



# Frequently Asked Questions

Regarding the Consultation & Revision of the Agricultural  
Production Standard for Application in Dairy

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Fair Trade USA

Lead Authors  
[standards@fairtradeusa.org](mailto:standards@fairtradeusa.org)



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# 1. About the Agricultural Production Standard (APS)

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## 1.1. What is the APS?

The APS sets the requirements for Fair Trade Certified™ agricultural production systems globally – covering diverse groups and sizes of farms and associated processing facilities under one standard. We recognize that sustainability is a journey, and our standards focus on continuous improvement over time to achieve superior social, economic, and environmental practices. Farms and facilities are audited against criteria applicable to their farm and facility size (Small, Mid or Large). APS compliance requirements are grouped thematically into six modules on:

- Empowerment
- Fundamental Rights at Work
- Wages, Working Conditions, and Access to Services
- Biodiversity, Ecosystem Function, and Sustainable Production
- Traceability and Transparency
- Internal Management System

Fair Trade Certification, however, is more than just the APS. In addition to our rigorous standards, our model drives impact and value through the investment of Community Development Funds and the provision of producer support services, such as education and training on human rights, leadership, gender equity, and financial resilience.

Please visit our [website](#) to learn more about our model.

## 1.2. How does the APS benefit producers?

The APS intends to support producers on a journey of continuous improvement. The APS is less prescriptive on methods, and more focused on outcomes, giving producers more options and opportunities to meet the same intent. In addition to core criteria all groups must meet, producers have a choice in guiding their own progress: they can prioritize which criteria would drive the most immediate benefit to them and which criteria make the most sense for their business at a given time along their journey.

## 1.3. How was the APS developed and how were stakeholders involved?

The APS was developed through a multi-year, rigorous and transparent review and revision process, which included extensive consultation on two draft versions of the APS. Over the course of its development, Fair Trade USA received feedback from more than 100 companies and organizations, including producer groups representing both smallholders and large growers, labor experts, trade unions, NGOs and fair trade movement organizations, buyers, and brands. Additional direct input from farm workers and smallholders was collected through 10 regional workshops, and real-time implementation of the draft standard assessed through 13 field tests with diverse producer groups. Fair Trade USA also hosted an international Stakeholder Summit with participants from 14 different countries to workshop the APS and problem solve around key issue areas identified in the first phase of feedback.

All feedback received was considered in detail during the course of the revision and finalization of the APS, which was completed and published on March 1, 2017. Summaries of feedback from each phase of consultation, and Fair Trade USA's responses to that feedback are available on our [website](#) in English and Spanish.



You can find more information about the process we use to write and revise all of our standards in our [Standard Development and Revision Procedure](#), available on our website. This process follows the [ISEAL Code of Good Practice](#) for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

## 2. About the Dairy Pilot Program

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### 2.1. Why did Fair Trade USA decide to expand into the U.S. dairy sector?

Fair Trade USA is regularly innovating to bring the fair trade model to new sectors and regions where we can drive positive benefits to farmers, workers, and supply chains. One such expansion took place in 2017 when Fair Trade USA decided to bring our unique combination of rigorous standards, Community Development Fund, and producer services to farmers and workers in the United States.

Reports of long hours, wage theft, unsafe working conditions, sexual harassment, and inadequate housing were brought to Fair Trade USA's attention by dairy industry stakeholders. These challenges, particularly those faced by small-scale dairies and dairy workers, are similar to other agricultural contexts where Fair Trade USA operates, leading the organization to hypothesize that Fair Trade USA programs would be a good fit for this industry. Additionally, Fair Trade USA found that the U.S. dairy industry lacked a recognizable and credible third-party certification and/or consumer facing seal that addresses these issues.

Fair Trade USA spent early 2019 conducting research and holding conversations to better understand the dairy industry and other sustainability and labor initiatives in the dairy space. The goal of the exploration was to determine whether and how the systems, operations, implementation, and auditing of the Agricultural Production Standard (APS) could be applicable in a dairy setting. The exploration confirmed that Fair Trade Certification presents a strong foundation to address the socio-economic, labor, and farm culture issues in the dairy sector in the United States.

