidence indicates that organisational capacity impacts the adoption of practices (IDs 98, 128, 130, 138), suggesting that an inverse linkage is more likely.

Data & Intelligence → Human & Environmental Rights
Hypothesised inconsistent linkage: One study (IDs 78) indicated that satellite-based monitoring helped reduce deforestation rates in certain Fairtrade certified regions, suggesting a potential link between Data & Intelligence and Human & Environmental Rights. Similar evidence also surfaced for GPS mapping of producer plots (ID 3).

Climate-Resilient Practices → Economic Gains
Hypothesised strong linkage: Several studies suggest that improved (climate-resilient) farming practices, supported through Certification and Producer Support, increased income through higher yields and improved productivity (e.g., IDs 31, 54, 83, 94, 117, and more). This showed a linkage with Pathway 1.

→ Impact

For Environmental Sustainability, impact level progress has been observed in biodiversity conservation, soil degradation prevention, and carbon sequestration (IDs 24, 76, 99, 136). However, existing research has given limited attention to the role of the two long-term outcomes—Stronger Producer Organisations and Human & Environmental Rights—in driving Environmental Sustainability.

Instead, gains in this impact area appear primarily driven by adopting Climate-Resilient Practices, though this hypothesised linkage to Environmental Sustainability was only supported with inconsistent evidence. Finally, we propose a pathway linking Climate-Resilient Practices to Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, highlighting the interdependence of agricultural practices with the Economic Pathway.

Climate-Resilient Practices → Environmental Sustainability
Hypothesised inconsistent linkage: Studies (IDs 10, 24, 31, 54, 135, 136) link Climate-Resilient Practices to improved Environmental Sustainability, supporting a connection from intermediate outcomes to impact, though this was limited to certain areas (IDs 133, FGD 5). Additional studies linked Standards & Certification directly to Environmental Sustainability, but also highlighted the need to strengthen the comprehensiveness of Standards, and enforcement (IDs 9, 56, 133). This was also noted by FGD 5 participants.

Strong Producer Organisations → Environmental Sustainability
Lack of evidence for linkage: Despite high compliance with Fairtrade's environmental Standards (ID 55) and benefits, such as soil analysis, organic fertiliser, insect traps, and improved waste management from strong SPOs (ID 85), no studies examined a direct link between Producer Organisations and Environmental Sustainability.

Human & Environmental Rights → Environmental Sustainability
Lack of evidence for linkage: One study (ID 78) showed satellite-based deforestation monitoring improved enforcement of environmental Standards, reducing deforestation in Colombia and Ghana, though significant deforestation persisted in Honduras. While promising, this evidence is insufficient to support a link between indicators.

Climate-Resilient Practices → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods
Hypothesised strong linkage: Adoption of Climate-Resilient Practices drove the economic pathway, including climate change preparedness (IDs 31, 53) and improved food security through increased yields (ID 139).

Legend

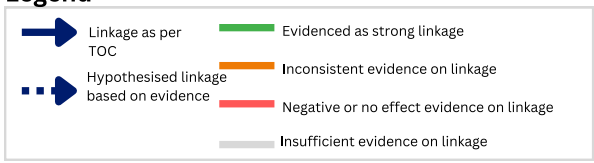


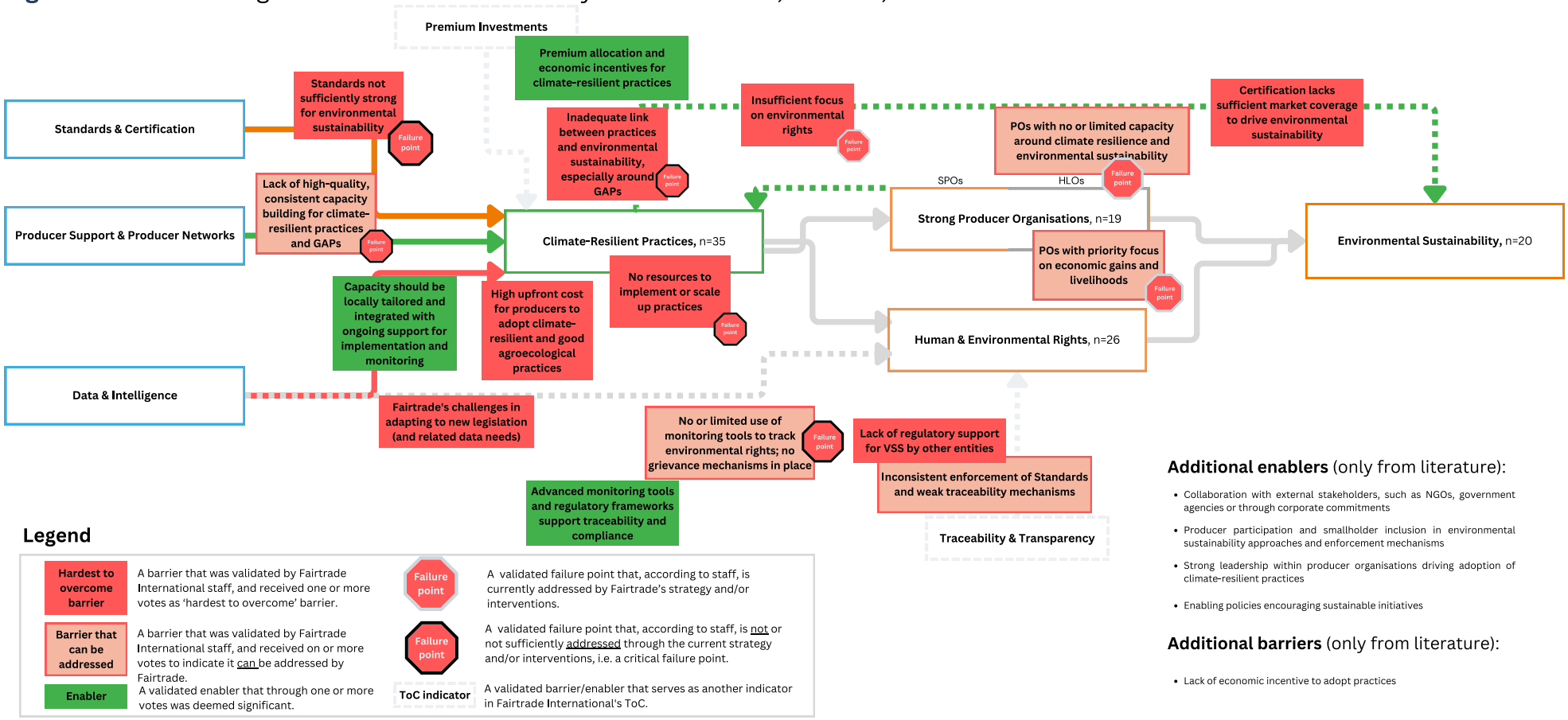
Figure 25 provides an overview of factors influencing Pathway 4. Participants of FGD 5 identified weak environmental Standards & Certification as the primary failure point, creating barriers to both Climate-Resilient Practices (ID 56) and continued deforestation challenges (IDs 9, 83, 85, 133). Other key barriers included inadequate capacity building for Climate-Resilient Practices, limited resources for implementation and scaling up, and a lack of focus on environmental rights and transparent monitoring mechanisms.

FGD 5 participants also criticised Fairtrade International's slow response to legislative changes, particularly its failure to provide environmental data required for EU and supply chain regulations, which could limit market access. *"Our system is social-focused, so we have much more to say on the social side than on the environmental side, whereas the legislation requires the opposite."* (FGD 5) This issue was also raised by participants from FGD 4 and 7 when reflecting on the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway that embeds Data & Intelligence and Enabling Public Policies.

Despite these challenges, promising results were observed, particularly for adopting Climate-Resilient Practices. Premium allocation and economic incentives for these practices were key enablers validated by FGD 5 participants, and in line with the conclusion of a study submitted following the FGD (AS.8), which concluded: *"The three Fairtrade interventions (Standard implementation, Fairtrade support and Premium use) offer opportunities for POs to work towards environmental impact but do not necessarily encourage environmental actions. Of the three interventions, Premiums are considered the best and strongest option to actively generate environmental impacts."* Other enablers are capacity strengthening initiatives tailored to local contexts with ongoing implementation support, advanced monitoring tools, and equitable regulatory frameworks, which were identified as key factors in improving traceability and compliance.

However, the lack of focus on environmental rights and transparent monitoring mechanisms undermines Fairtrade's potential to fully integrate Environmental Sustainability, highlighting the urgent need for enhanced data capabilities and more substantial alignment with evolving environmental Standards. This means improvement in Pathway 4 will depend on 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway 5 through Data & Intelligence.

Figure 25: Climate & Agricultural Practices Pathway – Failure Points, Barriers, and Enablers



Pathway 5: 'Fairtrade as a System'

The 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway represents a holistic approach to supply chains, integrating Fairtrade's Certification and Brand with Market Development interventions, Human & Environmental Rights, and Strong Producer Organisations. These elements are crucial in mediating the individual benefits of Standards & Certification. This pathway emerged from combining two pathways in Fairtrade International's ToC: Trust & Satisfaction and Analytics & Insights. Supply chain results were primarily linked to Trust & Satisfaction, while other enabling environment indicators were associated with Analytics & Insights. These pathways are summarised in Figure 26. Pathway 5 is defined by the impact in Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains and long-term outcomes predicted by Fairtrade's ToC to drive supply chains. It is also notable that Pathway 5 indicators serve as enabling environments for downstream outcomes, whether at producer organisation level or across the supply chain. Hence, this pathway is foundational within the ToC, particularly the Economic and Strengthened Producer Organisations pathways (i.e., Pathways 1 and 3). Fairtrade's ToC suggests that five of the six core interventions contribute to change via links to intermediate outcomes, as shown below in Figure 26. Further evidence was found that all interventions drive change along this pathway with a role by Producer Support & Producer Networks additionally evidenced (shown as a translucent indicator in Figure 27).

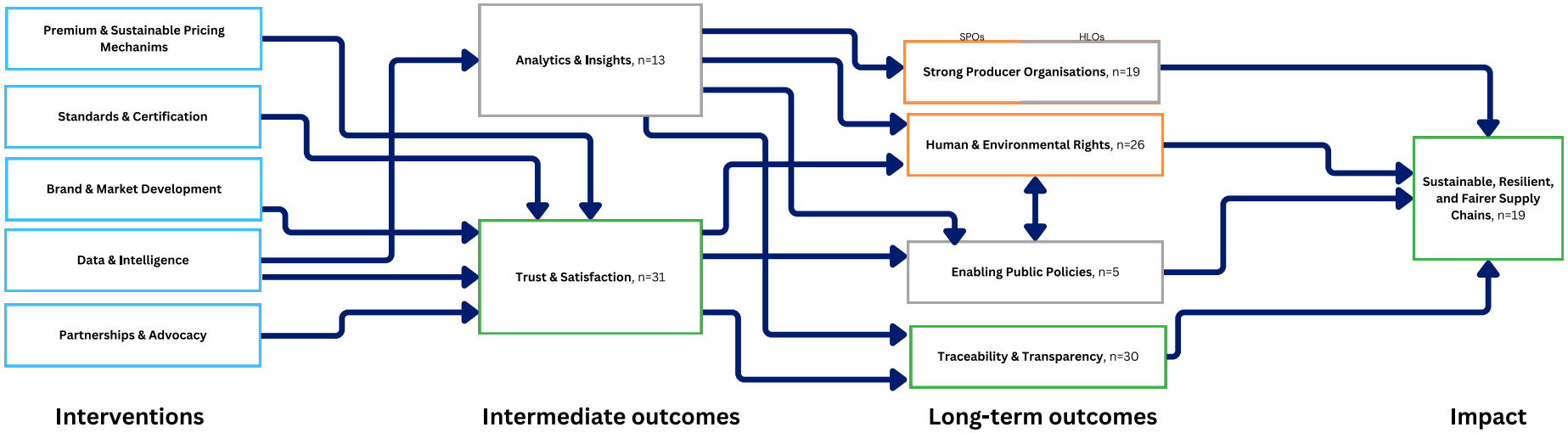
Despite this pathway's broad scope, the evidence base remains limited, with only 20 studies supporting it. Figure 26 shows that while the ToC hypothesises many linkages, numerous links demonstrated no evidence due to a lack of research. The indicator's support in the Evidence Map was variable. Across the ToC layers, evidence shows positive results accounted for 46–68% of intermediate outcome indicators, 50–60% of long-term outcome indicators, and 86% of Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains. Behind these variable results, the core supply chain pathway comprised of Trust & Satisfaction, Traceability & Transparency, and Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains demonstrated more positive findings for Fairtrade and, in general, more substantial evidence of linkages.

The other cluster of indicators, starting with Analytics & Insights in Pathway 5, can be considered enablers (e.g., enabling public policy) or associated ToC components (e.g., strong SPOs). These areas have weaker evidence and lower certainty in hypothesised linkages. FGD participants felt this had improved in recent years: *"We've come a long way in data and analytics, but external evidence is lacking."* (FGD 7) As mentioned, work is needed under Analytics & Insights to ensure supply chain traceability keeps pace with regulatory shifts (FGD 4).

The role of consumers emerged as central in this pathway, with staff highlighting opportunities: *"We've seen a huge increase in consumer awareness and trust."* (FGD 4) However, concerns were raised that Fairtrade is not fully capitalising on this potential as market shares remain low in some areas. For example, only 4% of Fairtrade certified tea is sold under Fairtrade conditions. Market size was identified as a significant barrier to achieving Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains (FGD 4, FGD 7), with Brand & Marketing staff being highly aware of existing risks posed by Fairtrade's higher price point (FGD 4).

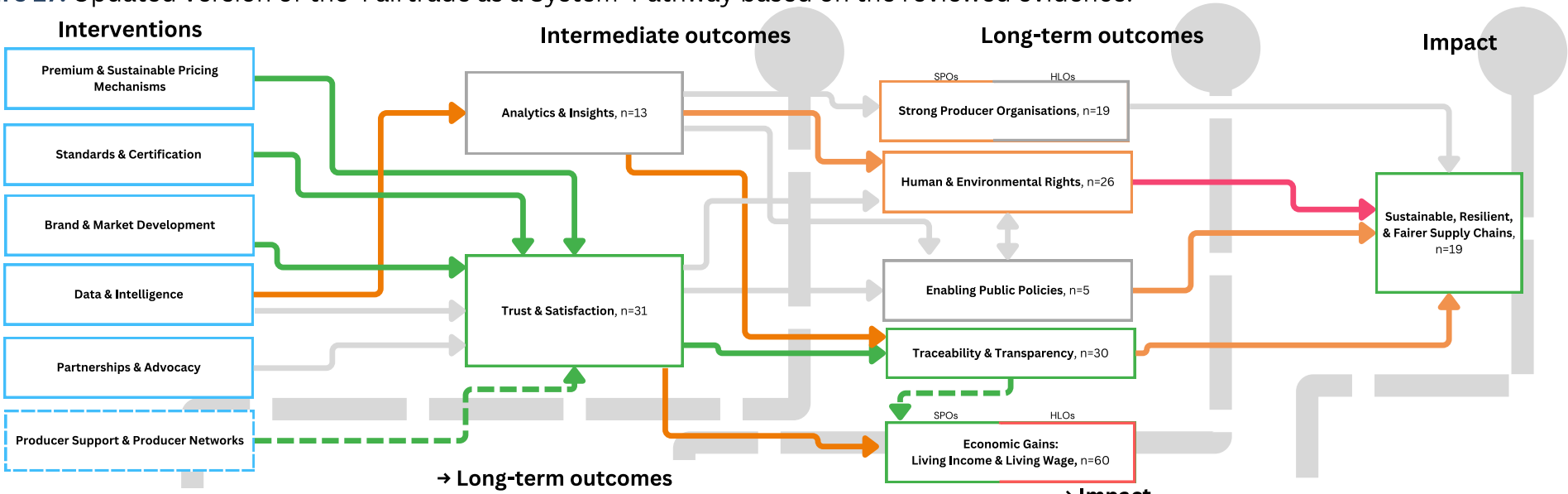
At the impact layer, the pathway is driven by clear supply chain drivers, such as Traceability & Transparency, but shows less integration with indicators such as Strong Producer Organisations. Linkages in the ToC also lack a clear articulation of key drivers, such as consumer influence, market size, and interaction with the supply chain, which is not helped by the fact that indicators in Pathway 5 have both supply chain and consumer metric components combined. Overall, at the impact level, there is weak evidence connecting long-term outcomes, especially when considering Fairtrade's high confidence in the supply chain impact area. This suggests that other factors not currently captured in the ToC may be driving impact in Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains.

