



Environmental Benefits of Fair Trade Coffee, Cocoa & Tea



Buying Fair Trade Certified™ products encourages environmentally friendly cultivation, which protects land, wildlife, and human communities.

Coffee & Cocoa

Background: A sun-grown coffee trend

Traditionally, coffee has been grown by small-scale farmers in forested agro-ecosystems that are high in biodiversity and free of agrochemicals. Since the 1970s, in an effort to raise production volumes, coffee growers have increasingly adopted higher-yielding hybrid plant varieties that grow better under the open sun. In addition to requiring massive deforestation of the diverse shade trees that grow over traditional farms, these modernized hybrids also require heavier applications of chemical fertilizers and pesticides - inputs that harm workers, wildlife, and local water supplies. In contrast to other farms, most Fair Trade farms rely on organic fertilizers and natural pest control. The combination of deforestation, soil erosion, habitat loss, wildlife elimination, and agricultural chemical pollution resulting from this growing trend in technified crops is creating a devastating impact on the environment and human communities.

Environmental stewardship

Fair Trade has clearly defined core criteria requiring environmentally sensitive production on Fair Trade Certified coffee and cocoa farms, including promotion of integrated crop management.

Maintaining traditional, diverse tropical forest systems

Fair Trade farms traditionally "intercrop" coffee or cocoa with various kinds of shade and fruit trees. Such shaded coffee and cocoa farms can be as biodiverse as natural forest ecosystems, hosting a rich array of wildlife, including migratory songbirds. These shaded farms also protect topsoil from erosion by heavy rains and wind.

Financial incentives to become organic certified

Fair Trade provides financial incentives for farmers to become organic certified. In addition to the standard Fair Trade floor price of \$1.26/lb for coffee and \$0.80/lb. for cocoa, the Fair Trade model includes an additional \$0.15/lb premium for certified organic coffee and \$0.09/lb. for certified organic cocoa - a strong incentive for farmers and more than enough to cover certification costs.

Technical assistance programs

Fair Trade co-ops often invest in technical training in soil improvement, agroforestry, organic production, composting and environmentally-friendly processing techniques.

Tea

Historically, tea was cultivated without the use of chemicals or artificial fertilizers. Tea estates depended heavily on tea workers for such tasks as weeding and gathering cow manure to use as fertilizer. However, much like coffee and cocoa, tea producers have similarly undergone a trend in technification since the 1970s - adopting more chemical-intensive fertilization and pest control techniques. While yields increased in the short-term, they began to decrease shortly thereafter both in quantity and in quality.

Nearly 100% of Fair Trade Certified tea in the U.S. is organic. Over the past decade, several estates that have adopted organic cultivation have been able to reverse the decline in yields caused by technification. More importantly, they have been able to offer a better product: tea that tastes better, is better for the environment, and that doesn't put tea estate workers at risk of exposure to dangerous chemicals. For estate owners, tea estate workers, and tea drinkers alike, organic tea cultivation is an important step toward environmental stewardship.