

What is Fair Trade Certification?

Fair Trade Certification is a third-party certification process that sets standards for the way coffee is produced and how much a farmer/farming cooperative earns per pound of coffee sold. The criteria are:

- Fair prices for farmers and decent working and living conditions for workers
- Direct trade with farmers, bypassing middlemen
- Free association of workers and co-ops, with structures for democratic decision-making
- Access to capital
- Sustainable agricultural practices including restricted use of agrochemicals

From TransfairUSA.org

Certification ensures the farmer will always have a steady price to depend on, and leads to economic development in cooperatives, with some cooperatives financing health care, schools, and infrastructure, as well as diversification into other crops and into subsistence agriculture.

How can I tell if it's Fair Trade Certified?

The Fair Trade label is a way for consumers to know these criteria were met before the product ever makes it to the shelf. Look for the label on your products – if it's not there, it's not Fair Trade certified.

How much do farmers make for their product under Fair Trade certification versus free trade market prices?

This varies from product to product. Since MSU's Real Food Group is working on coffee, we'll use it as an example. Coffee on the free trade market varies month to month. In 2002, it dipped to the lowest price in 100 years – US\$0.20/lb. The cost of production can vary from country to country, but it exists in the range of US\$0.70/lb – US\$1.10/lb. Right now, it hovers in the US\$0.60/lb- US\$0.80/lb range.

Fair Trade certified coffee sells at a US\$1.26/lb minimum (US\$1.46/lb if it's also certified organic) – the price set by the [International Coffee Organization \(ICO\)](http://InternationalCoffeeOrganization.org) when the United States pulled out of the ICO in 1990. If the free trade market price increases above the Fair Trade price, the Fair Trade price will increase to US\$0.05/lb (US\$0.15/lb) more than the free market price – ensuring that Fair Trade certified farmers are always making more.

Does Fair Trade Certified also mean it's certified organic?

Fair Trade certified does not mean it's also certified organic by default. Many Fair Trade certified products are organic. Some are certified, others are not, and others are not organic at all. Organic certification costs money, and some farmers choose to grow crop using organic agriculture, but choose to pay for Fair Trade certification over organic certification – and some choose both. One of the criteria is that farmers must commit to sustainable agriculture, and for many farmers, this means utilizing organic agricultural methods.

Is Fair Trade certification limited to coffee?

Fair Trade certified coffee is probably the most common Fair Trade certified product. However, products like tea, chocolate, cocoa, bananas, mangoes, grapes, apples, soccer balls, and crafts are also available, among other things. [Transfair USA's](http://TransfairUSA.org) web site is the best place to go to find the

most complete list available in the US, while the [Fair Trade Labeling Organization's web site](#) is the best place to go to find what Fair Trade certified products are available worldwide – and most of these are available online.

Where can I buy Fair Trade certified products?

Fair Trade certified products are available at a variety of locations nowadays – from supermarkets to food co-ops to natural foods stores. Many stores are online.

If you want to know where Fair Trade certified products are available in the greater Lansing area, please see the [Fair Trade For Sale](#) page. We'll be constantly updating this as we find out more places offer Fair Trade certified products.

My store/cafeteria/coffee shop/restaurant doesn't sell Fair Trade certified products. How can I get them to do so?

Fill out a comment card! Write an email! Meet with the manager or owner! Ask the clerk/cashier/waitperson!

These are all effective ways to get more Fair Trade certified products where you buy. Use your purchasing power and buy Fair Trade certified products. Use democracy and vote with your dollars and your voice, and get your friends to do the same. To go a step further, get involved in a local Fair Trade campaign, or start one on your own if there isn't one. Contact [Oxfam America](#) for more details.

I want to know more. What do I do?

Contact the Real Food Group. Contact Oxfam America. Contact TransfairUSA. Contact the Fair Trade Labelling Organization.

You can read more at: [TransfairUSA.org](#)
[FairTrade.net](#)
[OxfamAmerica.org](#)