Figure 26: 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway - as shown in ToC



While this pathway is emergent, its coherence could be strengthened by clarifying the role of indicators with limited supporting evidence (e.g., Strong POs). Due to logical inconsistencies, evidence mapping was challenging, even in more strongly supported areas, such as brand and supply chain. For instance, consumer purchasing intention is classified as a long-term outcome despite its critical role in intermediate outcomes via market size (e.g., Fairtrade Premium Investments). Coherence could be improved by focusing relevant indicators specifically on the supply chain, avoiding overlap with other areas, such as advocacy (e.g., Trust & Satisfaction) or consumer behaviour (e.g., Traceability & Transparency).

Figure 27: Updated version of the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway based on the reviewed evidence.



Interventions → Intermediate outcomes

Trust & Satisfaction is a key driver of this pathway, with strong evidence supporting Fairtrade's effectiveness in this area. The Evidence Map confirms strong linkages for three hypothesised interventions by Fairtrade International. However, evidence for the impact of Data & Intelligence and Partnerships & Advocacy remains limited. Studies suggest Producer Support is a key driver of Trust & Satisfaction, warranting its inclusion as a hypothesised linkage (shown as translucent dashed lines). Limited evidence connects Data & Intelligence to Trust & Satisfaction.

Brand & Market Development → Trust & Satisfaction
Strong linkage: External studies confirm a strong reputation (IDs 65, 68), with high trust observed among producer organisations (KPI 5.1) and across the supply chain, including traders, exporters, and retailers (IDs 92, 131).

Premium & Sustainable Pricing Mechanisms, Standards & Certification → Trust & Satisfaction
Strong linkage: Fairtrade's reputation for rigorous Standards, Producer Support, and Premium Investments is a key driver of consumer trust (IDs 65, 68). KPI data shows 87% satisfaction with Fairtrade (KPI 5.1), with external research confirming that these factors underpin both Trust & Satisfaction (IDs 34, 36, 43).

Producer Support → Trust & Satisfaction
Strong hypothesised linkage: Studies also noted Producer Support as important in consumer (ID 65, 68), producer, farmer and workers' trust (IDs 35, 58).

Data & Intelligence → Trust & Satisfaction
Lack of evidence for linkage: Trust in Fairtrade's monitoring was noted (ID 6), but no further detailed evidence underpins this linkage.

Partnerships & Advocacy → Trust & Satisfaction
Lack of evidence for linkage: Businesses aligning CSR missions with Fairtrade were supported through Partnerships & Advocacy (ID 51). However, detailed evidence for this linkage is still missing.

Data & Intelligence → Analytics & Insights
Inconsistent linkage: Fairtrade's KPI data shows rapid adoption of digital chain-of-custody, increasing from 1.4% in 2023 to 21.4% in 2024 (KPI 11.1). But literature provided inconsistent evidence for a linkage. Two studies (IDs 6, 55) reporting positive links between auditing processes and community engagement in monitoring, but other studies highlighted data pitfalls in auditing systems (IDs 48, 145).

→ Long-term outcomes

At the long-term level, Traceability & Transparency is the core indicator for the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway, which shows links to Pathway 1, via Economic Gains. Other long-term indicators, such as Human & Environmental Rights and EnablingPublic Policies, are more closely tied to fairer supply chains, but may operate as key enablers. The exact role of POs in driving impact was not well studied.

Analytics & Insights and Trust & Satisfaction → Enabling Public Policies
Lack of evidence for linkage: There was no evidence linking Analytics & Insights to Enabling Public Policies. While KPIs indicate a focus on partnerships (KPI 13.1), no studies examined the relationship between Trust & Satisfaction and policy influence.

Analytics & Insights → Strong Producer Organisations
Lack of evidence for linkage: Two studies reported improvements in record keeping and general organisational strengthening (IDs 35, 85). Further understanding of the exact linkage does, however, remain unclear and warrants focused research. One producer network representative articulated the need for more support on Analytics & Insights (FGD 6).

Analytics & insights → Human & Environmental Rights
Inconsistent linkage: One study found audit deficiencies led to undetected human rights grievances (ID 145), while another showed VSS social audits failed to detect violations or drive corrective actions (ID 48). The limited ability of deforestation monitoring tools was also noted (ID 133). Conversely, the child labour monitoring system seemed to perform well (IDs 6, 25).

Analytics & Insights → Traceability & transparency
Inconsistent linkage: Fairtrade has advanced supply chain traceability and governance transparency but faces challenges with fragmented systems. Most studies link this to audit compliance (IDs 51, 172), while others highlight limited environmental monitoring (ID 131).

Trust & Satisfaction → Human & Environmental Rights
Lack of evidence for linkage: Only one study linked trust in monitoring systems to child labour benefits (ID 6).

Enabling Public Policies → Human & Environmental Rights
Lack of evidence for linkage: No evidence was identified linking these two long-term indicators.

Trust & Satisfaction → Traceability & Transparency
Strong linkage: Strong evidence linking positive perceptions of VSS, including Fairtrade, to willingness to pay (IDs 68, 102, 107). Positive repetitional benefits also contributed to increased supply chain transparency (ID 51).

Trust & Satisfaction → Economic Gains
Inconsistent linkage: Some studies (IDs 54, 56, 101) suggest that increased trust, satisfaction, and resulting demand may lead to Economic Gains. Others (IDs 51, 131) found no clear link to improved incomes. The strongest evidence (IDs 18, 40, 3, 118, 133) points to market size and conditions as barriers to Economic Gains, but this does not demonstrate Fairtrade's impact through Trust & Satisfaction.

Traceability & Transparency → Economic Gains
Strong hypothesised linkage: Economic Gains are more likely to occur through market access and consumer purchasing behaviour. Market access was a key determinant of Economic Gains (IDs 34, 18, 24, 56).

→ Impact

Notable impact was observed for Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains, particularly for Fairtrade. Despite clear gains, evidence for linkages remains weak. Theoretically, transparency and traceability systems should be key drivers, but findings were inconclusive. The limited number of studies on linkages may indicate insufficient evidence on pathways or unarticulated factors in the ToC influencing this outcome.

Traceability & Transparency → Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains
Inconsistent linkage: The impact of sustainable consumer choices on the supply chain was not studied, though commodity data suggests a relatively flat market between 2020-23 (KPI 12.1). One study linked increased transparency to contracts and partnerships (ID 51), while another found that despite market growth and traceability, fair supply chains collapsed due to distribution challenges (ID 136).

Enabling Public Policies: → Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains
Inconsistent linkage: One Fairtrade-commissioned study highlighted policy impacts improving supply chains, such as the EU integrating Fair Trade principles into trade policies (ID 5). Another showed recognition agreements (e.g., Chile-Brazil) as enablers of resilient, fairer supply chains for other VSS (ID 63). Conversely, Fairtrade's failure to keep up with public policies was found to hinder supply chains (IDs 51, FGD 4, FGD 5).

Human & Environmental Rights → Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains
No linkage: Studies examining the connection between Human & Environmental Rights and Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains found no clear linkage. One study evaluating grievance mechanisms for human rights remedies showed no substantial shift in power dynamics (ID 132). Another identified limited VSS uptake, leading to shortcomings in addressing labour and human rights violations in the supply chain (ID 145).

Strong Producer Organisations: → Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains
Lack of evidence for linkage: The link between Strong POs and more Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains was evidenced by only one study (ID 58), which found that stronger organisations do enhance supply chains, driven by Premium Investments and improved organisational capacity.

Legend

- Linkage as per TOC
- Hypothesised linkage based on evidence
- Evidenced as strong linkage
- Inconsistent evidence on linkage
- Negative or no effect evidence on linkage
- Insufficient evidence on linkage

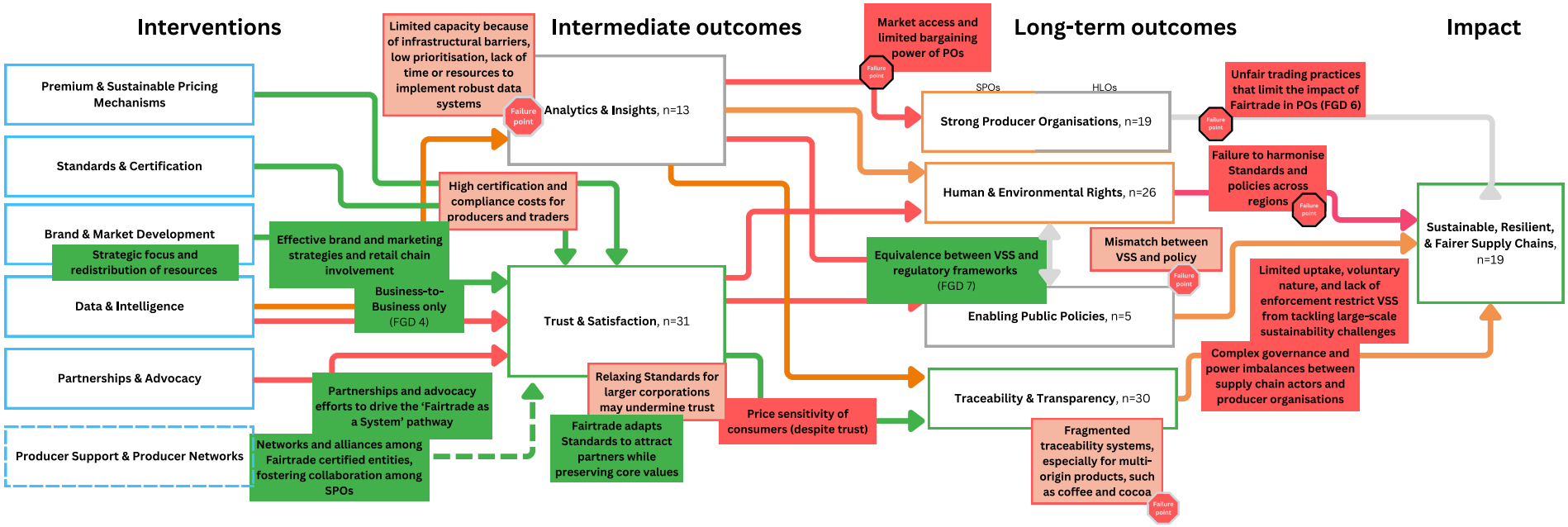
Reflecting its broad scope, the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway was presented to Brand and Market Development staff members (FGD 4) and the Advocacy, Resource Mobilisation and Global Impact Team members (FGD 7) for review. Notably, participants were inclined to comment on their area of expertise rather than the system as a whole. Figure 28 outlines the factors influencing this pathway: enablers, barriers, and failure points.

Each group prioritised different challenges. FGD 4 identified limited market access and weak bargaining power as key constraints. In contrast, FGD 7 emphasised mistrust in Northern-associated VSS and the failure to harmonise Standards across regions as primary failure points. While participants recognised the importance of aligning policies with VSS frameworks as an enabler, they questioned its feasibility: *"Alignment is significant, but is it realistic? It's a huge enabler."* They further reflected that this would also require accountability measures and monitoring (FGD 7). FGD 4 (participants from FGD 5) also raised concerns about keeping pace with policy and legislative developments, which are critical for supply chains. One participant noted: *"Public policies and legislation are overtaking Fairtrade at a rapid pace, so we need to step up to ensure compliance to avoid becoming obsolete."* (FGD 4) While KPI data (12.1) suggests Fairtrade has some positive policy impact, participants acknowledged the difficulty in measuring policy uptake and effectiveness.

Price sensitivity among consumers was identified as another major barrier for Fairtrade International (FGD 4). Additionally, both groups noted the limited uptake of VSS as a structural barrier to sustainable and resilient supply chains. KPI data (8.1) indicates stagnant and reversing market growth across multiple products from 2020–23, reinforcing this concern.

Both FGDs highlighted the need for stronger partnerships to address these challenges. FGD 4 participants argued that strategic redistribution of resources is a key enabler of growing the brand and markets in countries with the most growth potential. In contrast, FGD 7 participants needed more resources to drive partnership and advocacy efforts.

Figure 28: 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway – Failure Points, Barriers, and Enablers



Additional enablers (only from literature):

- Fairtrade's use of FLOCERT, including announced and unannounced audits
- Capacity building initiatives to strengthen producer organisations
- Consumer trust and awareness plus a shift towards ethical and sustainable consumerism
- Inclusion of producer networks in localised M&E implementation and self-assessment of this certification value for producers

Additional barriers (only from literature):

- Structural auditing challenges (e.g., time constraints, conflicts of interest, lack of transparency).

Legend

Hardest to overcome barrier	A barrier that was validated by Fairtrade International staff, and received one or more votes as 'hardest to overcome' barrier.
Barrier that can be addressed	A barrier that was validated by Fairtrade International staff, and received one or more votes to indicate it can be addressed by Fairtrade.
Enabler	A validated enabler that through one or more votes was deemed significant.
Failure point	A validated failure point that, according to staff, is currently addressed by Fairtrade's strategy and/or interventions.
Failure point	A validated failure point that, according to staff, is not or not sufficiently addressed through the current strategy and/or interventions, i.e. a critical failure point.
ToC indicator	A validated barrier/enabler that serves as another indicator in Fairtrade International's ToC.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We now synthesise findings from the evidence-mapping exercise, evaluating the strength of evidence across Fairtrade International's ToC areas and pathways. As in the main report, our discussion uses a colour-coding system to indicate confidence in Fairtrade International's impact using **Green**, **Amber**, **Red** and **Grey** classifications. When a ToC indicator name appears in **black** in the concluding summary, it signifies differing ratings for specific groups (e.g., HLOs or SPOs).

