

SustainCheck

Indicator analysis: Fairtrade

For the SustainScore

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Indicator: Fairtrade

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How to read this document

Fairtrade is an indicator for the SustainScore. An indicator is a label, certificate, standard, commitment, rating or similar instrument that says something about a company's sustainability.

The Fairtrade analysis sets out to determine two things:

- Which ESG subcategories of the SustainScore does Fairtrade affect? (chapter 3)
- Which score applies to each possible Fairtrade outcome, per subcategory affected? That follows from the requirements (chapter 3) and the assurance (chapter 4), and is set out in chapter 5.

Important in this file: Fairtrade is not treated as a single yes/no. Within FLOCERT certification we split the outcome by the organisation's function (producer, trader, other). There is also a second track, the Mark-licensee, which SustainCheck does not yet include (see 1.6 and 1.9).

1. Identity

This chapter says what Fairtrade is, what does and does not fall under that name, and which outcomes a company can have.

1.1 Official name

Official name: Fairtrade, certification against the Fairtrade Standards of Fairtrade International. The mark on finished products is the FAIRTRADE Mark (source 1, source 3).

1.2 Short name and aliases

- Short name: Fairtrade
- Also in data or texts: Fairtrade International, FLO, FAIRTRADE Mark, FLOCERT, Fairtrade certified, Fairtrade licensee, FLO-ID

1.3 Owner / scheme owner

Role	Organisation	Country
Who writes the standard?	Fairtrade International e.V.	Germany
Who certifies (FLOCERT track)?	FLOCERT GmbH	Germany
Who accredits (FLOCERT track)?	DAkKS (against ISO/IEC 17065)	Germany
Who licenses the FAIRTRADE Mark?	National Fairtrade organisation or Fairtrade International	per country

Certification and licensing are two different roles. FLOCERT audits compliance with the Standards. The licence to put the logo on finished products comes from a national Fairtrade organisation or from Fairtrade International (source 1, source 3, source 11).

1.4 Type of instrument

Possible types:

- label
- certificate
- management system standard
- commitment
- rating
- statutory register
- membership
- charter
- award
- hybrid

Main type of Fairtrade: hybrid. A product and chain certificate (producers, traders and other chain roles, via FLOCERT) plus, separately, a licence for the FAIRTRADE Mark on finished products (source 3, source 11).

1.5 Version of Fairtrade

- No single year like ISO 9001:2015. The Fairtrade Standards are a set: generic standards plus product standards (source 1, source 6).
- FLOCERT tests compliance criteria derived from those standards (source 1, source 8).
- This analysis follows the Fairtrade Standards / FLOCERT assurance rules in force at the time of the audit.

1.6 Two tracks under the name Fairtrade

Under the name Fairtrade sit two tracks that do not prove the same thing. SustainCheck therefore does not treat them as one outcome.

Track	What it proves	Who	Source today
FLOCERT certification	The organisation may produce or trade Fairtrade products under the Standards	Producer, trader or other chain role	FLOCERT Customer Search (source 4)
Mark-licensee	The brand may put the FAIRTRADE Mark on specific finished products	Brand / retailer with a licence contract	Not yet in SustainCheck (see 1.9)

A certified trader need not be a licensee: it may sell unprocessed or semi-processed products under Fairtrade terms without the Mark on the consumer pack. Conversely, a Mark-licensee is not automatically a FLOCERT client: the licence is a contract with a licensing body, while the chain up to the last trader must be Fairtrade-certified (source 11, source 12).

This file analyses the FLOCERT track. Within that track we split further by function (producer / trader / other), because the requirements, the audit cycle and the SustainScore coverage differ. The Mark-licensee track sits in 1.9 as a future extension.

1.7 What we do not include under this name

- World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) and generic 'fair trade' (two words) without Fairtrade International
- Other chain labels (including Rainforest Alliance)
- Own claims such as 'ethical cocoa' without a FLOCERT record
- Permission to Trade, suspended, cancelled (see 1.8)
- Mark-licensee without a FLOCERT record: no score today (future: 1.9)

1.8 Possible outcomes for a company

Fairtrade (FLOCERT track) is not a single yes/no. The FLOCERT Customer Search shows a function per organisation. That function determines which outcome SustainCheck uses, and therefore which score in chapter 5.

Why split?

- The Standards differ: producer standards (SPO, hired labour, contract production) versus the Trader Standard (source 6).
- The audit cycle differs: 3 years for producers, 5 years for traders (source 1, source 8, source 9).
- The impact on the SustainScore differs: producers mainly touch S4/S6/S7; traders mainly G4 and, indirectly, S4/S6.
- One score for all Certified records would give a retailer-trader the same coverage as a producer organisation. That is wrong.

