



**Fair for Life  
Position Statement on Plantation Certification**

Traditionally, Fair Trade applied specifically to marginalized small-scale producers in the 'Global South'. As the Fair Trade movement has developed and grown over the years, its context and relevancy has also continued to change and adapt to our growing understanding of how it might best help marginalized producers by meeting market demand. The earliest expressions of "Fair Trade" products were those produced by handicraft artisans and sold into 'alternative trading organizations', which are basically now the many fair trade stores that primarily carry FTF (Fair Trade Federation) and WFTO (World Fair Trade Organization) items. Later, product certification became popularized by formal certification of fair trade standards created by FLO (the Fairtrade Labeling Organization). Initially, fair trade certified items through FLO standards were only allowed to be produced by small-scale producers who were organized into formal grower cooperatives. Later, as FLO added tea to their product standards, they realized they would have to allow certification of plantations, because tea is mostly not produced by small-scale farmers or farmer cooperatives. Since then, FLO Fairtrade certification of Hired Labour has been opened to many products, notably flowers, fruits, wine and vegetables.

When Fair for Life Fair Trade certification was developed, IMO brought to the process their long history and expertise of many years of organic certification with groups of small farmers. Fair for Life Fair Trade certification was developed primarily for these groups. However, as cooperativism has a much different history in certain parts of the world, such as in many African countries where producers largely see it as a negative concept, formal cooperatives were never a viable option for small and medium size growers in order to gain Fair Trade certification. Therefore, Fair for Life also allows the certification of such contract farming producers. Another approach that Fair for Life took was to allow certification of plantations and estates, as a fair trade focus on the hired labor on the farms. Experience had shown that often the most marginalized social groups in a local setting were those in hired labor situations. In many countries, agricultural workers are among the most exploited and vulnerable groups of society and are hence an important Fair Trade target group. Fair for Life requires fair labor criteria to apply to labor on small farms, as well, which is an approach different from mainstream fair trade certification. In the case of hired labor on a plantation or estate, the workers would be the beneficiaries and administrators of the fair trade premium. In fact, in Fair for Life certification even hired labor in a processor that is significantly involved with production can be part of the fair trade focus and fair labor conditions are always verified. To date, IMO and Fair for Life has certified approximately 20 plantations (many of them in wine production), ranging from independent family size farms to medium size farms. Only plantations or estates that adhere to the stringent Fair for Life Social & Fair Trade criteria can be certified. Among these standard criteria are community relations, such as the requirement that the plantation has no negative impact on local or indigenous communities, the environment or local sustainable development. In case of certifying very large plantations / hired labour producers (that Fair for Life is currently not certifying), local stakeholders would be consulted as part of their annual audit and certification process.

*Dr. Peter Stamm Berger*