The discussion is structured initially around the indicators in the Evidence Map. We then assess the overall evidence base for Fairtrade, and provide recommendations for future research priorities and use of Fairtrade's KPIs for evidence generation. Finally, we discuss and present recommendations for Fairtrade International's ToC and the five identified pathways, analysing each individually to assess the strength of linkages from interventions to impact areas.

THE EVIDENCE MAP

The intermediate outcome layer of Fairtrade International's ToC is supported by a moderate evidence base, showing strong performance in economic and environmental practices and positive perceptions of Fairtrade. Social and collective bargaining outcomes displayed more mixed results, with more significant progress evident in early-stage outcomes, including the output level, while late-stage results were less consistent. HLOs were generally under-researched, as were specific marginalised groups. For four intermediate outcome indicators (Price Stability, Premium Investments, Diversity & Inclusiveness and Climate-Resilient Practices), we used outputs and early-stage outcomes to classify the evidence base, resulting in **Green** ratings for all areas, aligning with ISEAL standards for credible impact claims.[84]

Price Stability and **Premium Investments** consistently demonstrated positive results, with Price Stability showing the most consistent positive findings. **Climate-Resilient Practices** are another area where Fairtrade can have confidence of positive impact, reflecting Fairtrade's strengths in training, capacity building, and promoting agricultural practices and their adoption. However, Fairtrade staff in FGDs shared the critique that these practices do not always align with Environmental Sustainability goals. **Trust & Satisfaction** among stakeholders, including consumers, workers, farmers, producer organisations, and supply chain actors repeatedly demonstrated positive intermediate outcomes related to Trust & Satisfaction.

In contrast, social outcomes exhibited more variability. **Diversity & Inclusiveness** were rated positively for **women,** supported by strong early-stage results (e.g., capacity building and opportunities), though findings were less consistent for later outcomes, such as full participation. Yet, the evidence base for this group was weak, with only one attributional study and a handful of systematic reviews. Research on **youth** was limited, and studies on **other marginalised groups** were almost non-existent, highlighting a key priority for further investigation within the Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway.

Freedom of Association was under-represented in the evidence review and supported by weak evaluations. While Fairtrade demonstrated good adherence to Freedom of Association audit criteria, early-stage results were mixed or showed no effect. Inconclusive and null fundings were often due to workers' limited involvement in decision making, inconsistent support from HLO management for union membership, and external structural barriers to forming or joining associations.

Finally, **Analytics & Insights** also lacked sufficient evidence, relying largely on qualitative research and missing impact evaluations, which made it difficult to classify the indicator. Staff in FGDs acknowledged this gap, attributing it to Fairtrade's relatively recent focus on Data & Intelligence and Analytics & Insights.

The long-term outcome layer is supported by more studies than the intermediate outcome layer. However, the evidence base is less consistent quality-wise, with significant variability in methodological rigour and limited longitudinal impact evaluations. At this ToC layer, SPOs consistently outperformed HLOs, especially in economic and organisational indicators. 'Hard' indicators, such as income gains and certification compliance, produced clearer results, while 'soft' indicators, such as norms and agency, were more variable. Early-stage results for long-term economic outcomes (e.g., farm gate prices) were better supported than later-stage results (e.g., living income), contributing to mixed evidence for most individual indicators.

Overall, the results highlight strengths in Traceability & Transparency, Economic Gains for SPOs, and Improved Labour Conditions for farmers and workers. Across the studies mapped, prioritising longitudinal quantitative evaluations will be essential to strengthening the evidence base for long-term outcomes and their linkage with impact areas.

Though strong quantitative evaluations were lacking, mapped studies consistently reported **Improved Labour Conditions,** particularly in health and safety outcomes across SPOs and HLOs. **Economic Gains for SPOs** showed strong results, with increased income, income stability, and enhanced productivity linked to Premium investments. However, Economic Gains **for HLOs** were more variable due to structural challenges with no measurable wage improvements across multiple studies.

84 A Framework to Guide Practice. December 2023, ISEAL. Impacts and Outcomes: Claims and Communications Guidance. Available at: https://www.isealalliance.org/get-involved/resources/impacts-and-outcomes-claims-and-communications-guidance

Traceability & Transparency had consistent, supportive evidence, driven by improved supply chain monitoring and certification adherence alongside encompassing evidence focused on consumer behaviour. While most evaluations were exploratory, some attributional and causal findings supported this indicator's encouraging evidence base.

Conversely, **Strong Producer Organisations** displayed inconsistent results, with evidence of improved governance and advocacy offset by weaknesses in organisational structures in **SPOs** and limited evidence regarding HLOs. Similarly, **Human & Environmental Rights** outcomes were mixed. There were positive examples of reduced human rights violations but, in general, these were undermined by weak enforcement and accountability mechanisms alongside a low number of studies covering environmental rights. Both these indicators also suffered from a lack of coherence, calling for cleaner definitions and presentation of producer organisations earlier in the results chain (i.e., at the intermediate outcome level within the ToC).

Results on **Representation & Influence** showed progress in women's participation, but systemic change remained limited by structural barriers, such as cultural norms. Studies focused more on women than on the general Representation & Influence of workers and farmers. Hardly any evidence was mapped in relation to other marginalised groups, though several robust evaluations and reviews supported this indicator. **Enabling Public Policies** lacked sufficient research overall, with only isolated case studies highlighting progress and one study presenting negative results.

At the impact layer, we found the strongest evidence for supply chain enhancements. **Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains** showed strong gains in improving equitable distribution of profits among supply chain actors, fostering sustainable development among buyers and traders, and enhancing their governance in the supply chain.

Evidence for **Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods** was split, with some studies reporting positive outcomes but not consistently. Financial robustness showed context dependent improvements, such as increased income and spending on essentials, but external pressures often offset gains. Studies on threshold measures (e.g., hunger or poverty states) showed limited impact, with certified farmers and workers remaining below national poverty lines and inconsistent effects on food security. Progress on resilience was better, supported by Premium-financed disaster management plans and sustainable agricultural practices, though long-term assessments were lacking.

Environmental Sustainability demonstrated encouraging results in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, emissions reduction, and sustainable practices. However, results for deforestation and land use outcomes were mixed, constrained by weak enforcement and economic pressures. The evidence base suffered from a lack of rigorous impact assessment but included consistent evidence for progress in early-stage results, such as climate resilience. Consulted staff (FGD 5) raised concerns around the lack of focus on Environmental Sustainability within Standards and the limited capacity of Fairtrade International to progress this ToC area strategically.

The impact areas around Gender Equity and Social Inclusion and Decent Work lacked depth and rigorous evaluations, limiting confidence in findings. **Gender Equity and Social Inclusion** results primarily focused on women, showing improvements in participation and some modest gains in agency, often driven by targeted interventions in healthcare and education. However, entrenched social norms and systemic barriers limited broader impacts, and evidence for other marginalised groups was minimal.

Decent Work outcomes were inconclusive, with inconsistent findings and significant gaps in labour standard enforcement. While some improvements were noted in employment terms and living conditions, evidence on wages and job security was mixed. This indicator also showed high conceptual overlap with other long-term outcomes and impacts. This issue contributed to the evidence gap at the impact level and should be explored in further iterations of the ToC.

THE EVIDENCE BASE FOR FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL

The evidence base for Fairtrade International between 2021-2024 is substantial, with 122 studies identified, including 103 focused on Fairtrade (43 exclusively and 60 studies focused on Fairtrade alongside other VSS). However, most studies are literature reviews, qualitative research, or descriptive quantitative research.

Definitively understanding whether Fairtrade International's interventions and strategy have led to a change as articulated within the ToC requires robust causal or attributional evaluations. These methodologies determine whether observed changes are directly attributable to the intervention rather than external factors. As external influences become more significant in the long-term outcomes and impact points of the ToC, robust causal methods are increasingly important. This is why ISEAL allows weaker evaluation standards to make credible impact claims on outputs and early-stage outcomes (e.g., Price Stability).

Notwithstanding this need, only four studies in the entire Evidence Map were classified as causal after accounting for study design quality and conduct. At the same time, an additional 24 quantitative evaluations were classified as attributional, representing sufficiently rigorous research to determine if changes occurred. Hence, a major gap in the evidence base is in high-quality quantitative impact evaluations.

Not all indicators require causal or attributional impact evaluations. Among specific groups, such as farmers, a substantial number of robust evaluations already exist for some indicators, such as Economic Gains. Moreover, many intermediate outcome indicators can be credibly substantiated using monitoring data or descriptive research (e.g., cross-sectional data collection), which aligns with ISEAL's guidance for credible impact claims. For other outcome areas, qualitative methods may be more appropriate. For example, assessing Enabling Public Policies is better suited to qualitative

approaches, such as outcome mapping or most significant change.

Reflecting on these considerations, Table 4 highlights priority areas for quantitative impact evaluation (i.e., causal or attributional). Fairtrade International's research programme should prioritise these areas. Given that Fairtrade commissioned fewer causal or attributional studies between 2021 and 2024 compared to those found in the overall Evidence Map sample, prioritising the commissioning of attributional or causal impact evaluations would enhance the robustness of Fairtrade's evidence and drive the external evidence base by addressing gaps.

In addition to commissioning high-quality quantitative impact evaluations, Table 4 highlights general research priorities under Expand Scope. These priorities include areas rated as **Grey** in the Evidence Map and thematic areas that emerged across multiple indicators.

Priorities reflect the uneven distribution of evaluation studies, with 76% reporting results related to Fairtrade International's intermediate outcomes, 82% addressing long-term outcomes, and only 61% covering the impact layer. They also reflect mapped studies that often focus on individual indicators rather than broader domains (e.g., studies mapped under Improved Labour Conditions, focusing on specific health and safety practices). Expanded research priorities should also consider particular groups. For example, commissioning studies on HLOs appears particularly important for Fairtrade International, with only eight studies in the Evidence Map evaluating this group exclusively. Other under-researched groups include marginalised groups other than women and youth (e.g., migrant workers or indigenous communities).

Research priorities differ for some indicators listed in the Expand Scope column of Table 4, such as Analytics & Insights and Freedom of Association. In the case of Analytics & Insights, the focus is less on impact evaluation and more on understanding how to enhance regulatory compliance, system credibility, and the practical use of Data & Intelligence for producer organisations. In contrast, for Freedom of Association, research priorities lie in exploring barriers and labour dynamics within HLOs to develop programmes that support them in achieving freedom of association and collective bargaining before conducting impact evaluations on the success of these programmes.

Table 4 outlines priority areas for future research, focusing on quantitative impact evaluations to resolve uncertainties and adopting an expanded research scope to address critical knowledge gaps. The insights from Part 2 and Part 3 of this report will actively guide Fairtrade's Global Impact Team in formulating targeted research questions for each indicator area as presented.

Table 4: Priority areas for enhanced research focused on expanding scope and strengthening methodological rigour.

Expand Scope	Quantitative Impact Evaluation
Freedom of Association	Economic Gains for HLOs
Diversity & Inclusiveness for youth and marginalised groups	Representation & Influence
Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods	
Analytics & Insights	Environmental Sustainability
Human & Environmental Rights	Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
Stronger Producer Organisations	

We also formulated the following general recommendations to strengthen the evidence base for the ToC and Fairtrade's effect:

- **Broaden the scope of research:** Expand research for priority areas listed in Table 4. The Evidence Map also identified priority groups for research: HLOs, youth and other marginalised groups. For these research areas, the priority is depth of understanding, meaning a range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches could be employed.
- **Increase use of strong impact methods:** Use robust impact evaluation methods, such as RCTs and QEDs, especially for long-term and impact layer outcomes. Indicators in Table 4 require strong evaluation to clarify inconclusive results and support credible impact claims. While RCTs may be challenging in contexts with multiple certifications, they remain the most potent method for proving the impact of interventions. When designed with cluster randomisation and treatment-as-usual comparisons (to other VSS), they could work within the operational reality of Fairtrade, such as high VSS saturation. When RCTs are unfeasible, QEDs such as fixed-effects models and interrupted time series analyses provide rigorous alternatives without uncertified control groups.
- **Invest in studies that examine results across the ToC pathways:** Commission research that not only uses attributional methods but also examines linkages across the results chain, connecting intermediate, long-term, and impact layers of the ToC. While most studies in the Evidence Map examined multiple indicators, relatively few examined relationships between these indicators (i.e., linkages). External researchers will be encouraged to adopt a pathway-focused approach if the ToC also clearly emphasises its primary pathways.
- **Conduct long-term evaluations:** Fairtrade International should prioritise longitudinal evaluations, particularly long-term quantitative studies, to assess initiatives only after

sufficient time has passed for interventions to generate meaningful change. Short evaluation durations have often led to a focus on short-term metrics within long-term outcomes and impact ToC areas. This has left critical research gaps in Gender Equity and Social Inclusion, longstanding Environmental Sustainability impact, and measures of resilience within Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods.

- **Strengthen outcome measurement quality:** Fairtrade International should enhance the consistency and robustness of outcome measurements in its commissioned research by prioritising hard outcome measures (e.g., yields and incomes) where possible or using psychometrically validated, culturally appropriate scales when not (e.g., outcomes such as agency). The Evidence Map highlighted variability in measurement approaches, particularly within social and governance domains, such as Freedom of Association and Representation & Influence, where studies often relied on weaker, self-attributional outcomes. This issue is most pronounced at the long-term outcome and impact layers of the ToC, where external influences make clear attribution difficult without precise outcome measurement. This approach will support more substantial aggregation and synthesis of findings from research, ultimately enhancing the credibility of Fairtrade's impact claims.

FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Evidence Map and pathway findings were triangulated with Fairtrade International's KPIs, allowing us to assess their alignment with outcomes and impacts within the ToC and their effectiveness in curating evidence. Hence, during this study, we reviewed the key strengths and challenges of using the Global Strategy Dashboard and its KPIs for evidence generation. In this section, we discuss and summarise the main findings, which are presented in full in Annex 2, along with recommendations based on this analysis.

The primary strength of the KPIs is their comprehensiveness; Fairtrade International's Global Strategy Dashboard captures 52 KPIs and provides a well-structured system for performance monitoring, helping track various aspects of the organisation's work across different strategic pillars, such as Empowered Farmers and Workers, Sustainable Supply Chains, and Gender Equity. The dashboard integrates Fairtrade International's existing monitoring and compliance data, integrating up to 12 unique data sources[85], making the most of data already collected routinely.

However, KPIs showed limited coverage of ToC areas, evidencing only 10 of the 19 outcome and impact indicators. The main issue is the weak alignment between KPIs and Fairtrade's ToC, as the Global Strategy Dashboard KPIs are structured around Strategic Pillars rather than directly mapping to ToC layers (intermediate and long-term outcomes and impact areas), reducing their relevance for evidence generation. Our work identified suitable indicators for Premium Investments (KPI 8.2) and Diversity & Inclusiveness (KPIs 6.2/6.3), Economic Gains (KPI 1.1), and Environmental Sustainability (KPI 7.2b).

The current KPI framework could be enhanced for evidence generation by prioritising KPIs that substantiate intermediate outcome levels, which aligns with ISEAL's guidance. This would involve developing metrics for Price Stability and refining the definition and measurement of Climate-Resilient Practices (currently inadequately captured by KPI 7.1). Regarding robust long-term outcomes and impact KPIs, it is crucial to ensure the rollout of KPIs such as Living Income (KPI 1.1) and the Percentage of SPOs that are Deforestation-free (KPI 7.2b), as they are vital for communicating Fairtrade's impact.