### 2.2. Who was involved in the development of the APS Draft Dairy Amendment?

Select stakeholders including, but not limited to, experts, NGOs, and industry representatives within the fields of dairying and sustainable certification schemes were consulted regarding: 1) the overall program strategy; 2) applicability and comprehensiveness of the APS in addressing relevant dairying specific issues and in providing value to the dairy supply chains; and, 3) identifying areas of concern which should receive special emphasis and attention during the pilot field trials and public consultation. The APS Draft Dairy Amendment incorporates the formal and informal feedback received during this process and highlights areas of the standard for special focus during consultation. Additionally, initial findings from the pilot field trials that are currently underway to test the applicability of the APS in a dairy context were incorporated into the APS Draft Dairy Amendment.

### 2.3. What issues does Fair Trade USA aim to address on dairies via certification?

The implementation of the dairy-adapted APS is intended to drive the same [social and economic outcomes](#) as the existing APS. The dairy program intends to support lasting, positive change in the impact areas of income sustainability, community and individual well-being, and empowerment. The APS compliance requirements are grouped thematically into modules on empowerment; fundamental rights and work; wages, working conditions and access to services; traceability and transparency; and, internal management system.



Fair Trade USA believes the APS serves as a suitable foundation to ensure safe working conditions, freedom of association, protections against harassment and discrimination, provision of benefits, clear contracts and pay slips, reasonable working hours and overtime pay, safe and sanitary housing conditions, and to increase access to on-the-job training.

Although the APS is globally applicable, only dairies in the United States will be eligible for fair trade certification, as the program is being developed initially to focus on driving benefits for U.S. supply chains, farmers, and workers.

Due to significant differences between the environmental issues and approaches to environmental stewardship in food crop production as compared to dairies, the environmental requirements of the APS will not be applied to dairies as the program is piloted. Specifically, criteria in Module 4 related to biodiversity, ecosystem function, and sustainable production will not be audited. Fair Trade USA will explore how best to address critical environmental sustainability issues in dairies in partnership with experts and organizations already working in the space over the course of the program development, consultation, and finalization.

## 2.4. Will Fair Trade USA's standards address animal welfare issues?

While we recognize that animal welfare is a critically important issue, there are already dedicated organizations working to drive improvements in animal welfare on farms in the U.S. In our research, we also found that the majority of the dairy sector in the U.S. is already engaged in a second or third-party verified animal welfare program, so addressing animal welfare issues by adding compliance criteria to the Dairy Amendment would create duplicative requirements for farmers and overlaps with existing industry initiatives. Because of these findings, we believe that assuring continuous improvements in animal care practices is best led by organizations that specialize in this field, and not by Fair Trade USA.

By supporting farmer and worker welfare, we believe there will be indirect animal welfare benefits on Fair Trade Certified dairy farms because taking care of cows starts with taking care of the people who care for them.

## 2.5. How are Fair Trade USA and Chobani partnering, and is this program available to others?

Fair Trade USA is piloting the application of the APS Draft Dairy Amendment in partnership with Chobani and their dairy supply chain. Chobani has made Fair Trade Certification a key pillar of their "[Milk Matters](#)" initiative, which tackles issues related to workers' rights, animal care, environmental stewardship, local sourcing, and community development.

Although Fair Trade USA is conducting pilot field trials in partnership with Chobani, this expansion of the APS scope is an industry-wide initiative. This means that all U.S. dairy producers are eligible to apply for Fair Trade Certification and that all brands wishing to buy and sell Fair Trade Certified dairy are eligible to do so. Our goal is to create true transformation at scale for dairy producers and workers by ensuring the benefits of Fair Trade Certification are available to all.

We encourage all interested dairy supply chain actors to contact [info@fairtradeusa.org](mailto:info@fairtradeusa.org) to learn more about how Fair Trade Certification can improve producer and employee welfare, reduce supply chain risk, and engage consumers.



## 3. About the Dairy Sector Public Consultation

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### 3.1. Why is Fair Trade USA consulting on the dairy-amended APS and what are the goals?

Following the [ISEAL Code of Good Practices](#), it is best practice in the sustainability standards community to engage a balanced and representative group of stakeholders in the development or substantial revision of a standard. Robust stakeholder consultation is a required part of Fair Trade USA's revision process for major changes, as defined in the [Standard Development and Revision Procedure](#). Since Fair Trade USA is expanding the scope of the APS into a completely new sector with unique characteristics, operations, and challenges, we believe it is important to follow these best practices to ensure the final standard is fit-for-purpose in the U.S. dairy industry.