Outcomes today (FLOCERT Customer Search, status Certified):

- Certified producer: the function in FLOCERT is producer (small-scale producer organisation, hired labour, contract production or equivalent).
- Certified trader: the function in FLOCERT is trader.
- Certified other: Certified, but the function is not a clear producer or trader (or a mix that cannot be reduced to either). Example: manufacturer / another chain role as it appears in the search.
- Not present: no record, or a status that is not Certified (suspended, cancelled, Permission to Trade).

Permission to Trade (temporary permission before the first on-site trader audit, up to 9 months) does not count as present (source 1).

A product limit applies to all Certified outcomes: FLOCERT links products to the record (search can be by product, country, function, status) (source 4). Example: 'Coffee (Not specified)' means certification for coffee, not for the whole assortment. SustainCheck does not see the product share. Present = certified for at least one product. That limit is built into the scores in chapter 5.

1.9 Future extension: Mark-licensee

Today SustainCheck uses only the FLOCERT Customer Search for Fairtrade. The Mark-licensee track is a planned extension, not a current outcome.

Difference from FLOCERT certification:

- FLOCERT: audit against the Fairtrade Standards; the right to trade or produce under Fairtrade terms (source 3).
- Mark-licensee: a contract with a licensing body to put the FAIRTRADE Mark on specific finished products; the chain up to the last trader must be Fairtrade-certified (source 11, source 12).
- Certified without Licensed: may trade Fairtrade without the Mark on the consumer pack (source 12).

- Licensed with Not Certified: can occur for brands that do not themselves need a trader/producer certificate; the Finder states explicitly that Licensed + Not Certified may still sell finished Fairtrade products if the licence applies (source 12).

Sources where that information would be found:

- Fairtrade Finder: <https://www.fairtrade.net/en/fairtrade-finder.html> (source 12). Directory of certified producers/traders and of licensees. Shows Licensing Status (Licensed / Not Licensed) and Certification Status.
- Get licensed / national Fairtrade organisations: the licence runs through the NFO in the country of registration, or through Fairtrade International if there is no NFO (source 11).

Are those sources complete?

- No. Fairtrade International itself writes that the Finder is still being developed, links data from several internal sources, is not yet complete, and in rare cases can be inaccurate (source 12).
- After cancellation of a certificate, an organisation can remain in the Finder for up to one year (source 12).
- Fairtrade advises always confirming status directly with the supplier or the Fairtrade organisation before a contract (source 12).
- There is no public proof that every licensee worldwide sits in the Finder. Licensing runs through dozens of NFOs; the Finder is an aggregate, not a guaranteed complete world register.

Consequence for SustainCheck: a Mark-licensee is relevant in substance (especially S8, a product claim to the consumer), but the public source is today too incomplete and too uncertain to score as an equal of FLOCERT. Therefore: no score in this analysis; recorded as a future extension once source quality allows it.

2. Scope

This chapter says what Fairtrade applies to. The scope depends on the FLOCERT role.

2.1 What is assessed

Certified producer:

- Object: producer organisation (cooperative, plantation, contract production) for the products in the FLOCERT scope.
- Upstream: labour and trading conditions at the producers themselves (minimum price, Premium, labour rights) (source 1, source 6).

Certified trader:

- Object: a trading organisation that buys or sells Fairtrade products.
- Assessed: whether Fairtrade transactions (price, Premium, traceability, certified chain) hold for the products in the scope (source 1, source 8).

Certified other:

- Object: another certified chain role in FLOCERT (not clearly producer or trader).
- Assessed: the requirements that belong with that function and that product scope. The exact combination of standards must follow from the FLOCERT record; if that is unclear, the cautious score in 5.1 applies.

In common: a buyer's own operations outside the Fairtrade product scope (pay in its own country, its own factory environment) are not the core.

2.2 What Fairtrade does and does not cover

Covered (within the FLOCERT product scope):

- Certified volumes of the products on the record
- Minimum price and Fairtrade Premium for those volumes (source 1, source 2)
- Social and (limited) environmental requirements at producer level, depending on the product (source 1, source 6)
- For traders: trading conditions and chain compliance for those products

Not covered:

- All products or all of the company's purchasing
- A company certificate for the whole group or all sites
- The Fairtrade share of revenue (not public in the Customer Search)
- Physical origin per consumer product under mass balance (including cocoa, sugar, fruit juice, tea) (source 10)
- The FAIRTRADE Mark on the shop shelf (that is the licensee track; not scored today)

2.3 Validity and version transitions

- Producers: 3-year cycle, confirmation audits, renewal in year 3 (source 1, source 8).
- Traders: 5-year cycle, a mix of on-site, remote and digital audits, renewal in year 5 (source 1, source 9).
- Other chain roles: according to the assurance programme FLOCERT attaches to that function; Unknown. Reason: no separate public cycle description besides producer/trader was found (see 6.2).
- Standards are revised per product. This analysis accepts the edition in force on the audit date.

