



Safe Working Conditions



I. Introduction



Fair trade is a movement that empowers farmers, workers, and fishers to fight poverty in ways that improve lives and protect the environment. Founded in 1998, Fair Trade USA™ offers award-winning, rigorous, and globally recognized

sustainable sourcing certification programs that improve livelihoods, protect the environment, and build resilient, transparent supply chains. **Its trusted Fair Trade Certified™ seal on a product signifies that it was made according to stringent fair trade standards.** Fair Trade USA is building an innovative model of responsible business, conscious consumerism, and shared value to eliminate poverty and enable sustainable development for farmers, workers, their families, and communities around the world. Fair Trade USA is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and the leading certifier of fair trade products in North America. Fair Trade USA achieves its mission by empowering producers around the world with the business training, environmental knowledge, and capital investment necessary to create high-quality products that can compete in global markets, and by certifying and promoting fair trade products.

ON THE COVER:

MARIA TEREZINHA DE ALMEIDA, supervisor of the manual weeding process at Goiasa, a sugar and renewable production company in Goiás, Brazil.



“It is through these Fair Trade flowers that hundreds of families, like mine, continually improve our lives.”

ELVIA ALMACHI holds a bundle of recently harvested Fair Trade Certified roses. A production line field supervisor and mother of two, she has been working at family-owned flower farm Agrogana in Cotapaxi, Ecuador for 12 years, along with her husband Luis Alberto Villegas.

OUR ORGANIZATION and its partners work together to drive system-wide impact goals related to resilient and sustainable communities, prosperity, mutually beneficial trade, and conscious consumption. At its heart, this means that the farmers, workers, and fishers participating in fair trade, along with their families and communities, are prosperous and thriving. An essential aspect of fulfilling this vision is ensuring protection of workers from unsafe conditions. This is achieved meeting their fundamental needs for personal well-being, access to on-site safety equipment, clean drinking water, and proper sanitary conditions.

II. Background and Context

Nearly 3 million people around the globe die every year due to risk factors in the workplace, including accidents, work-related diseases, and extreme working hours.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic only served to exacerbate the situation, forcing the world to become more aware of the importance of implementing and enforcing strong occupational safety and health systems. Establishing effective provisions to protect workers requires meaningful participation by employers, employees, public health actors, and other relevant parties. Fair Trade USA considers the perspectives of all these groups in assembling standards for creating and maintaining safe working environments that protect the health of workers.

The benefits of strong workplace safety standards are immeasurable. First among these is reducing the unnecessary loss of life and the subsequent impact felt by the families they leave behind. The prevention of injuries and illness is also paramount, as these can have devastating effects – both emotional and financial – on individuals and their loved ones. At the same time, the knowledge that they are safe in their place of employment can lead to greater peace of mind for workers and their families.

The advantages of a strong safety and health culture are not restricted to workers. Management and the business enterprise overall can benefit from the reduced costs, improved morale, and enhanced production resulting from a safer workplace. With less days lost to injury and illness, improved relations with an engaged labor force, and a spirit of openness and collaboration, an enterprise can reach new heights of success, benefiting stakeholders and society on the whole. When a company's safety standards are verified through a credible program like Fair Trade Certified, brands, retailers, and traders can source their products with confidence, helping improve traceability and credibility for their business, and creating shared value for consumers who care about shopping ethically. The end game is to generate a true win-win scenario for everyone involved.



A fisherman at the Maluku handline yellowfin tuna fishery, Waepure Village, Buru Island, Maluku, Indonesia.

III. Fair Trade’s Approach to Workplace Safety

How do we contribute to the establishment and enforcement of safe working conditions? Fair Trade Certified™ producers, groups of producers, and facilities of all sizes, including farms, fisheries, and factories, are audited according to our rigorous standards for sustainability, fair wages, and workplace safety. Our organization develops, implements, and monitors our fair trade standards with the goals of driving income equality, community and individual well-being, empowerment, and environmental stewardship.

Our **Theory of Change**² describes how the strategies and activities of an organization can impact the lives and livelihoods of farmers, fishers, and workers in hired labor settings over time. This model is built on four stakeholder journeys:

- Resilient Communities
- Conscious Consumers
- Mutually Beneficial Trade
- Prosperous Individuals



“I’m proud that cooperation with fair trade has allowed our farm to grow organic and to flourish.”

HE XINREN, head supervisor of the Kaoshui tea farm, with his son **HE FUSHAN**, supervisor of the farm, in Dazhangshan Gardens, Wuyuan, Jiangxi province, China.



Our focus on helping to establish and maintain Prosperous Individuals throughout the world includes our protocols for safe working conditions.

We seek to protect workers, farmers, and fishers by requiring secure environments, additional capital and resources, and education along their path to achieving fair trade certification. However, our workplace safety standards do not solely pertain to the well-being of individuals. All stakeholder goals work in tandem, so that providing for the safety and health of certified producers can also lead to Resilient Communities made up of secure families who are treated equitably, Mutually Beneficial Trade sourced from ethical supply chains, and Conscious Consumers made aware of fair trade practices and understanding their value.