As such, Fair Trade USA is seeking input and feedback from stakeholders to inform the finalization of the dairy-amended APS, and to refine the Fair Trade dairy program and offerings more broadly. In particular, Fair Trade USA has identified and noted some requirements within the APS Draft Dairy-Amendment that we know will need additional testing and research to ensure applicability in the dairy industry. Gaining feedback and expert input on these flagged topics is the primary goal of the public consultation process.

Through the public consultation process we aim to:

- Identify what adaptations and modifications to the APS are necessary to ensure it is well-suited and meaningful for the dairy industry in the United States
- Understand whether there are any critical industry issues not currently addressed by the APS, that should be considered for inclusion in the standard
- Determine whether Fair Trade USA is driving the intended outcomes highlighted in our Theory of Change for the dairy industry

### 3.2. How can I participate in the consultation and what type of feedback is Fair Trade USA looking for?

Fair Trade USA invites you to provide feedback on our APS Draft Dairy Amendment during the public comment period which begins in early July and ends on September 18, 2020. In particular, we encourage you to focus your review and feedback on the dairy-specific modifications to the APS, which are noted in red font and within the “Dairy Amendment & Guidance” columns of the document tables. Additionally, the Public Comment Form available on our [website](#) highlights the targeted consultation questions we are seeking input on. Please see below for more detailed instructions on how to get involved.

#### How to contribute:

**Step 1:** Gain an overview by visiting the Fair Trade USA website and our Certified Dairy web page.

- Review the [Dairy Project Plan](#) to learn more about our process, timeline, and objectives.
- Visit the [Fair Trade USA website](#) to learn more about how our model works.
- Review the [APS Overview](#) for an introduction to Fair Trade USA and the APS.
- Read the [APS Draft Dairy Amendment](#) to familiarize yourself with the content of this standard revision. The introduction provides guidance on how to read the APS as well as information on the Dairy Pilot Program.
- Learn more about our impact goals in our [Theory of Change and Impact Management System](#).



**Step 2:** Share your feedback with us through our Public Comment Form, which can be completed online or emailed directly to [standards@fairtradeusa.org](mailto:standards@fairtradeusa.org). If you would like the opportunity to provide more in-depth feedback by participating in an interview or workshop, please email [standards@fairtradeusa.org](mailto:standards@fairtradeusa.org) to express your interest.

### 3.3. What happens to the feedback I'll provide?

Feedback received during the public consultation period will be reviewed and used to refine the Draft Dairy Amendment. It will be processed and analyzed in combination with learnings and data collected during the field trials and audits with pilot participants. Fair Trade USA's external Standards Committee—made up of experts from a variety of farming, technical, NGO, and agricultural industry backgrounds—will support and advise on this revision process as well as play a critical role in understanding and reacting to stakeholder feedback on core strategic and technical issues.

A summary of the comments received during the public consultation, and Fair Trade USA responses will be publicly shared in early 2021. Our aim is to use your feedback to ensure that the APS is relevant and impactful in the dairy sector and that Fair Trade USA meets the needs of our partner producers, consumers, and businesses.

We anticipate that the revised version of Fair Trade USA's APS will be published in Q1 of 2021, along with summaries of feedback received and changes made.

### 3.4. Where will additional information be made publicly available?

Information about the emerging program and opportunities to comment and provide feedback on the dairy-amended APS will be posted in the Standards section of the Fair Trade USA [website](#).



## ABOUT FAIR TRADE USA

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Fair Trade USA is the leading third-party certifier of fair trade products in the United States. We enable consumers to make a difference with their dollar. We help people and the planet work in tandem so both are healthy and sustained. We provide farmers in developing nations with the tools to thrive as international business people. Instead of creating dependency on aid, we use a market-based approach that gives farmers fair prices, workers safe conditions, and entire communities resources for fair, healthy, and sustainable lives. We seek to inspire the rise of the conscious consumer and eliminate exploitation. Learn more at [FairTradeCertified.org](http://FairTradeCertified.org).

### Contact

Fair Trade USA

1901 Harrison Street, Suite 1700

Oakland, CA 94612

USA

Phone: +1 (510) 663-5260

Fax: +1 (510) 663-5264

E-mail: [info@fairtradeusa.org](mailto:info@fairtradeusa.org)

Website: [FairTradeCertified.org](http://FairTradeCertified.org)