A notable number of KPIs currently lack clear, evidence-based targets or rely on vague benchmarks like "year-on-year improvement", which makes it challenging to determine progress definitively. Establishing clear targets could enhance the interpretation and curation of Fairtrade's effects. Moreover, a ToC-aligned Dashboard with a clearly defined evidence focus would better prioritise key indicators and facilitate the optimal display of results for evidence generation, which are sometimes challenging to interpret in the current Dashboard. As part of the KPI review presented in full in Annex 2, we make the following recommendations:

- **Align KPIs with the ToC:** KPIs should be realigned with the ToC to ensure consistency in language and structure to improve their use for evidence generation.
- **Capture ISEAL's direct intermediate outcomes:** Ensure that intermediate outcome KPIs, which align with ISEAL evidence criteria, are measured (e.g., Price Stability) and captured adequately (e.g., Climate-Resilient Practices). Existing data on Premium Investments and Diversity & Inclusiveness is structured to optimise evidence generation (e.g., through disaggregation by commodity).
- **Ensure coverage of outcome and impact indicators:** Examples of strong indicators measuring long-term outcomes, such as KPI 1.1 (Living Income), and impacts, such as KPI 7.2b (Deforestation-free), were limited in their usefulness to the Evidence Map because of insufficient coverage.
- **Improve KPI targets:** Setting more specific and evidence-based targets for KPIs is crucial for assessing performance effectively and communicating added value externally.

85 i) FairInsight, CODImpact, ii) Global Strategy Dashboard & Human Rights Report, iii) Governance and Gender Survey, iv) FLOCERT Certification and Compliance Data, v) FairTrace (Sales) & CODImpact (Production), vi) Licensee Survey, vii) Producer Satisfaction Survey, viii) Climate Resilience Internal Survey, ix) FairLense, x) Global Impact, Centre of Excellence, xi) Globescan & Market Surveys, xii) GRM Internal Survey.

FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL'S ToC

While evidence supports the connections between Fairtrade International's interventions and intermediate outcomes, it provides weaker support for linkages between other ToC layers, and specifically, the progression from intermediate to long-term outcomes and ultimately to impact areas. We found strong linkages between intermediate and long-term outcomes in the Economic Pathway and specific components of other pathways. However, evidence consistently indicated weak connections between long-term outcomes and impacts, or they remained unevidenced. Although most of the 122 studies identified examined multiple indicators, few studies directly linked results across layers, as articulated in the ToC. Most evidence for pathways came from literature reviews, with few strong quantitative studies examining linkages.

Fairtrade International's ToC aligns well with other change theories in this literature review, supporting its conceptual validity (IDs 61, 66, 98, 136). The complexity of the ToC, which aims to articulate change across multiple levels, also mirrors external literature (IDs 98, 113). However, this complexity presents challenges for understanding and engaging with the ToC and communicating Fairtrade's mission and approach. A 2024 staff survey by the Global Impact Team revealed low staff engagement with the ToC, with many struggling to understand the pathways. Feedback from staff confirmed that additional detail and clarification are needed to make the ToC more practical. FGD data and the 2024 survey outcomes implied that the ToC needs to reflect better the reality of the context in which Fairtrade operates through a realistic approach to the changes that Fairtrade can affect.

We recommend Fairtrade International considers the following ToC enhancements:

- **Enhance pathway consistency:** Ensure all pathways are fully represented across the ToC layers, avoiding gaps in the change trajectory. This is particularly important for gender-, PO-, and climate-focused pathways (i.e., Pathway 2, 3, and 4), where indicators should consistently link intermediate outcomes to long-term outcomes and impacts.
- **Refine indicator scope:** Segment broad indicators into distinct pathways to improve clarity. For example, the indicator Strong Producer Organisations could benefit from separate layers in the ToC with a dedicated intermediate outcome indicator. At the same time, Climate-Resilient Practices and Environmental Sustainability need better long-term outcome representation.
- **Eliminate redundancy:** Several indicators showed high levels of overlap. For example, an indicator focused on improved adherence to labour rights covers Improved Labour Conditions and Human & Environmental Rights, which may impact both Decent Work and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. Indicators should be distinct and build on preceding outcomes.
- **Prioritise linkages and indicators:** Most of the five identified pathways feature a core set of primary indicators. Streamlining the ToC could clearly distinguish these from important but only supportive indicators, which may be better represented in alternative pathways or as assumptions, barriers and enablers. The current total of 78 pathways starting from intermediate indicators is overly complex and reduces the practicality of the ToC. To enhance clarity and utility, Fairtrade International should prioritise indicators based on the evidence presented in Parts 2 and 3 of this report, as well as their alignment with the organisation's new strategy and any planned updates to interventions.
- **Strengthen group representation:** Develop a more explicit structure for representing different groups, including SPOs, HLOs, women, youth and other marginalised communities. While the current digital ToC allows filtering by some groups[86], our results suggest differences in indicator performance between HLOs and SPOs (e.g., for Economic Gains) and pathways between indicators. Both general and focused indicators and their associated pathways should be reviewed by group to improve accuracy. Notably, the current ToC treats marginalised groups and women as a standalone pathway (presented as Pathway 2), which may be inconsistent with how other core groups are represented, e.g., HLOs and SPOs do not have a standalone path. This will work to increase the accuracy and clarity of pathways within the current ToC.
- **Define indicators clearly:** Establish precise definitions for indicators. Several indicators were split across distinct concepts or groups. For example, Trust & Satisfaction and Traceability & Transparency would be improved if focusing specifically on supply chain dynamics and not also including consumer behaviour metrics. Moreover, some indicator labels appeared to focus research in a disadvantageous way. For example, using Gender Equity removes focus from the Social Inclusion of other marginalised groups in Pathway 2. In other cases, the terms used were outdated in the thematic area (e.g., GAPs under Climate-Resilient Practices). Other labels in the current ToC miss key practices and linkages, such as the effect of agroecological practices on yields. Hence, we recommend revisiting the labelling.
- **Clarify scope in the ToC:** Fairtrade should clearly define the limits of its influence in the Theory of Change, particularly regarding poverty reduction and social norm change, both of which are considered out of scope internally by Fairtrade International but are frequently evaluated in the 2021–2024 literature mapped for this study. While the ToC does not overtly reference poverty, it does present SDG 1 under Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, implying an impact on poverty where none should be claimed. Similarly, the inclusion of the terms Gender Equity as an impact area suggests a role in shifting social norms, yet Fairtrade's strategy and ToC do not clearly define this. To avoid unintended claims and ensure external assessments remain aligned with Fairtrade's remit, the ToC should either clarify its intended influence on social norms or remove external poverty goals, particularly at the impact level.

86 i) SPOs/Farmers/Community, ii) HLOs/Workers/Community, iii) Businesses, iv) Consumers, and v) Citizens/CSOs/Government.

- **Introduce a capacity building-focused intermediate outcome:** The absence of a clear capacity building outcome has resulted in many outputs being mapped as 'other indicators' capturing outputs and early outcomes, such as increased awareness, skills, knowledge, and confidence. Additional capacity building-related outputs and early outcomes were, in other instances, mapped under specific themes (e.g., gender-focused training under Diversity & Inclusiveness). Creating a dedicated intermediate outcome focused on capacity strengthening would improve consistency and logical sequencing and reflect the foundational role of capacity building in achieving stronger POs, improving practices, etc., as highlighted by Fairtrade staff in FGD 6. Outside of this, the ToC was comprehensive, with no distinct clusters of 'other' and unintended indicators.

By addressing these recommendations, Fairtrade International can develop a more coherent and practical ToC, enhancing its ability to effectively demonstrate impact and guide implementation and research. Given the competing priorities of simplifying the ToC and maintaining specificity, we recommend creating an organisation-wide ToC that summarises core pathways, outcomes and impacts. Fairtrade can gain specificity by embedding additional detail in pathways, highlighting differences by target groups, assumptions, barriers, enablers, and associated pathways. This approach offers thematic clarity while preserving the ToC's global, cross-cutting purpose. Presenting the ToC in a pathway-based format helped engage a broad range of Fairtrade International teams during FGDs. Some teams, such as the Living Income Team, already use an internal ToC aligned with their area of focus. The redesigned ToC should harmonise these internal frameworks, aligning best practices and presenting required specificity through structured pathways without reverting to a fragmented model.

ToC PATHWAYS

Although the five pathways were presented separately during the FGDs and Part 3 of the report, the evidence suggests a high level of interlinkages and a need to be connected in an overall ToC as per its current presentation.

Pathways 1 (Economic) and 4 (Climate & Agricultural Practice) demonstrated the strongest coherence and both also demonstrated overlapping linkages with other pathways. While Pathway 1 was well supported overall, analysis of Pathway 4 revealed fragmented linkages (e.g., the role of Human & Environmental Rights), and evidence from FGDs indicated limitations in Fairtrade's approach to advance Environmental Sustainability. The Economic Pathway was better researched and supported among SPOs, but appeared to operate differently for workers, who were impacted by the outcomes of Pathways 2 and 3 (Social Inclusion & Agency, and Strengthened Producer Organisations), such as Freedom of Association.

In contrast, Pathways 2 and 3 exhibited lower coherence and weaker evidence of links between intermediate and long-term outcomes and outcomes to impacts. The Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway had few studies underpinning it at the impact level.

Pathway 5 ('Fairtrade as a System') embeds results for the supply chain, and perceptions of Fairtrade were well studied. Here, strong linkages were demonstrated early in the change trajectory. Other components of the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway around supporting producer organisations, farmers and workers, including elements of Pathways 1-4, were less understood and less well supported by evidence of linkages.

Our analysis revealed the following Pathway-specific points for discussion and recommendations. Each recommendation is classified as relevant to the ToC overall, a particular indicator, the evidence base (e.g., a recommendation on research focus), or strategy related. Recommendations are presented per pathway.

Economic Pathway (Pathway 1):

Is strongly supported by evidence, demonstrating clear links between Fairtrade's Pricing Interventions, Price Stability, and Premium Investments. There is robust evidence connecting these intermediate outcome indicators to Economic Gains, although the link between Economic Gains and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods is less certain.

For SPOs, improvements in farm revenue and resilience were driven by price guarantees, Premium-funded community projects, and enhanced access to resources. However, challenges included high certification costs and external economic pressures. HLOs experienced weaker benefits, with minimal wage improvements and disparities in Premium distribution. FGD 3 participants also highlighted distinct "pain points" that hinder workers and farmers from meeting a living wage and living income. The pathway was strongly linked to the Social Inclusion & Agency, Strengthened Producer Organisations, and Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathways (Pathways 2, 3 and 4).

Recommendations for Pathway 1:

- ToC - **Differentiate the pathway between producer organisation types:** Increase the clarity of Pathway 1 by distinguishing between SPOs and HLOs, allowing the description of group-specific indicators and links.
- Indicator - **Reconsider the Decent Work indicator:** The Decent Work impact indicator showed a high overlap with other indicators, in this instance, with Economic Gains and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. The question should be

asked whether this indicator is adequately represented elsewhere in economic indicators and indicators present in different pathways (e.g., Improved Labour Conditions), and if so, either redefine or remove Decent Work to avoid duplication.

- Evidence - **Scale up and evaluate Living Income and Living Wage:** KPIs suggest limited progress and limited monitoring capabilities (especially on Living Wage), with feedback from FGDs also indicating limited research. All suggest that Fairtrade needs to increase its focus to meet the 25% of farmers and workers receiving a living income and living wage target.
- Strategy - **Strengthen market access to boost Economic Gains for SPOs:** Address limited market access and fluctuating demand for Fairtrade certified commodities, identified as a key barrier to Economic Gains in the literature and during FGDs. Enhancing market access would strengthen the Economic Pathway, support PO resilience and organisational strength (i.e., Pathway 3), and ensure more progress within the Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway (Pathway 4).

Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway (Pathway 2):

Focuses on governance, representation, and inclusivity, aiming to build equitable systems and empower workers, farmers, and marginalised groups. It integrates Diversity and Inclusiveness, and Freedom of Association to drive Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Decent Work, and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion. Change trajectories differ for SPOs and HLOs. For example, HLOs' strength in Freedom of Association and prioritising Improved Labour Conditions and Decent Work are key areas for impact on workers.

The evidence shows strong links between Standards & Certification, Producer Support & Producer Networks, and positive early outcomes, particularly for gender equity and leadership under Diversity & Inclusiveness in SPOs. There are also strong linkages between Diversity & Inclusiveness and Representation & Influence. However, these gains were not fully realised due to persistent socio-cultural barriers and entrenched hierarchies in HLOs. Linkages between long-term outcomes and impacts were weak and inconsistent. Additionally, the pathway lacks coherence across Human & Environmental Rights, Improved Labour Conditions, and Decent Work indicators, with a narrow focus on women's empowerment. Pathway 2 interacted with the Economic Gains and Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathways (Pathways 1 and 3).

Recommendations for Pathway 2:

- ToC - **Consider focus on women, youth, and other marginalised groups:** The ToC and this pathway prioritise women, youth and marginalised groups, often over other key groups such as HLOs and SPOs. Among marginalised groups, women receive disproportionate attention in both the ToC and evaluative research. Therefore, we recommend Fairtrade ensures a balanced focus on all target populations and prioritises research on youth and other marginalised groups.
- Indicator - **Reconsider the Decent Work indicator:** As with other pathways, the Decent Work impact indicator overlaps considerably with Human & Environmental Rights, Improved Labour Conditions, and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. The Decent Work indicator should be formulated in a way that is conceptually distinct from other ToC areas or removed to simplify the ToC.
- Strategy - **Increase focus on Freedom of Association:** The limited studies covering Freedom of Association were a critical evidence and research gap. Various Fairtrade staff members considered this a direct result of the lack of focus on this short-term outcome, with interventions being largely restricted to Standards and, conversely, little supportive programming. Freedom of Association should be a priority area for the upcoming strategy review.

Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway (Pathway 3):

Consolidates overlapping indicators focused on enhancing organisational capacity. It begins with Freedom of Association, Diversity & Inclusiveness, and Analytics & Insights, advancing from Standards & Certification, and Producer Support & Producer Networks. Positive outcomes include improved capacity building and inclusivity in SPO decision making and resource allocation. Though progress in HLOs' organisational capacity is limited, substantial gains are found in Improving Labour Conditions, especially when driven by Producer Support & Producer Networks. There was little research and little support for links between long-term outcomes and impacts of Environmental Sustainability and Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. Coherence of this pathway was low, with a clear need to distribute the Strong PO indicator across ToC layers and differentiate between SPOs and HLOs to address distinct challenges. This pathway is tied to Economic Gains through a direct linkage with Stronger Producer Organisations at the long-term outcome level, affirming a connection with the Economic Pathway overall, as evidenced by the literature.