3. Requirements

This chapter says what Fairtrade requires per FLOCERT role, and which SustainScore subcategories that therefore affects.

3.1 Material requirements per role

Certified producer (summary; full text in the producer standards, source 6):

- Fairtrade Minimum Price and/or Fairtrade Premium (source 1, source 2)
- Ban on child labour and forced labour; labour rights on plantations (source 1, source 6)
- Democratic organisation in small-scale producer organisations (source 6)
- Environmental criteria at producer level, depending on the product (source 6)

Certified trader (summary; Fairtrade Trader Standard, source 6, source 8):

- Payment of Fairtrade Minimum Price and Premium where applicable
- Contract terms and transparent Fairtrade transactions
- Certified chain: buying from certified operators
- Traceability or mass balance under product rules (source 8, source 10)

Certified other:

- The requirements follow the standard(s) that apply to that function.
- Without a clear mapping in the public record: treat as partial chain compliance, not as full producer or trader coverage.

3.2 Mapping to SustainScore subcategories

Scale for the mapping:

- strong: the requirement sits at the core of that subcategory
- moderate: the requirement touches the subcategory but does not cover it
- weak: a side effect, not real coverage

Certified producer:

Requirement	Subcategory	Coupling	Evidence	Source
Minimum price and Premium	S4 / S7	strong	Economic standards; Premium	1, 2, 6
Ban on child labour / forced labour	S6	strong	Social / hired labour	1, 6
Working conditions of producers	S4	strong	Hired labour / SPO	1, 6
Democratic governance of the cooperative	G4	weak	SPO standard	6
Environmental criteria on the farm	E2 / E4	weak	Environmental criteria	6

Certified trader:

Requirement	Subcategory	Coupling	Evidence	Source
Payment of price / Premium in the chain	S4 / S7	moderate	Trader Standard	1, 6, 8
Ban on non-compliant sourcing (chain requirements)	S6	moderate	Trader Standard; HREDD elements	6, 8
Purchasing terms and due diligence in the chain	G4	strong	Trader Standard	1, 8
Traceability / mass balance	G4	moderate	Product rules	8, 10

Certified other:

Requirement	Subcategory	Coupling	Evidence	Source
Chain compliance for products in scope	S4 / S6 / G4	moderate to weak	Depends on the function	4, 6, 8
Premium / producer community	S7	weak	Only if the role touches Premium	2, 6

3.3 Primary versus secondary per role

Outcome	Primary	Secondary
Certified producer	S4, S6	S7; G4 weak
Certified trader	G4	S4, S6, S7 (indirect via the chain)
Certified other	depends on the function; by default cautious S4/G4	S6, S7

3.4 Limits of coverage

- All roles: only the Fairtrade products in the FLOCERT scope, not all purchasing or all brands of the group.
- S1: a buyer's or retailer's own workers: not covered.
- E4: Fairtrade is not a biodiversity standard of the forest-management certificate type. Environmental requirements are incidental.
- S7: Premium is input to producer communities; Fairtrade itself says that Premium spending is not proven impact as an outcome (source 2).
- S8: a product claim via the FAIRTRADE Mark belongs to the licensee track. Not scored as long as SustainCheck does not use that source (1.9).
- A producer score on a buyer in another country: this file scores the FLOCERT entity that is Certified, not automatically its customers.

4. Assurance

This chapter says how reliable the evidence for Fairtrade is. Together with the requirements in chapter 3, that determines the scores in chapter 5.

4.1 Assurance level

Possible levels:

- 1. Self-declared
- 2. Second party
- 3. Third-party audit (not accredited)
- 4. Accredited third party (typically ISO/IEC 17065 for product/chain certification)

Level for all FLOCERT Certified outcomes (producer, trader, other): 4. FLOCERT is ISO/IEC 17065-accredited for Fairtrade producers and traders (source 3, source 7).

Level for Mark-licensee (future): lower or of a different kind. Licensing is a contract plus artwork approval, not an ISO 17065 certificate of the brand holder itself. The underlying chain must still be certified (source 11, source 12).