Setting the Standards for Workplace Safety

An important way that Fair Trade Certified drives collective empowerment is by setting industry and agricultural standards that establish groups to foster communication and collaboration on important issues such as health and safety, community investments, and working conditions. As an example, our Agricultural Production Standard (APS) requires the formation of a Fair Trade Committee, a Health and Safety Committee, and a Social Engagement Team that collaborate to set, enforce, and communicate guiding principles for the workplace, including:

- Adequate first aid supplies and access to medical services are provided in the case of workplace incidents.
- Workers are provided with acute medical care for all workplace injuries and illnesses, as well as lost wages during immediate recovery time.
- Machinery and equipment on the site, as well as worker transportation, are maintained and equipped with appropriate safety devices.
- Indoor workplaces and on-site buildings are maintained to be safe.
- In hot climates and in hot workplaces, workers are provided with suitably cool water and shade for rest breaks in order to protect against heat stress.
- Employers must make information available to workers on the risks associated with any hazardous work, including higher risks associated with certain medical conditions.
- Workers have the right to reasonable accommodations for any work that poses risk to their health.
- Individuals use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as appropriate to their tasks and have been trained on its proper use.
- PPE is functional, regularly maintained, and provided to workers free of charge.



A field worker pours himself water at Usina Goiasa in Goiás, Brazil. Because the sugar at Goiasa is organic, weeding is done manually. A managing supervisor receives hourly updates about the temperature, humidity, and air quality, and advises workers to stop if they reach unhealthy or unsafe levels. Each worker has their own dedicated water bottle to ensure proper hydration throughout their shift.

IV. Personal Well-Being

Fair trade standards are aimed at not only keeping workers free from injury and illness, but also providing them with a sense that they are safe where they are employed. Data from workplaces applying our standards show a significant improvement in accidents and sicknesses prevented, as well as a feeling of safety on the job:

- A major U.S. retailer sourcing their produce from Fair Trade Certified tomato farms in Mexico indicated only 6% of workers reported accidents in the last year, while 94% said that they always felt physically safe while working.
- We surveyed over 11,000 workers employed at factories across China, India, Mexico, Nepal, and Vietnam that implemented Fair Trade Certified standards between 2016 – 2022 and learned that 90% of the respondents now feel safe working there (vs. 65% in 2016).
- The implementation of our standards at Indonesian fisheries has shown a steady improvement in worker safety over time, with survey respondents indicating that only 45% of fishers always wore lifejackets at sea in 2016, which rose to 52% in 2018, then 72% in 2020; now over 90% indicate that they always feel safe working on their vessel.

DARWIN PEREZ packs recently harvested Mini Roma on-the-vine tomatoes at Campo Ciari, Triunfo Santa Rosa, Guaymas, Sonora, Mexico.

V. On-Site Safety Equipment

An important way to prevent major injuries and illnesses on the job is through the ready availability of appropriate equipment. Fair trade certification requires adequate first aid response supplies, well-maintained PPE sufficient for tasks, and the provision of any reasonable accommodations for work that poses risk to workers' health. To this end:

- Franklin Baker Company, a producer of Fair Trade Certified coconuts in the Philippines, has provided not only first aid kits for workers, but also cash assistance to employees who tested positive for COVID-19 to take care of their medical expenses and food. Another coconut producer, The Peter Paul Philippines Corporation, supplied workers with hygiene kits that include facemasks, soap, and vitamins.
- In South America, Peruvian Fair Trade Certified coffee cooperative Asociación Provincial de Cafetaleros Solidarios San Ignacio presented workers with COVID training, bio-safety products, as well as first aid kits; the Colombian Cooperativa Departamental de Caficultores del Huila LTDA distributed biosafety products and medicine supplies to employees.
- Indonesian Fair Trade Certified fisheries provided sea-worthy clothing, raincoats, and fishing knives to improve safety and efficiency.

"Fair trade is a great incentive to keep improving; it's a sign of trust. I enjoy working for a company that has this certification and high standards."

BRENDA GUADALUPE PRADO RODRIGUEZ, a quality control supervisor at the MHMR packing plant, Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico.





Harvesting sugar cane at Fair Trade Certified organic sugar producer CORA in Tebicuarymi, Paraguari, Paraguay.

Protecting Sugar Cane Workers

The cultivation of sugar cane is labor intensive, with daily exposure to hazards leaving workers at risk for injury. The distribution of appropriate safety equipment is essential to lowering the risk of work-related incidents and increasing workers' sense of safety.

The Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA), a Fair Trade Certified association of sugar producers located in the Orange Walk & Corozal Districts of Belize, helped facilitate field workers receiving effective gear to help safeguard their well-being while cultivating their crop. This year, the equipment set included safety mesh goggles, shin guards, protective head gear, anti-cut gloves, and safety vests. At present, 1,468 BSCFA cane cutters have received equipment and 272 of their drivers now have safety vests.