Recommendations for Pathway 3:

- Evidence - **Prioritise this pathway for future evaluations:** Evaluate the under-researched intermediate outcomes of this pathway, namely Freedom of Association, Analytics & Insights, and Diversity & Inclusiveness of other marginalised groups beyond women. Evaluate the link between strong HLOs and Economic Gains, stronger POs and livelihoods, and the role of POs in all aspects of the ToC, which would strengthen Fairtrade's evidence base considerably.
- ToC - **Enhance Strong Producer Organisations in the ToC:** Integrate Strong Producer Organisations across all ToC

layers and consider distinct pathways for SPOs and HLOs. Establish a clear results chain to capture intermediate outcomes, such as capacity strengthening in labour rights and supply chains, avoiding mapping these outcomes outside the ToC.

- Strategy - **Clarify the role of Analytics & Insights:** Define how Analytics & Insights contribute to organisational strength, human and environmental rights, and monitoring practices. Highlight their potential to support market access, which is a critical barrier for economic gains among producers. Ensure the role of Analytics & Insights is clearly articulated in the ToC.

Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway (Pathway 4):

Establishes a link between Climate-Resilient Practices and Environmental Sustainability. However, the role of specific indicators, such as Strong Producer Organisations and Human & Environmental Rights, remains unclear. The coherence of Pathway 4 is weakened by the absence of a dedicated environmental long-term outcome indicator, leading to limited environmental evidence identified at this layer. While 58% of studies showed positive results at the intermediate level, only 35% of studies reported positive impacts on Environmental Sustainability. Positive outcomes, such as biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration, were evident at the impact level. Certification and capacity strengthening under Producer Support & Producer Networks were linked to Climate-Resilient Practices via enhancements to producers' awareness and technical skills. Despite increased capacity, adopting sustainable practices was only partial, and Fairtrade staff noted significant limitations with some of the promoted practices. More specifically, they articulated that Fairtrade Standards fall short of meeting Environmental Sustainability goals, with key requirements introduced too late and Fairtrade International lacking the capacity to meet regulatory data requirements.

The literature suggests a linkage between Fairtrade's interventions and the uptake of Climate-Resilient Practices. However, evidence for the results chain breaks down between intermediate-, long-term and impact layers of the ToC. Pathway 4 was linked strongly with the Economic Pathway through increased yields and improved resilience that drive economic gains and livelihood improvements.

Recommendations for Pathway 4:

- Indicator - **Refine terminology for Climate-Resilient Practices:** Replace Climate-Resilient Practices with Agroecological Practices to align with sustainability goals; omit the reference to the term GAP under this indicator label. Clearly define the role of these practices in improving yields and quality (feeding into the Economic Pathway) and driving Environmental Sustainability.
- ToC - **Introduce a dedicated environmental indicator:** Add a dedicated environmental indicator at the long-term outcome level to enhance pathway coherence and better measure environmental outcomes and impacts along the change trajectory.
- Strategy - **Improve the strength of key requirements and enhance environmental data management:** To ensure Fairtrade keeps up with regulation, it must integrate key requirements into environmental Standards promptly and ensure that these reflect the best principles for Environmental Sustainability. Moreover, there is a need to strengthen data collection, auditing, and use of environmental data to boost supply chain transparency in order to meet evolving environmental requirements and market regulations while remaining within the realm of what is feasible for producers.

'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway (Pathway 5):

Centred on the Fairtrade brand and its supply chain, this holistic pathway currently incorporates all but one of Fairtrade's interventions and is the sole pathway that integrates Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains. Pathway 5 also incorporates components of the ToC that support Pathways 1 to 4. Despite its broad scope, only 20 studies contribute to this pathway. Pathway 5 features two distinct clusters:

1. **Brand and supply chain metrics:** Strong evidence supports achievements related to Trust & Satisfaction, Traceability & Transparency, and Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains, with all indicators classified as **Green**. There are robust linkages between Trust & Satisfaction and Fairtrade interventions, as well as between Trust & Satisfaction and Traceability & Transparency. However, linkages between long-term outcomes and the impact of Sustainable, Resilient, and Fair Supply Chains were weak or inconclusive, yet the impact area is rated **Green**.
2. **Enabling environment for POs, farmers, and workers:** Indicators related to Analytics & Insights, Stronger POs, Human & Environmental Rights, and Enabling Public Policies are crucial in supporting Pathways 1 to 4. However, the interactions between these components and other enablers remain underdeveloped in the ToC. The increasing importance of Analytics & Insights was highlighted, particularly in adapting to new environmental legislation. However, evidence gaps persist for this indicator, alongside Enabling Public Policies and the role of POs in driving sustainable supply chains. Clarifying these linkages could enhance the ToC and strengthen the enabling environment for POs, farmers, and workers to thrive.

To improve coherence, Pathway 5 should refine its focus on supply chain indicators, clearly distinguish these from advocacy (e.g., Trust & Satisfaction) and consumer behaviour metrics (e.g., willingness to pay, mapped under Traceability & Transparency), or consider developing a separate supply chain-focused pathway. As noted, the role of POs in driving

more sustainable supply chains remains unclear, as does the extent to which Data & Intelligence and Analytics & Insights can strengthen these organisations. Further research is needed to understand these mechanisms.

Recommendations for Pathway 5:

- Strategy - **Clarify producer organisations' role in enhancing supply chains:** Clearly define how POs contribute to Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains, and provide targeted capacity building in Data & Intelligence to support this.
- Indicators - **Streamline supply chain indicators:** Refine the ToC to focus Trust & Satisfaction, Traceability & Transparency exclusively on supply chain metrics, reducing overlap with consumer behaviour indicators.
- Strategy - **Enhance Analytics & Insights for compliance:** Develop a plan to ensure Analytics & Insights meet evolving regulatory needs, particularly for EU environmental standards, by integrating compliance into Data & Intelligence interventions. Feedback from FGD 7 suggests Public Policies drive Analytics & Insight. It is currently presented as the other way around in the ToC. Adding a bi-directional relationship could also highlight policies as a key contextual factor.
- Evidence - **Address evidence gaps in public policy influence:** There is limited evidence on how public policy affects Fairtrade and how Fairtrade responds to policy shifts, such as recent changes in EU environmental supply chain regulations. Strengthening the evidence base on Fairtrade's policy impact and how policy changes can link to other components of the ToC should be a priority for future research. This would aid Fairtrade's capacity to anticipate and adapt to evolving policy landscapes.
- Evidence - **Undertake research to understand the interaction between 'Fairtrade as a System' indicators and other Pathways:** Fairtrade International should conduct research to understand better how pathway indicators of 'Fairtrade as a System', such as Analytics & Insights, Stronger Producer Organisations, Human & Environmental Rights monitoring, and Enabling Public Policies support or influence other ToC pathways. Current evidence suggests these indicators may act as enablers or assumptions within other pathways, but the exact linkages remain unclear. For example, Enabling Public Policies could shape Fairtrade's approach to Analytics & Insights, suggesting a foundational role. This research could strengthen the clarity of these indicators in other pathways (e.g., key enablers), allowing the ToC to be streamlined further.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this report are based on a review of 122 studies published between 2021 and 2024. The aim was to assess Fairtrade's contribution to the outcomes and impacts articulated in its ToC. The Evidence Map and pathway analysis were validated by and supplemented with staff insights derived from FGDs and KPI data. Together, these inputs systematically assessed the evidence supporting Fairtrade International's interventions and strategy.

Despite its comprehensiveness and structured approach to assessing evidence, this study had limitations. These include our use of the simplified digital ToC framework in this review and the potential for publication bias, discussed in more detail in Annex 1. Still, notwithstanding any limitations, the report offers a broad assessment of Fairtrade International's ToC and its impact across the supply chain and economic, social, and environmental domains. In this conclusion section, we aim to identify the 'golden threads' emerging from the Evidence Map, pathway analysis, and associated findings.

Fairtrade consistently contributes to early-stage progress across most intermediate outcomes. However, it faces more significant challenges in achieving long-term systemic change, especially for workers and marginalised groups. This contrast between strong short-term results and limited long-term evidence forms the report's core message and underpins its recommendations.

SPOs and farmers consistently show more substantial evidence of positive outcomes than HLOs, with farmers also more extensively covered in the literature. Fairtrade's ToC appears better aligned with SPOs than with HLOs. Mechanisms, such as pricing tools, are less clearly defined in how they directly benefit workers compared to farmers, and key KPIs for workers, such as living wage, remain underdeveloped. Overall, the Evidence Map revealed a significant imbalance, with more substantial evidence for SPOs.

The strongest and most consistent effects in the Evidence Map are in areas closely linked to Fairtrade's certification model and pricing mechanisms: Price Stability, Premium Investments, and Climate-Resilient Practices, tied to pricing mechanisms, capacity building and enforcement through the Fairtrade Standards. Trust & Satisfaction, with strong confidence in Fairtrade effects, was also tied to brand and market interventions. Long-term indicators with higher confidence were generally associated with interventions directly driving results.

However, confidence in Fairtrade's long-term outcomes beyond these areas is weaker. While there is success in Improving Labour Conditions and Economic Gains for SPOs and some early progress in organisational capacity (e.g., Strong Producer Organisations), evidence is lacking for sustained gains in Representation & Influence and Human & Environmental Rights. Outcomes focused on workers, across various layers of the ToC, e.g., Freedom of Association, Strong HLOs, and Decent Work, are especially under-researched.

At the impact level, the evidence gaps are widest. Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains was the only indicator with a high confidence level for positive effects. Gender Equity and Social Inclusion was rated red, with evidence suggesting that Fairtrade cannot be confident that it is positively impacting this area. Generally, the ToC areas where Fairtrade has had less success, such as Representation & Influence, Strong Producer Organisations, and Gender Equity and Social Inclusion, appear to be affected by entrenched structural inequalities and power dynamics, particularly within HLOs. These are difficult to address without targeted, context specific interventions.

At the long-term outcomes and impact levels, indicator definitions tend to become broader and less coherent (e.g., Strong Producer Organisations and Decent Work). Some indicators are so wide in scope that progress may be observed in one aspect while other areas remain unchanged. While some degree of abstraction is necessary for a global ToC, refining indicators, such as keeping them topic-specific or disaggregating outcomes by group (e.g., SPOs vs workers), would allow for a more precise assessment of Fairtrade's strengths and limitations.

Evidence for pathways was limited. Although most studies covered multiple indicators, they often did not mimic pathways or only focused on subcomponents of the broader ToC indicator. Nonetheless, results generally mirrored the overall trends in the Evidence Map. The weakest links were those feeding into long-term outcomes and those connected to impact level. Later ToC layers also reflected less coherent parts of pathways. Indicators often combined diverse concepts, omitted complete results chains for some groups, and lacked consistency. While the pathways proved helpful in FGDs for communicating change, they require greater specificity.

The Economic Pathway and the Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway displayed the clearest progress sequences, with capacity building playing a central role. However, while capacity building was widespread across pathways, its benefits were inconsistent. It did not always lead to stronger governance, holistic organisational development, equitable participation, or individual empowerment.

Pathway analysis suggests that Fairtrade's ToC may underestimate how interventions contribute directly to long-term outcomes and impacts. Several studies showed direct links between Fairtrade interventions and advanced outcomes at these later ToC stages, particularly along Pathways 1, 2, and 3, rather than always progressing through intermediate outcomes, as currently assumed. Another key finding was the presence of strong linkages between pathways, notably between the Economic and Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathways (Pathways 1 and 4), the Economic and Strengthened PO Pathways (Pathways 1 and 3), and the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway (Pathway 5), which intersected with all the others.

The findings also emphasise the importance of context. Several pathways were susceptible to market conditions, cooperative performance, and national labour laws, which certification alone cannot overcome. During FGDs, participants identified barriers and enablers as mostly influencing long-term and impact-level outcomes compared to earlier intermediate

outcomes. Increased contextual factors underscore the need for long-term evaluation designs to account for these factors. Generally, 'hard' indicators, such as income gains and certification compliance, yielded clearer, more consistent results. Meanwhile, 'soft' indicators, such as changes in norms or empowerment, were more variable, highly context-dependent, and a priority area for longitudinal evaluation. Finally, robust evaluative studies are lacking for rights-based indicators and system-level enablers. Fairtrade is limited in its ability to make strong claims about these areas.

Despite limitations, this report offers the most comprehensive assessment to date of Fairtrade's Theory of Change, highlighting consistent gains in early outcomes, particularly for SPOs and pricing-linked interventions, but weaker evidence at long-term and impact levels, especially for workers.

We hope this report provides a robust foundation for Fairtrade International to refine its ToC, enhance its interventions and strategy, and prioritise future research. Key recommendations from the discussion are presented in Table 5 on the final page.

Table 5: Overview of key recommendations derived from the Evidence Map and Pathway Analysis

Priority areas for research	Refining ToC indicators and pathways	Considerations for Strategy review
Explore evidence gaps identified for Freedom of Association, Diversity & Inclusiveness (other than women), Analytics & Insights, Strong HLOs, Enabling Public Policies, Decent Work.	**Improve coherence across ToC layers:** strengthen connections between intermediate outcomes, long-term outcomes, and impacts, particularly for Pathways 2, 3 and 4.	**Enhance focus on Freedom of Association:** increase supportive programming beyond just compliance with Standards.
Prioritise research on under-represented groups: HLOs, youth, and other marginalised populations.	**Refine indicator scope:** differentiate SPOs from HLOs (e.g., split Stronger Producer Organisations), and introduce long-term indicators for Environmental Sustainability.	**Address environmental regulatory alignment:** strengthen environmental data collection, auditing, and integration into Fairtrade's strategy to meet emerging regulatory requirements.
Conduct more causal and attributional studies for long-term and impact-level outcomes.	**Eliminate redundancy:** remove overlapping indicators to improve clarity (e.g., Improved Labour Conditions, Human & Environmental Rights and Decent Work).	**Scale up and evaluate Living Income and Living Wage:** Address gaps in Economic Gains by improving access to Fairtrade markets and evaluating long-term wage impacts.
Commission studies examining pathway links between intermediate, long-term, and impact indicators.	**Introduce a dedicated capacity building outcome:** capture early-stage skills development systematically rather than dispersing across various indicators.	**Strengthen market access to boost Economic Gains:** limited market access and fluctuating demand for certified commodities was a key barrier in the economic pathway for SPOs

ANNEXES

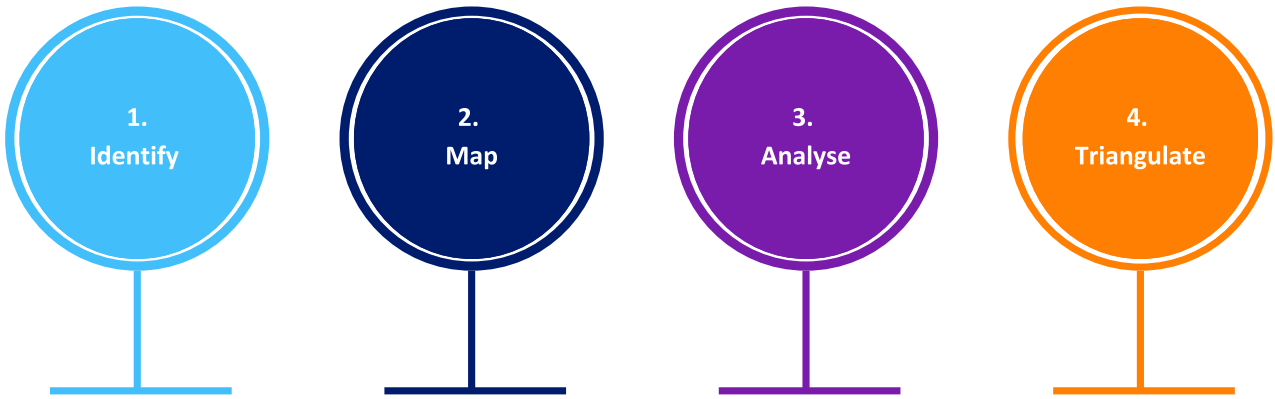
ANNEX 1: DETAILED METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Following project inception, the review followed a four-phase process (Figure A.1). The methodology and related tools were developed in close collaboration with Fairtrade International's Global Impact Team and informed by a review of key documents shared during inception. Additionally, findings from the Fairtrade International ToC kick-off survey, open to all Fairtrade staff and receiving 69 responses, contributed to the development of our methodology for evidence-mapping and pathway analysis.