4.2 Audit practice per role

Certified producer:

- First audit always on-site before sale under Fairtrade (source 1)
- 3-year cycle; up to two confirmation audits; unannounced where extra risk exists (source 1)

Certified trader:

- Often first Permission to Trade after a desktop review; then the first on-site audit (source 1)
- 5-year cycle; up to four confirmation audits (on-site, remote, digital) (source 1, source 9)

Certified other:

- Follows the FLOCERT programme for that function
- Unknown. Reason: public documentation mainly describes the producer and trader programmes (source 1, source 8)

4.3 Accreditation

- Standard: ISO/IEC 17065 (source 7)
- Body: DAKS, D-ZE-14408-01, valid until 2027 (source 7)
- Scope: Fairtrade Standards for producers and for traders. Not yet: Precious Metals, Climate, Textile (source 7)
- Standard-setting (Fairtrade International) is separated from certification (FLOCERT) (source 1, source 3)

4.4 Verifiability

FLOCERT track (in use):

- Source: <https://www.flocert.net/fairtrade-customer-search/> (source 4)
- Filterable by status, product, country, function and keyword
- Outcome via status Certified and function (producer / trader / other)
- Not Certified does not count

Mark-licensee track (not yet in use):

- Primary candidate source: Fairtrade Finder, <https://www.fairtrade.net/en/fairtrade-finder.html> (source 12)
- Shows Licensing Status and Certification Status
- Not complete: Fairtrade itself says the directory is still being developed and is not complete (source 12)
- Supplementary: NFO contact per country (source 11), no central open world register with proven completeness

4.5 Overclaim risks

- Presenting one FLOCERT product record as 'the whole company is Fairtrade'
- Mixing producer, trader and other roles
- Equating a Mark on the pack with a FLOCERT certificate of that brand company
- Mass balance: a mark without physical Fairtrade content (source 10)
- Permission to Trade or Finder remnants for up to one year after cancellation (source 1, source 12)
- Confusion with generic fair trade or WFTO

5. Conclusion: impact on the SustainScore

Per FLOCERT outcome (1.8) the score per subcategory affected follows here. Grounding: requirements (chapter 3) and assurance (chapter 4). Scores sit below 100 because the requirements do not fully cover the subcategory and because the product share is unknown.

5.1 Score per outcome and subcategory

Outcome	Subcategory	Score	Note
Certified producer	S4	98	Core of the producer standards; only products in scope
Certified producer	S6	91	Child labour / forced labour in that producer scope
Certified producer	S7	70	Premium to communities; input, not outcome-proof (source 2)
Certified producer	G4	45	Governance of the cooperative is incidental, not a buyer's chain management
Certified trader	G4	83	Trader Standard: purchasing, contracts, chain compliance
Certified trader	S4	64	Indirect: conditions in the chain, not the producers' own shop floor
Certified trader	S6	58	Indirect via trader requirements; weaker than a producer audit
Certified trader	S7	45	Premium flows through traders; impact sits with producers
Certified other	S4	64	Cautious: chain role less clear than producer/trader
Certified other	S6	52	Cautious, same limit
Certified other	G4	64	Partial chain compliance
Certified other	S7	39	Only if Premium is relevant for the role
Not present	all	none	No impact via this indicator
Mark-licensee (future)	S8 and others	n/a today	No score yet; Finder source quality insufficient (1.9)

If one company has several FLOCERT records or functions, the highest score of the outcomes that apply to that company applies per subcategory. How SustainCheck further handles overlap between indicators sits in the SustainScore methodology.

5.2 What Fairtrade does not do

- No score on E1 to E6 as a main signal
- No score on S1, S2, S3, S5, G1, G2, G3
- No S8 score as long as Mark-licensee is not connected
- No proof that all of the company's products are Fairtrade
- No substitute for a sector-specific environmental label

6. Sources

Every statement in this document that is later used in the SustainScore points to a source below.

6.1 Sources used

Numbering:

1. Fairtrade International. How Fairtrade certification works. <https://www.fairtrade.net/en/why-fairtrade/how-we-do-it/how-does-the-label-work/how-fairtrade-certification-works.html> Accessed: 30/08/2026.
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6.2 Looked for but not found

- A public product share or Fairtrade revenue share per FLOCERT client
- An official mapping of FLO-ID onto national company numbers
- A complete world list of all Mark-licensees guaranteed by Fairtrade
- A public assurance cycle specifically for chain roles outside producer and trader
- A stable, machine-readable API on the Fairtrade Finder