The initiative illustrates how adherence to fair trade standards can have a tangible impact on worker safety. In this case, much-needed safety equipment was provided to meet the standards, benefitting everyone from the individual workers to the community overall.

VI. Clean Drinking Water and Sanitary Conditions

At this moment, 2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services and 3.6 billion lack safely managed sanitation services.³ These crises are compounded by unsafe hygiene practices, which result in widespread diseases and devastating childhood mortality rates stemming from these conditions. Fair trade standards seek to promote increased health and safety for farmers, workers, and fishers by targeting the elimination of poor sanitation, unsafe drinking water, and inadequate hygiene at the workplace. At the same time, Fair Trade Community Development Funds can be applied to address outstanding water, hygiene, and sanitary needs of workers and their families at home.



In 2018, the Kpatabonou Village, in the Oumé section of Ivory Coast, completely renovated its water pump with Community Development Funds received through the local cooperatives' partnerships with Fair Trade USA.

About Community Development Funds

For every Fair Trade Certified product sold, the producer earns an additional amount of money that goes into a worker-controlled Community Development Fund. From there, a committee decides together how to spend their funds to improve their lives and meet their unique social, economic, and environmental needs. Resources can be directed towards a diverse range of community-based projects, from better water and sanitation access to worker residency improvements.

Kabre Ousseni, an Ivory Coast farmer, is benefitting from a Fair Trade Community Funds project to install a water pump that will provide safe drinking water for workers as well as the local community: "We will be able to take water from the pump. Before that, we were getting water from the ponds, but that's not good for our health, especially for children's health ... [When the project was complete] there was nothing but joy, I can't even describe it. We were very impatient and when the day came, we all gathered and we were all really happy. There was a celebration and a lot of joy."

Workplace Hygiene Begins at Home

The Intebaj SAPI de CV tomato growers located in Salamanca & Santiago Valley in Guanajuato, Mexico recognized that the bathrooms of 50 of their workers' residential homes (housing over 200 individuals in total) lacked basic sanitary infrastructure. A Community Development Funds project is now helping to fund construction costs for each of the bathrooms identified as needing upgrades.

The renovations include new sinks and showers and replacing flimsy materials such as wood and cardboard. The unhygienic bathrooms will continue to be addressed to help prevent illnesses contributing to absences from work and medical expenses. These improvements not only make sanitary conditions accessible for the workers and their families, but also enhance their sense of health and well-being.



A bathroom renovation design for employee homes in Guanajuato, Mexico.



BEATRIZ ADRIANA BUENROSTRO SIERRA, an employee of Intebaj SAPI de CV and mother of two, considers herself fortunate to be among the recipients of the renovations: "It provides a better place to live for my children, an improvement in the health of my family ... I [previously] had to use shared bathrooms where other people used them. I didn't like that due to hygiene and health reasons, so for me this project is very good because the bathroom includes all the basics, the shower, toilet, sink, things that are needed to live well."

A GLOBAL INITIATIVE



Fair Trade USA is proud to align its practices with the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) adopted by all United Nations Member States⁴ in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. While the SDGs were primarily conceived as government-level objectives, achievement of the goals and targets will require creativity, know-how, technology, and financial resources from all stakeholders, including the business community.

We track our impact and measure progress against 6 of the 17 SDGs⁵, with our focus on Safe Working Conditions supporting two specifically:

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6: CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Ensure Availability and Sustainable Management of Water and Sanitation for All



United Nations

Goal 6 includes a target to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

Fair Trade

Fair trade standards require that workers have access to potable water and adequate sanitation facilities on plantations and in factories.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL 8: DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Promote Sustained, Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Full and Productive Employment and Decent Work for All



United Nations

Goal 8 includes a target to protect labor rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.

Fair Trade

Fair Trade USA's standards minimize workplace risks and ensure that appropriate measures are taken to ensure that workers and farmers are safe.

VII. Building an Equitable World

Fair Trade USA recognizes the establishment and maintenance of safe working conditions as essential to bettering lives and enhancing sustainability. By setting rigorous standards for worksite protection, sanitary conditions, and clean water access, Fair Trade Certified products can contribute to more equitable worker conditions across the globe. This in turn helps create thriving communities, businesses, and production systems that mutually benefit one another. Through collaboration with our partners, we aspire to improve livelihoods, protect the environment, and build resilient, transparent supply chains.



SELMA SOARES DA SILVA, sugarcane harvester at Goiasa in Goiás, Brazil and beneficiary of Fair Trade Community Development Funds that support community initiatives.

VIII. References

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¹ Azzi, Manal, *UN Chronicle*, "Together We Can Build a Culture of Safety and Health at Work," April 27, 2022

² <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/why-fair-trade/theory-of-change>

³ <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/water-sanitation-and-hygiene/>

⁴ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁵ <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/why-fair-trade/sustainable-development-goals>