This annex provides an overview of key steps and results across each phase, including the search strategy and findings, research quality criteria, and an overview of focus group discussions (FGDs). We also provide an overview of key methods and our actions during each of the four phases in more depth than what is presented in the main report. An even more comprehensive version of the full methodology is available in the Project Plan Report upon request.

Figure A.1: Research phases of the evidence review



Phase I: Identification of Studies

The identification process occurred in two stages:

I. Fairtrade literature: Studies that were catalogued from Fairtrade International's Learning Platform between 2021 and 2024, including Fairtrade-commissioned work and external research.

II. External literature: Studies from published and grey literature which were identified using the following search strategy.

The external literature search involved a structured review of three bibliographic databases (the Directory of Open Access Journals, ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar), covering papers published between 2021 and 2024 in English. Boolean logic (as shown in Table A.1) was applied across the databases. Title screening was conducted with the review stopping after examining the first 20 pages of results.

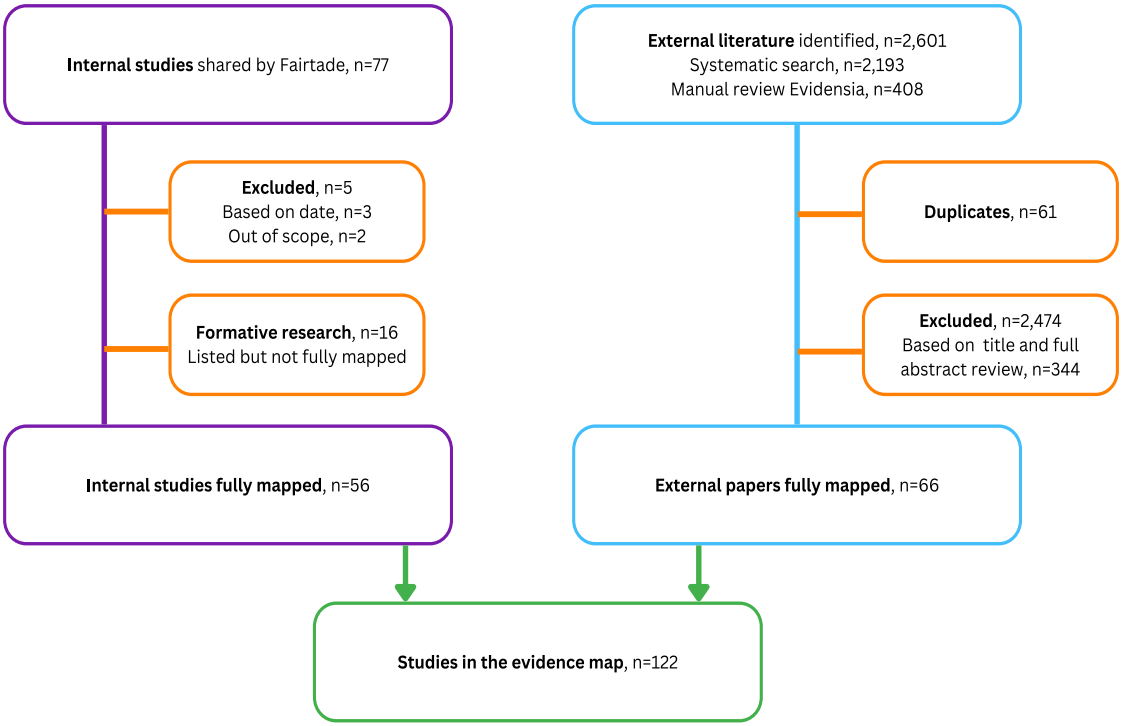
Table A.1: Boolean logic - terms used for bibliographic databases:

Component in search	Example Boolean logic
Fairtrade component	(Fairtrade OR Fair Trade OR Fair Trade USA OR Fair Trade Certified)
Method component Search 1	**AND** (RCT OR "Randomi*ed Control Trial" OR " Cluster Randomi*ed Control" OR Quasi-Experiment OR QED)
Method component Search 2	**AND** (PSM OR "Propensity Score Match*" OR "Cost Benefit Analysis" OR CBA OR Impact Evaluation)

The external literature search prioritised Fairtrade-focused and quantitative impact evaluations. The search yielded 2,193 titles, which were screened, and abstracts reviewed, resulting in the removal of 26 duplicates. Through this process 55 studies were identified for mapping. Additionally, a manual review of 408 articles from the Evidensia database (ISEAL) over the same period resulted in a further 11 studies, once accounting for 35 duplicates. This brought the total number of external studies included in the review to 66. (See Figure A.2 for further break-down.)

Overall, a total of 143 studies were entered into the framework: the 66 external studies and an additional 77 internal studies, identified from the Learning Platform. Before analysis, several internal studies were excluded, including three that, while useful for mapping, were published prior to 2021 and two that were deemed out of scope.[87] Furthermore, internal literature classified as formative (i.e., not providing evaluative results) was entered into the Mapping Framework with basic information (e.g. study details), but was excluded from the analytic sample (n=16), resulting in 122 studies contributing to the Evidence Map. Of these, 46% were sourced from Fairtrade International's platform, while 54% came from the external literature search.

Figure A.2: Identification of internal and external literature for the Evidence Map



87 This concerned an Annual Report by Fairtrade and the previous Evidence Mapping study undertaken in 2019 – both reporting on secondary data that would significantly skew the results of the map.

Phase II: Mapping of Studies

The Mapping Framework was the primary analytical tool for this investigation, and was used to extract data from identified studies during the mapping and structuring of the analysis. It gathered essential information from each article/report, including what was evaluated and the results. We used the framework to map these results to the ToC layers, capturing evidence related to specific pathways as articulated in the current version of the ToC. Additionally, the framework was used to enter data to assess the relevance of this evidence to Fairtrade International and the quality of the research findings, enabling evaluation of the strength, depth, and breadth of evidence across various components of the ToC.

Information extracted from the literature and entered into the Mapping Framework was organised into five key sections:

1. **About the research:** this section details key study information, including publication details (title, authors, year), the research institution, publication type, research objectives, and methods (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods).
2. **About the activity:** describes the activities evaluated, such as intervention types (e.g., Premium and sustainable pricing mechanisms), target groups (e.g., SPOs or HLOs), the countries involved, and product areas covered (e.g., cocoa, coffee). It also addresses the study's relevance to the Fairtrade movement and notes any contextual or programmatic barriers to achievement.
3. **Mapping results to ToC layers:** maps the study's results to intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts articulated in Fairtrade International's ToC.
4. **Mapping ToC pathways:** evaluates the ToC pathways assessed in the studies, noting points of failure, barriers, and facilitators to achieving outcomes and impact.
5. **Rating of research quality:** this rating assesses the methodological robustness of the study through closed-ended questions regarding the clarity of the research questions, sample selection, reproducibility, and consideration of limitations.

Of these areas, we detail how results were mapped to ToC layers, how data was extracted for pathways, and how research quality was assessed in the following sections.

A webinar was hosted to showcase and explain the Mapping Framework on 20 March 2025.

Mapping Results to ToC Layers

For each study entered into the Mapping Framework, results were recorded against individual intermediate outcomes, long-term outcomes, and impacts in the ToC, covering:

- Number of results (i.e., number of different indicators assessed)
- Type of result (Qualitative / Quantitative / Both)
- Results: the indicator as described in the research (textual description)
- Whether the result was achieved (Positive, Negative, Mixed, No Impact)[88]
- Contextual factors related to non-achievement (Yes, No)

Each ToC layer also contained an 'other' category, allowing us to identify unintended results.

In determining if the result was positive, negative, mixed or no effect, the following criteria were used:

- **Quantitative:** consultant judgement determined impact by assessing the direction and significance of results or considering the effect size's statistical power and practical importance.
- **Qualitative:** consultant judgement determined impact by assessing clear articulation of impact or change, documentation of real-world influence and its practical relevance, alongside considering the transferability of the results.
- **Literature review:** the study author's judgement.

Mapping ToC Pathways

The Mapping Framework was also used to captured evidence for the ToC pathways within individual studies. Studies that reported two or more indicators for various layers of a specific pathway were recorded in the pathway section of the framework. Here, we recorded the indicators evaluated. For example: Price Stability → [?] → Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods. A textual entry was added to elaborate on any failure points in this pathway, or barriers and enablers to achieving the results chain.

Rating of Research Quality

Studies entered into the Mapping Framework were also assessed for research quality. Since the Evidence Map incorporated evidence from quantitative, qualitative, and literature reviews for different purposes in the analysis, the criteria applied to assess strength vary by research type. All 122 research studies received one of the following classifications:

1. Highest quality evidence
2. Acceptable evidence
3. Exploratory evidence

Figure 5 in the report provides an overview of the meaning of each of these levels for quantitative, qualitative and literature review studies. For mixed-methods studies, both the quantitative and qualitative components were evaluated separately against their respective criteria. These are detailed below.

- **Literature reviews:** these studies did not involve primary data collection, so their specific design and conduct were not assessed. Instead, the evaluation focused on the search methodology and the review's use of rigorous research to determine overall research quality, as outlined below:

88 For reporting purposes, this was updated to No Effect in the entire report write-up, but still captured as No Impact in the Mapping Framework.

Table A.2: Literature review: an overview of type of reviews, research quality and robustness.

Type of Literature Review	Robustness
Meta-Analysis or Systematic Reviews	Highest quality evidence
Comprehensive but non-systematic reviews e.g., Evidence Gap Maps, Rapid Evidence Assessment, Thematic Synthesis	Acceptable evidence
No systematic literature reviews e.g., Narrative Review, Scoping Review	Exploratory evidence

- **Quantitative Studies:** studies with a quantitative component were assessed based on both their methodological rigour and how well the study was designed and conducted. Box A.1 outlines the method criteria for classifying evidence as Highest Quality, Acceptable, or Exploratory. Table A.3 details the specific aspects of study design and execution that determined study quality. These criteria were assessed using a checklist completed during study entry into the Mapping Framework. Individual checklist items were recorded and then scored in the framework. See Table A.3 for quantitative checklist items and their scores. Study quality was determined by applying the following thresholds to each item:
  - ◊ **Highest quality evidence** [Causal Methods]: No Checklist Response Score <2
  - ◊ **Acceptable evidence** [Attributional Methods]: No Checklist Response Score <1
  - ◊ **Exploratory evidence:** Any Checklist Response Score = 0
- **Qualitative Studies:** for qualitative study components, the method did not determine research quality. Rather, the credibility of qualitative findings was solely assessed on the basis of the study's research design and conduct, as specified in the checklist. Checklist items for quantitative research (Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q8 listed in Table A.3) are also relevant to qualitative research. Additional checklist items for qualitative methods (Q4, Q5, Q6, and Q7) are detailed in Table A.4. Research quality evidence scores for qualitative methods were determined by applying the following thresholds to each checklist item:
  - ◊ **Highest Quality Evidence:** No Check List Response Score <2
  - ◊ **Acceptable Evidence:** No Check List Response Score <1
  - ◊ **Exploratory Evidence:** Any Check List Response Score = 0

Box A.1: Quantitative methods by credibility

Highest Quality Evidence [Causal Methods]: The highest quality quantitative evidence was casual: positive results prove a direct cause-and-effect relationship between Fairtrade and ToC outcome or impact. These studies use rigorous designs (e.g., RCT and QEDs) to isolate Fairtrade's effect, ensuring high confidence in the results. Methods at this level include:

- Experiments:
  - ◊ Randomised Control Trials (RCTs)
  - ◊ Cluster Randomised Control Trials (cRCTs)
- Quasi-Experimental Designs (QED):
  - ◊ Control Analysis with Matching:
    - ■ Regression Discontinuity
    - ■ Instrumental Variable Analysis
  - ◊ Time Series Analysis:
    - ■ Interrupted Time Series (with a control)
    - ■ Difference in Differences

Acceptable Evidence [Attributional Methods]: Attributional studies were considered acceptable. This type of evidence indicates that Fairtrade probably contributed to an observed change but does not fully rule out other influencing factors. These studies use comparative methods (e.g., before-and-after analysis, quasi-experimental designs) to strengthen confidence in Fairtrade's role in results observed. Methods include:

- Pre-post-test (with a control group)
- Quasi-Experimental Designs (QED):
  - ◊ Propensity Score Matching
  - ◊ Covariate Matching
  - ◊ Synthetic Control Method
  - ◊ Interrupted Time Series (without a control)

Exploratory Evidence [Descriptive Methods]: These studies identify a correlation between Fairtrade and an outcome but do not confirm a direct link. These studies often use descriptive data (e.g., cross-sectional surveys, monitoring data) or trends without controlling for other factors, making them useful for identifying patterns but less reliable for proving impact. These methods include:

- Monitoring for Evaluation
- Cross-sectional study (with controls)
- Pre-post-test (single group)

Table A.3: Study checklist for quantitative studies.

