



Standards Development and Revision Policy

December 2015

Introduction

Fair Trade USA works to bring the benefits of Fair Trade to workers, farmers and communities across the world, allowing them to participate in international markets in ways that are fair and equitable today as well as to help them to progress and acquire greater business capacity over time. In developing and revising our standards, we will follow best practices in standards, which requires the following:

- Defining the objectives of the standard and justifying the need for its development or revision
- Identifying affected stakeholders and providing them with information about the standard development/revision process and how they can participate
- Having public consultations and ensuring that there is a balance of interests participating
- Providing a variety of opportunities and tools for stakeholders to participate, such as teleconferences, meetings, and webinars
- Ensuring a variety of opinions are given equal weight and providing for balanced decision-making
- Making standards and supporting documents publicly available and reviewing our standards on a regular basis

This document outlines the process we will use to write and revise our standards.

Objective

The objective of this policy is to ensure a transparent and equitable standards-setting process which allows ample opportunity for stakeholder engagement, in line with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

Scope

The procedures outlined in this document are valid for all existing and future Fair Trade USA standards including for instance those for Farm Workers, Independent Smallholders, Trade, Apparel and Home Goods, and Capture Fisheries. It is not relevant for the development or revision of other Fair Trade USA policies, for instance those related to certification, pricing, or labeling.

Proposing a new standard or a change to an existing standard

Fair Trade USA may internally initiate the review or development of a standard, or it may be requested at any time by any stakeholder by writing to standards@fairtradeusa.org. All standards are reviewed at least every five years.

The Fair Trade USA Standards Team will evaluate all proposals and Fair Trade USA's Senior Management Team will decide if the proposal requires the development of a new standard or if a major or minor revision to an existing standard is required.

Minor revisions to existing standards

Minor revisions include improving or clarifying language, correcting typing or grammatical errors, updating references to other standards where these have changed, or allowing for a change in the scope of products eligible for the standard. Fair Trade USA can make minor revisions to standards at its discretion. Fair Trade USA's Vice President of Certification, Standards, and Impact shall approve any minor revisions.

Major revisions to existing standards and development of new standards

Major revisions are modifications of the standards that significantly change the intent and thus require the formal stakeholder consultation and approval process described below. Any five-year review of an existing standard will be considered a major review.

All new standards development will also follow the formal process described below.

Developing a Project Plan

For all new standards and for any major revisions to existing standards, Fair Trade USA will develop a public Project Plan which includes:

- The objective and rationale of the need for the new standard or revision
- A summary of the activities and steps to be taken, with an approximate timeline
- Decision-making procedures and who is responsible for decision-making
- Contact information for how to contribute to the consultation process

As they are developed, project plans for Fair Trade USA standards reviews will be available on www.FairTradeUSA.org/certification/standards. Any interested party shall be allowed to comment on and suggest changes to the Project Plan.

Advisory Committees

For certain projects, Fair Trade USA may create an Advisory Committee consisting of external stakeholders with expertise in the relevant product or production set-up. Advisory Committees may assist in the standards drafting process, analysis of feedback received during public consultation, and/or field testing phases of the project. The roles and responsibilities of the Advisory Committee will be outlined in the Project Plan wherever relevant.

Drafting new standards and revisions to existing standards

The drafting process will generally be led by the Standards Team at Fair Trade USA. During the drafting process, key experts and stakeholders including certification bodies may be consulted for advice.

The Vice President of Certification, Standards, and Impact is usually responsible for approving the first draft of the standard for public consultation, but the Fair Trade USA Senior Management Team may also have that responsibility, depending on the project. The party responsible for approving public drafts will be identified in the Project Plan.

First public consultation on draft standards

Once a draft has been approved for public consultation, Fair Trade USA will publish the draft standard on our website and actively solicit feedback from stakeholders including producers, industry partners,

NGOs, and other experts. Feedback may be collected via teleconferences, meetings, personal conversations, webinars, written submissions, and field tests. If feedback is not received from all core stakeholder groups, including producers, workers, traders, retailers, and external experts such as producer support organizations, a special effort will be made to contact these groups to solicit feedback.

This public consultation period lasts at least 60 days.

Analysis of feedback and further revisions

All feedback received during the consultation will be analyzed and discussed internally at Fair Trade USA. Feedback will be summarized for discussion by the Advisory Committee, if applicable.

All comments will be taken into account and considered on an objective and equitable basis. Based on these comments, a new draft standard will be published for a further round of public stakeholder consultation. This second round normally also lasts for 60 days, but can be shorter or cancelled altogether if there were no major comments or contentious issues in the first round of consultation, or where adequate and balanced stakeholder participation occurred in the first round. More than two rounds of public consultation may be held if substantive issues continue to be identified.

For each draft as well as the final version of the standard, a public summary of the comments received during the previous consultation round, and how they were taken into account, will be made available on the Fair Trade USA website.

Decision-making on final content

The Fair Trade USA Board is responsible for approving the final content of all new standards and all major standards reviews, although they may delegate this decision-making to the Senior Management Team or the Vice President of Certification, Standards, and Impact. The exact decision-maker will be identified in the Project Plan.

Revisions to this policy

This policy will be regularly reviewed. We invite any stakeholder to provide feedback on this policy and suggestions for improvements by writing to standards@fairtradeusa.org.