Question, [Response]	Score
Q1 - Publication: Where was the study published?	
[The study was published in a peer-reviewed journal]	2
[The study was commissioned by, or publication is associated with very noteworthy academic, organisation, NGO or institution which is well-known for voluntary standards, certification schemes or evaluation at the regional or global level]	2
[The study was published in another type of publication]	0
Q2 - Study Aims: Are the research questions, objectives or aims clearly reported?	
[Yes – The study provided a number of research questions and / or hypotheses developed before investigation]	2
[Yes – The study did not have research questions, but had clear objectives or aims]	1
[No – The study only gave a very broad area of investigation, reporting no specific aims, hypothesis or questions]	0
Q3 - Study Sample: Is it clear how participants were sampled, and whether sampling methods appear appropriate?	
[Yes – The study provides a clear, detailed overview of how participants were selected, which was appropriate for objectives or research]	2
[No – The sampling method was either inappropriate or not clearly described making it difficult to assess its appropriateness]	0
[No – The study does not detail how participants were selected]	0
Q4 - Sample Size: Is the sample size sufficient to rule out random error or chance?	
[Yes – A thorough power analysis justifies the sample size, ensuring the study is well-powered to minimise random error]	2
[Partially – Some justification for the sample size is provided, but key factors, such as effect size, clustering or variability are not fully addressed]	1
[No – The sample size lacks clear justification, with no evidence of a power analysis, raising doubts about its adequacy to rule out random error]	0
Q5 - Measurement Strength: How would you assess the strength of the outcome measurement used in the study?	
[Strong – The measurement tools are validated, reliable, and directly aligned with Fairtrade International outcomes or the outcomes intended by the authors]	2
[Moderate – The measurement tools are generally appropriate and reliable, but there is concern via limited evidence of validation, use of proxies and short duration of time to evaluate outcomes]	1
[Low – The measurement tools lack clear validation or reliability, and the outcome measures are indirect or poorly aligned with the study's objectives or outcomes raising significant concerns about the study's findings]	0
Q6 - Appropriateness of Statistical Methods: How would you rate the appropriateness of the statistical methods used in the study?	
[Highly Robust – The statistical methods are well-chosen, appropriate for the study design, and rigorously applied, providing strong and reliable results]	2
[Moderately Robust – The statistical methods are generally appropriate, but there are some concerns about their application, suitability or ability to address confounding or other challenges within the data]	1
[Low Robustness – The statistical methods are poorly chosen or applied, or do not account for significant challenges identified in the study or data]	0
Q7 - Sources of Bias and Alternative Explanations: How would you assess the potential sources of bias and the ability for study to rule out alternative explanations for study results?	
[Bias and Alternative Explanations Ruled Out – The study thoroughly addresses potential sources of bias and carefully considers alternative explanations, providing strong confidence in the results]	2
[Bias and Alternative Explanations Partly Addressed – The study identifies some sources of bias and discusses alternative explanations, but there are a few gaps that leave some uncertainty]	1

Question, [Response]	Score
[Bias and Alternative Explanations Not Addressed – The study fails to adequately address potential sources of bias or alternative explanations]	0
Q8 - Reproducibility: Is it clear how the findings and conclusions have been arrived at?	
[Yes – It is clear to me how the authors have arrived at their conclusions]	2
[Somewhat – It is clear to me how most conclusions have been arrived at; however, in some cases effects and results were overlooked]	1
[No – It is unclear how authors have arrived at their conclusions based on their results, or conclusions overlook important effects]	0

Table A.4: Specific checklist questions for qualitative studies.

Question, [Response]	Score
Q4 - Sample Composition and Size: Is the sample composition and size sufficient to generate valid, objective and representative information?	
[Yes – Justification for the sample composition and size is provided and was based on prior research, theories or guidance from programme, implementation, and reference is made to data quality and level of saturation]	2
[Partially – Some justification for the sample composition and size is provided, but no reference is made to data quality and level of saturation]	1
[No – The sample size is small, lacks clear justification, and/or was listed as a study limitation by the authors]	0
Q5 - Data analysis: How robust was the approach taken to analyse the qualitative data?	
[Highly Robust – The analysis is conducted by a team using a flexible coding scheme and qualitative software, ideally validated with participant feedback]	2
[Moderately Robust – The analytical approach taken is generally appropriate (as per Option 1), but not all elements are incorporated; there are some minor concerns about their application and/or other challenges within the data]	1
[Low Robustness – The approach to analyse the qualitative data is poorly chosen or applied, or does not account for significant challenges identified in the study or data]	0
Q6 - Building on existing literature: Does the study build on existing literature?	
[Yes – The research question/objective/aims, and methodology have been informed by existing literature and, in the discussion and conclusion, place findings in a wider context and link to previous relevant research]	2
[Partially – The study was partially informed by existing literature, either only in the planning or only in the interpretation of results but not both]	1
[No – There is no clear reference to and application of existing literature]	0
Q7 - Consideration of limitations: Are the results interpreted in relation to limitations of the study? (e.g., potential sources of bias)	
[Yes – The report describes the study limitations, potential sources of bias and how these can affect results]	2
[Somewhat – The report does list some limitations, but do not discuss how this could have affected results]	1
[No – The report does not discuss or outline any study limitations or sources of bias]	0

Phase III: Analysis

After study details were extracted and entered into the Mapping Framework, analysis was conducted using pivot tables to summarise key quantitative results (e.g., the percentage of supportive findings within a ToC area) and cross-breaks (e.g., differences between HLOs and SPOs). Additionally, textual data recorded in the framework was filtered and reviewed to unpack findings on ToC outcome and impact areas, providing an assessment of contextual differences in achievements, as well as barriers and enablers.

This process enabled the assignment of a confidence rating to each ToC area for the Evidence Map described in Part 2 of this report. This traffic light rating (see explanation in Part 2) was based on the consistency of findings and the robustness and quality of evidence. The second criterion was informed by study quality, as described above, allowing a review of supportive results by evidence strength.

To examine pathways in Fairtrade International's ToC, studies tracking two or more indicators along hypothesised pathways were analysed to examine for evidence of interlinkages, barriers, enablers, and failure points along the change trajectories. This helped identify emerging themes for Part 3, the Pathway section of the report, and provided a narrative on how they operate in practice.

The findings from this analysis were described in an interim report and used to develop briefing and stimulus materials for the FGDs ahead of the following phase.

Phase IV: Triangulation

Emergent findings from the Evidence Map and pathway analysis were triangulated through participatory feedback from Fairtrade staff derived from the FGDs and through additional submissions (AS) of literature and internal documents, as well as using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Each triangulation method is briefly outlined below.

Focus Group Discussions

This section details our approach to the qualitative research component of the study.

To validate and complement the evidence review, a series of six FGDs were conducted with Fairtrade staff between November 2024 and January 2025. The primary objective of these FGDs was to validate the interim findings derived from the literature review through interactive reflection and feedback. Specifically, the discussions aimed to assess whether Fairtrade interventions were generating the intended outcomes and impact as outlined in the ToC, identify any unintended consequences, and examine potential gaps in the assumptions underpinning the expected changes.

Each FGD was structured around a specific ToC pathway that emerged from the literature review. Participants were selected and grouped based on their expertise and experience of working on a specific pathway (see Table A.5). Average group size was 7 people (ranging from 2 to 13 participants). Sessions lasted 90 minutes and were conducted in a structured yet participatory format, including the use of briefing materials shared prior to each session, a summary presentation of findings, and interactive reflection exercises facilitated through Miro boards. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before each session.

Table A.5: Details on all FGDs.[89]

No.	Date/time (CET)	Focus of discussion	Background of participants invited	Number of participants who attended
1	27 Nov 2024 10:00-11:30	The Social Inclusion & Agency Pathway (Pathway 2)	Core Team (Global Impact, Research Task Force, Digital Technology, HREDD Centre of Excellence, Social Protection, Max Havelaar France)	13
3	11 Dec 2024 11:00-12:30	The Economic Pathway (Pathway 1)	Living Income & Living Wage (Living Income, Living Wage, Global Impact, GPM Banana, FTA)	4
4	13 Dec 2024 13:00-14:30	The 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway (Pathway 5)	Brand and Market Development (Communication, Global Strategy, Global Impact, Research Task Force, GPPP, Claims, Fairtrade Italy, GPM Flowers, Cocoa, Coffee)	6
5	14 Jan 2025 11:00-12:30	The Climate & Agricultural Practice Pathway (Pathway 4).	HREDD, Climate & Deforestation (Fairtrade Germany, Climate and Environment Senior Advisor, Global Impact)	2
6	14 Jan 2025 15:00-16:30	The Strengthened Producer Organisations Pathway (Pathway 3).	Producer Networks (CLAC, FTA, and NAPP), and others (Global Impact, Digital Technology)	12
7	16 Jan 2025 10:00-11:30	The 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway (Pathway 5).	Partnership and Advocacy (Global Advocacy) Global Resource Mobilisation, Global Impact)	3

Data was captured through audio recordings, which were subsequently transcribed for analysis, as well as through textual inputs shared on the Miro boards. Findings from these discussions were thematically analysed and have been incorporated into relevant sections of the report (Part 2: The Evidence Map and Part 3: Pathways) to validate, complement, nuance, and illustrate insights emerging from the literature review.

Participants were also encouraged to submit any additional supportive documents, in the form of literature as well as internal documents. A total of 19 documents were submitted. These have been reviewed and were integrated into relevant sections of the report with clear references in footnotes. Note: these documents were not added to the framework given that the analysis had been completed at this stage, and some of the documents fall outside the review period (2020-2024). An overview of these sources is presented below, including ID as used for reference in the report.

89 Please note that while 8 FGDs were originally scheduled only 6 took place as smaller groups were later combined. Therefore the FGD titles include numbers 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7, and there is no cited FGD 2 or FGD 8.

Table A.6: Additional submissions (AS)

ID	Reference	Submitted following	Covered in report
AS.1	Fairtrade International. Fairtrade's Living Income Theory of Change. Internal presentation.	FGD 3	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.2	GlobeScan (2024). Navigating a Pivotal Year: 2024 GlobeScan Trends Report. Retrieved from https://globescan.com/2024/02/06/webinar-2024-preparing-for-a-pivotal-year-a-special-globescan-trends-webinar/	FGD 4	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.3	GlobeScan (2024). No, Business Is Not the Most Trusted. Retrieved from https://globescan.com/2024/01/16/no-business-is-not-the-most-trusted/	FGD 4	Reviewed.
AS.4	Consumers International and GlobeScan (2023). Global Consumer Archetypes to Foster Sustainable Living. Retrieved from https://unctad.org/topic/competition-and-consumer-protection/un-guidelines-for-consumer-protection	FGD 4	Reviewed.
AS.5	GlobeScan / ERM Sustainability Institute (2023). Pulse Survey: Government Action. Retrieved from https://globescan.com/2023/11/01/erm-globescan-sustainability-institute-pulse-survey/	FGD 4	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.6	ERM (2024). Annual Trends Report 2024: The Next Steps for Sustainable Business. January 2024.	FGD 4	Reviewed.
AS.7	Singh, R., Saini, J., Sharma, A. & Ray, A. (2024). Evaluating Environmental Impact of Fairtrade Certified Cotton in India. Global Agrisystem Pvt. Ltd.	FGD 5	Reviewed, integrated
AS.8	Linne, K., Donga, M., & Lottje, C. (2019). Analysis of the Producer Level Impact of Fairtrade on Environmentally Friendly Production, Biodiversity Conservation, and Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change. FAKT – Consult for Management, Training and Technologies GmbH.	FGD 5	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.9	Fairtrade International (2024). Passed, upcoming and cancelled national and EU legislation affecting Fairtrade. Internal presentation, September 2024.	FGD 5	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.10	Mihaljcic, T., Kour, H., Hernandez Espinosa, A. L., Rewa, I., Balasingam, G., & deRiel, E. (2023). Producer Satisfaction Survey Findings. Fairtrade International.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.11	Fairtrade International (2024). Public Systems Report. Internal document, December 2024.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.12	Fairtrade International (2024). FairMarket: Making Fairtrade products more traceable. Internal document, July 2024.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.13	Fairtrade International (2022). Fairtrade's Digital, Data & Information (DDI) Strategy. Internal document, March 2022.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.14	Fairtrade International (2024). Supporting supply chain due diligence reporting and traceability journey with Fairtrade. Internal document, October 2024.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.15	Fairtrade International. Data Reporting & Standards. Internal presentation.	FGD 7	Reviewed.
AS.16	Fairtrade International. FairInsight. Internal presentation.	FGD 7	Reviewed.
AS.17	Fairtrade International. Deforestation Monitoring. Internal presentation.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.18	Fairtrade International. Deforestation Monitoring & EUDR Risk Assessments. Internal presentation.	FGD 7	Reviewed, integrated.
AS.19	Wätzold, M.Y.L., Abdulai, I., Cooke, A., Krumbiegel, K., Ocampo-Ariza, C., Wenzel, A. and Wollni, M. (2025). Do voluntary sustainability standards improve socioeconomic and ecological outcomes? Evidence from Ghana's cocoa sector. Ecological Economics, 229, p.108474. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108474	General	Reviewed, integrated.

Fairtrade International KPIs

Fairtrade International's Global Impact Team compiles KPIs for many intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts in the ToC. For Evidence Map results where KPI data was available, findings were compared and integrated into the Evidence Map to contrast with external evaluative evidence for each ToC area.

A total of 52 KPIs were available for triangulation. During the inception phase, consultants and the Global Impact Team reviewed all KPIs that broadly aligned with the ToC, identifying 19 indicators as proxies for the impact areas: Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods, Gender Equity and Social Inclusion, and Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains. The list of these KPIs, along with the available years used in the Evidence Map, is provided in Table A.7 below. Annex 2 includes more specific findings from the review of KPIs.

Table A.7: KPIs & Data Sources selected for the Evidence Map.

KPI Area	KPI Description	Available Years	Data Source
Living income	KPI 1.1 Percentage of Fairtrade farmers in global commodity chains who earn a living income	2021, 2022, 2023	FairInsight, CODImpact
	KPI 1.4 Number of POs in global commodity chains with farmer income measured vs living income benchmarks	2021, 2022, 2023	Senior Advisor Sustainable Livelihoods
	KPIs 4.1a and 3.1a Percentage of non-compliance (scores 1 and 2) related to human rights areas	2021, 2022, 2023	FLOCERT Audit results
HREDD for POs (POs' strength)	KPIs 4.2a and 3.2a Percentage of non-compliance (scores 1 and 2) related organisational strength areas	2021, 2022, 2023	FLOCERT Audit results
Producer satisfaction	KPI 5.1 Percentage of POs satisfied or very satisfied with producer support services	2021, 2022, 2023	Producer Satisfaction Survey
Inclusivity and diversity	KPI 6.1 Percentage of producers represented on governance bodies (1) PN Board members and (2) PN committees	2021, 2022, 2023	Governance and Gender Survey
	KPI 6.2 Percentage of women serving (1) as Board members and (2) on committees	2021, 2022, 2023	
	KPI 6.3 Percentage of youth among (1) PN Board members and (2) PN committees	2021, 2022, 2023	
Climate resilience practices and deforestation	KPI 7.1 Number and percentage of POs that participate and/or apply climate-resilient practices	2023	Climate Resilience internal survey
	KPI 7.b Number and percentage of SPOs that are deforestation-free	2021, 2022, 2023	Climate Resilience internal survey
Market growth	KPI 8.1 Volume sold (metric tonnes)	2020, 2021, 2022, 2023	Fairtrace (sales)
	KPIs 8.1 and 8.2 Premium generated and Premium use	2021, 2022, 2023	FairLens
Traceability and transparency	KPI 11.1 Percentage of transactions which are tracked on a Fairtrade digital platform with known chain-of-custody model	2021, 2022, 2023, 2024	FairInsight, CODImpact
Advocacy and citizen engagement	KPIs 12.6 & 12.7: Consumer Awareness: percentage of public recognition and trust in Fairtrade label	2021, 2023	Globescan survey, Market surveys
Partnerships	KPI 13.1: Number of strategic partnerships on key thematic areas	2021, 2022, 2023	GRM internal survey
	KPI 13.2: Number of projects and programmes on key thematic areas	2021, 2022, 2023	
	KPI 13.3: Number of SPOs and beneficiaries impacted by projects and programmes on key thematic areas	2021, 2022, 2023	

Once all findings were triangulated, the results of the interim report were updated to final findings and conclusions as presented in this report.

Study limitations

While the Evidence Map provides a robust assessment of Fairtrade International's ToC, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the 122 studies selected are probably influenced by selection and publication bias, as the inclusion of studies from Fairtrade's Learning Platform and systematic searches may favour published studies with positive or significant results, potentially overlooking studies with null findings. Additionally, the heterogeneity of study designs and quality presents challenges. The reliance on qualitative research and lower-quality quantitative methods (e.g., cross-sectional studies, monitoring data) limits the robustness of conclusions for certain outcomes, particularly those cited as indicators requiring further research in Table 3. The evidence base also demonstrates coverage limitations, with notable gaps for specific groups, such as HLOs and marginalised groups beyond women, as well as under-researched thematic areas, including Freedom of Association, Enabling Public Policies, and Analytics & Insights.

Furthermore, the non-comprehensive nature of the current evidence base constrains the ability to draw conclusions in specific regions or product categories. With certain regions and commodities over-represented, the evidence may not fully reflect the variability in barriers and enablers across diverse contexts, especially considering that analysis found barriers and enablers strongly interact with context. At the long-term outcomes and impact layers of the ToC, causality and attribution remain uncertain, with a limited number of high-quality quantitative studies able to establish clear linkages between Fairtrade interventions and observed impacts.

Another key consideration when interpreting results is the digital ToC served as our framework for indicator definition and pathway development. While this version is the most widely used, it is less detailed than Fairtrade International's internal working version, meaning our analysis may have missed some key details. Other limitations of our analysis relate to the limited number of ToC indicators represented in the KPIs, which restricts opportunities for triangulation.

Limitations around the FGD methodology included not having enough time to have meaningful discussions. This was the case during FGD 1, in particular, where too much time was absorbed presenting interim results and background information to the Evidence Map and little time was left to explore pathways in a meaningful way. Subsequently, the agenda and set-up were adapted for the remaining FGDs, but time constraints did remain a challenge. Other challenges and limitations included: group size being slightly too small or too big, poor internet connectivity, and limited or no engagement with the briefing materials circulated prior to the sessions. These all hampered meaningful engagement. In some cases, siloed discussions seemed to be taking place, when different teams and departments were on a call aimed at exploring a pathway in a holistic way, but it became apparent that experts like to comment and focus on one specific element and struggle to see the bigger picture. This was particularly the case for the 'Fairtrade as a System' Pathway with FGD 4 and FGD 7, or the Strengthened PO Pathway with FGD 6. This challenge should be kept in mind when Fairtrade plans to work on ToC redesign, weighing up the pros and cons of working per team or mixing different staff and areas of expertise.

ANNEX 2: REVIEW OF FAIRTRADE INTERNATIONAL'S KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Evidence Map and pathway findings were triangulated against Fairtrade International's KPIs, allowing for a review of their alignment with outcomes and impacts within the ToC and their usefulness for curating Fairtrade International's evidence base. The main findings are summarised in the Discussion and Recommendation section, while in this annex we dive a bit deeper. We provide an overview of the KPIs alignment with the ToC, assessing the coverage, gaps, and applicability of Fairtrade's KPIs for impact measurement, making five overarching recommendations.

Building on the 2022 ToC and strategy, Fairtrade developed 52 KPIs compiling and repurposing indicators from 12 unique data sources.[90] This resulted in a systematic and structured compendium for performance monitoring. These KPIs are managed on a Global Strategy Dashboard and categorised under four Strategic Pillars[91] and 12 Topics.[92] This means KPIs are organised differently from the ToC. Structuring KPIs around Strategic Pillars rather than the ToC has resulted in weak alignment with intermediate and long-term outcomes and impact areas. As shown in Table A.8, KPI areas are only determined at the impact level, meaning ToC layers cannot be determined from the framework. Table A.8 also outlines which KPIs were used for triangulation and where these were placed against the Evidence Map.

In consultation with the Global Impact Team, the 52 KPIs were reduced, prioritising intermediate and long-term outcome and impact indicators, or indicators relevant for interpretation. Excluding 24 KPIs does not imply their lack of usefulness; many remain valuable for tracking interventions but do not contribute to analysis of progress along the Theory of Change.

90 i) FairInsight, CODImpact, ii) Global Strategy Dashboard & Human Rights Report, iii) Governance and Gender Survey, iv) FLOCERT Certification and Compliance Data, v) Fairtrace (Sales) & CODImpact (Production), vi) Licensee Survey, vii) Producer Satisfaction Survey, viii) Climate Resilience Internal Survey, ix) FairLens, x) Global Impact, Centre of Excellence, xi) Globescan & Market Surveys, xii) GRM Internal Survey.
91 i) Empowered Farmers and Workers, ii) Growth and Innovation, iii) Digitisation of Fairer Supply Chains, iv) Advocacy and Citizen Engagement.
92 i) Living Income, ii) Living Wage, iii) HREDD for POs, iv) Climate Change, v) Producer Satisfaction, Inclusiveness, and Diversity, vi) Market Growth, vii) Business Good Practices (HREDD Licensees), viii) Business Satisfaction, ix) Traceability and Transparency, x) Advocacy and Citizen Engagement, xi) Advocacy, xii) Partnerships.

The selection process has revealed gaps in ToC coverage, limiting their relevance to the Evidence Map. An additional four KPIs were excluded due to data unavailability or poor coverage, leaving 24 indicators that were cited in the KPIs as aligning with the following ToC impact areas.

Table A.8: Fairtrade International's KPIs by Strategic Pillar and ToC Area

KPI	Strategic Pillar	ToC Impact Area	Evidence Map Indicator
Living Income	Empowered Farmers and Workers	Sustainable Resilient Livelihoods	Long-term: Economic Gains
HREDD for POs		Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains	Long-term: Strong Producer Organisations
Compliance with HREDD for Human Rights		Decent Work	Long-term: Human & Environmental Rights
Board Representation of Producers, Women, and Youth		Gender Equity and Social Inclusion	Long-term: Representation & Influence
Strategic Partnerships and Key Thematic Programmes	Advocacy and Citizen Engagement	Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains	Long-term: Enabling Public Policies
Market Growth, Volume Sold	Growth & Innovation	Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains	Long-term: Traceability & Transparency
Consumer Awareness		Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains	Intermediate: Trust & Satisfaction
Premium Generated and Premium Use		Sustainable, Resilient, and Fairer Supply Chains	Intermediate: Price Stability and Premium Investments
Transactions with a chain-of-custody model and Digital Tracking	Digitalisation for Fairer Supply Chains	Sustainable, Resilient and Fairer Supply Chains	Long-term: Traceability & Transparency
Adoption of Climate-Resilient or Agroecological Practices	Empowered Farmers and Workers	Environmental Sustainability	Intermediate: Climate-Resilient Practices
SPOs with Geolocation Data, and SPOs that are Deforestation-Free		Environmental Sustainability	Impact: Environmental Sustainability

Coverage of the ToC was also low. Following re-alignment, KPIs only pertained to ten of the 19 outcome and impact areas listed in the ToC. As shown in Table A.8, only one KPI is classified as covering an impact area of the ToC (namely, Environmental Sustainability). As a result, their use in the Evidence Map required further classification where we noticed misalignments between KPI language and the ToC framework, which reduced their usefulness for assessing Fairtrade International's effectiveness. The introduction of a competing classification system has added unnecessary complexity when integrating KPIs into the Evidence Map, even for specialists highly experienced in research methods, planning, and logical frameworks. If alignment appears inconsistent to these users, it is unlikely to be accessible or useful for Fairtrade International staff using internal performance data to evaluate and interpret the ToC effectively. We make the following two recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1: Ensure accurate alignment of KPIs with the ToC.** All KPIs should be accurately aligned with the ToC, ensuring consistency in language, structure, and placement. The use of alternative classification systems should be reconsidered, or KPIs should be presented in a format that is directly comparable with the ToC to enhance coherence and usability for evidence generation.
- **Recommendation 2: Address gaps and prioritise coverage.** Once KPIs are properly aligned with the ToC, conduct a systematic review to identify gaps in coverage and prioritise areas requiring additional indicators to ensure comprehensive outcome measurement.

The management of these KPIs in a Global Strategy Dashboard is a significant strength. Supporting the integration of multiple data sources, enabling data visualisation, streamlined reporting, performance tracking, and improved data management can automate reporting. To support this, Fairtrade International's Global Strategy Dashboard also incorporates select qualitative insights and contextual information, such as KPI aspirations. Despite these strengths, the dashboard attempts to serve multiple functions, including performance tracking, impact evaluation, and external communication. This lack of clear distinction between purposes may reduce its effectiveness. Hence, separate KPI sets or dashboards should be considered for different audiences and uses. For instance:

- Targets are critical for performance tracking and accountability.
- ToC alignment strengthens impact evaluation and evidence-based decision making.
- Better visualisation and structured updates would improve communication and interpretation.

At present, the dashboard's infrequent updates and inconsistent disaggregation limit its effectiveness for performance

management. In this instance, targets should be a priority area, as would the need to update data more than once yearly.

If the goal is evidence generation, KPIs must be better aligned and prioritised to capture ToC indicators meaningfully. The current data presentation hinders interpretation and use for evaluation and performance management.[93] This renders such indicators ineffective for performance management, general interpretation, and progress tracking. A more strategic approach is needed and clarifying the dashboard's purpose should guide the design of statistical calculation and results presentation.

Clear purpose could result in an evidence-specific (including performance and accountability) dashboards, from this more general Global Strategy Dashboard. This would also support streamlining reporting and data breaks, and could mitigate some of the challenges with consistency of data. Currently, the dashboard contains 10 unique reporting structures, ranging from broad categories (product, region, POs, SPOs, HLOs) to narrower classifications (product, country, years in programme), creating inconsistencies that affect data usability. Clarifying the dashboard's purpose would help refine disaggregation approaches and ensure greater consistency across KPIs required for different purposes.

- **Recommendation 3: Clarify the global strategy KPIs and dashboard purpose.** Define distinct functions for performance tracking, impact evaluation, and communication, and develop separate KPI sets for different audiences. This will help streamline KPIs, identify gaps, and support decision making on target setting, update frequency, and data presentation to enhance usability, interpretation, and evidence generation.

Following ISEAL's guidance to use output indicators to make credible claims for some intermediate outcomes (as discussed in Part 2), Fairtrade requires a better aligned KPI selection for evidence generation. ToC indicators selected by the Evidence Map and their coverage in the Global Strategy Dashboard are listed below. Fairtrade International would do well to prioritise strong KPI measurement of these indicators and consider data requirements (e.g., to support creditable impact claims).

- **Price Stability** (Not covered)
- **Premium Investments** (Covered by KPI 8.2)
- **Diversity & Inclusiveness** (Covered by KPIs 6.2 and 6.3)
- **Climate-Resilient Practices** (Inadequately measured by KPI 7.1)

Climate-Resilient Practices are measured by training attendance rather than actual adoption. This fails to meet ISEAL's criteria for substantiated impact claims. Similarly, Premium Investments and Diversity & Inclusiveness require disaggregation by country, intervention, and target group to be fully effective for evidence generation. Our review also identified several strong long-term outcome KPIs (i.e., KPI 1.1: "Percentage of Fairtrade farmers in global commodity markets achieving a living income") and even one impact level indicator (e.g., KPI 7.2b: percentage SPOs that are deforestation-free) although even in these examples coverage of these indicators has been lacklustre.[94] This has resulted in inadequate measurement in these outcome areas to allow for robust assessment of Fairtrade's progress and reinforces the need to identify ToC evidence gaps and prioritise indicators to ensure measurement is sufficiently comprehensive to demonstrate impact and track progress.

- **Recommendation 4: Prioritise KPI measurement for key intermediate outcomes and other strong indicators and ensure data coverage is sufficient to make impact claims.** Most Fairtrade KPIs are classified wrongly at the impact level, despite relying on monitoring data. Aligning with ISEAL's guidance would shift indicators to the intermediate outcome level, allowing monitoring outcomes and output indicators to substantiate impact claims for the identified output areas. Other strong outcome and impact measures, which are not relying on typical monitoring data (e.g., living income and deforestation), need to be compressively measured to provide useful results.

A major weakness in the KPI reviewed is the inconsistent definition of targets. Three indicators lack assigned targets or are marked "TBD". Eleven indicators have vague benchmarks such as "year-on-year improvement" or "increase over time". Some targets appear disconnected from actual progress. For example, the Climate-Resilient Practices indicator has a 100% adoption target, yet progress stands at only 51%. Without clear, evidence-based targets, assessing performance and making informed decisions becomes challenging.

- **Recommendation 5: Improve KPI targets.** For evidence generation, targets are not always applied but are typically based on comparisons of change (e.g., over time, relative to a control, or baseline). In performance monitoring, targets usually reflect fixed levels (e.g., adoption or compliance rates). In both cases, targets should be specific, not generic, and based on internal or external evidence. While some KPIs had convincing targets (e.g., KPI 8.1), these were rare, highlighting the need for more consistent, evidence-driven target setting.

In conclusion, Fairtrade International's KPI framework is comprehensive but misaligned with the ToC, limiting its value for evaluation. KPIs primarily track long-term outcomes and impacts using audit compliance and survey data, which are more suited for intermediate outcomes. Infrequent updates, inconsistent targets, and unclear reporting structures further reduce effectiveness for performance management. The Global Strategy Dashboard's multi-purpose design complicates data interpretation, making its role unclear. The key recommendation is to clarify the dashboard's purpose and its supporting KPIs. For evidence generation, this means strengthening ToC alignment, addressing indicator gaps, and ensuring purposeful disaggregation and visualisation and targets which are evidence-based to enhance usability.

93 For example, HREDD indicators are averaged for HLOs but do not include separate reporting for SPOs. Moreover, the use of non-compliance (scores 1–2) and compliance thresholds (scores 3–5) creates a complex distribution that is difficult to interpret. This is not only because of how the scores are distributed as cataloguers, but also because the distribution itself reflects different meanings—i.e., a binary distinction between non-compliant and compliant and best practices, versus an average score that blends the full range of data. Another example is KPI 7.2b, which lacks a clear denominator due to the way the measure (7.2a) has been rolled out. Consequently, the result cannot be meaningfully interpreted as a measure of deforestation among SPOs with geolocation data.

94 For example, KPI 1.1 on living income: as of 2023, only one country had established living income benchmarks for cocoa, with just 10 SPOs using the LIRP (KPI 1.4), and no measurement of living wages had been made. For KPI 7.2b, the percentage of SPOs that are deforestation-free, this indicator was limited to just 42 SPOs out of a total of 734 coffee and cocoa SPOs, meaning it was not used for assessment of Fairtrade effects.

ANNEX 3: BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Listing all studies referenced in the report using framework study ID.

Study ID	Reference
1	De Buhr, E., Bertrand, W.E., Ayerakwa, H., Cooper, A.J., Gonzalez Torres, E. & Bayer, C.N. (2020). Contextual Analysis of Workers in Fairtrade-certified Small-scale Producer Organizations: Cocoa Production in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana; Banana Production in Colombia, the Dominican Republic and Peru. Fairtrade International.
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