

# A Report on Market and Supply Chain Research on Domestic Fair Trade





**This report is a product of the Center for Fair and Alternative Trade's (CFAT) newest project area, Food Justice: Production to Consumption. Prepared by Shelby Coopwood, CFAT Graduate Research Assistant. Supervised by Joshua Sbicca, Ph.D, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Colorado State University, Associate of CFAT and Laura T. Reynolds, Ph.D, Professor of Sociology at Colorado State University, Director of CFAT.**

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## **Part I:**

# **Academic Research on Domestic Fair Trade: Annotated Bibliography of 10 Key Articles**

**Brown, Sandy and Christy Getz. 2015. "Domestic Fair Trade in the United States." Pp. 174-190 in *Handbook on Research on Fair Trade*, edited by L. Raynolds and E. Bennett. Northampton MA: Edward Elgar.**

This study draws on interviews with farm labor and NGO representatives as well as an analysis of publicly available documents from a variety of social certification initiatives designed to promote domestic fair trade. Some of the organizations and initiatives include the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA), The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP), The Food Alliance, the Fair Trade Sustainability Alliance (FairTSA), the Equitable Food Initiative (EFI), Labor Link and Fair Trade USA.

In their analysis of the DFTA, the authors contend that the consensus-based governance of the DFTA has led to challenges over differing perspectives. The authors suggest that attempts to address both farmer and farmworker interests have made it difficult for the DFTA to reach consensus on a variety of issues. The DFTA's consideration of farmworker issues stems in part from the participation of the AJP. The AJP has developed a set of standards that the authors distinguish as a high bar approach, and claim that this has made progress slow within the voluntary market for standards.

The authors' analysis of other domestic social certification initiatives finds that, unlike the DFTA and AJP, other initiatives do not necessarily delineate farm size as a measure of social justice. These initiatives' standards are broader yet face significant challenges, specifically certifying farms in the context of a voluntary market-based system in which there is little incentive for larger players to improve working conditions and wages. Several initiatives, like the EFI, are attempting to increase buy-in from larger-scale farming operations and distributors. It is through food safety improvements that the EFI has garnered most of its media coverage and serves as the main reason farms join, rather than for the labor standards.

Other initiatives, like the Food Alliance, include labor practices in their program standards, yet operations can be certified without meeting any labor criteria. FairTSA has attempted to enter the market for US certification of US production although they have yet to certify any domestic operations. Labor Link, a non-profit subsidiary of Fair Trade USA, aims to increase transparency in working conditions in factories and on farms through mobile phone survey technology. Unlike EFI, it does not use certification or labels as part of its social justice monitoring program; it uses worker feedback.

The authors conclude that in the US, the preoccupation with small-scale family farming contributes to a misperception of the social relations of agricultural production. They suggest that US-based fair trade efforts would benefit from an acknowledgement of the structural differences between farm employers and farmworkers, a critical assessment of the fundamental role of wage labor on 'family farms,' and a recognition that labeling and certification can support labor regulation, but cannot replace regulation.

**Duram, Leslie and Amber Mead. 2014. "Exploring Linkages between Consumer Food Co-operatives and Domestic Fair Trade in the United States." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 23(3):235-242.**

This study highlights the interactions between two stakeholders in alternative food networks: consumer food co-operatives (co-ops) and Domestic Fair Trade (DFT). (It pulls data from the Mead 2011 study also discussed in this bibliography.) Five consumer co-ops that are independent members of the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) participated in this study. The participating co-ops are in Massachusetts (2), New York (1), and Minnesota (2). One manager from each store was interviewed. This study also included a document analysis of key documents from four years (2007-2010) of DFTA annual meetings.

From the interviews with the co-op managers, two common themes emerged: (1) DFT concepts are central to co-op activities, and (2) many challenges exist for incorporating DFT into co-op business practices. There was a consensus among managers that DFT was an extension of their existing values and beliefs. They felt that their co-ops already integrate Fair Trade principles into their business practice, so devoting additional time and resources to the DFTA was not necessary. At the time of the study, interaction with the DFTA depended mostly on the individual co-ops seeking support.

Some of the challenges for incorporating DFT into co-op business practices included: the lack of DFT certification or labeling and tracking mechanism to assess percentage of products that are DFT; the interchangeability between DFT and other alternative food network terms; the perception that farmers/producers/laborers in North American do not face similar injustices as those in the global South. Co-op managers say that stakeholders within their food networks possess little awareness of the co-op's commitment to DFT. Managers believe Fair Trade is important to a majority of their customers, but feel they are not willing to pay a higher price for it.

Analyses of the DFTA meetings indicate that one goal of the association is to foster linkages among different food stakeholder groups. The authors suggest that if the DFTA promotes co-ops as 'DFT zones' they may have more success uniting stakeholders. The authors recommend that the DFTA advertise benefits of membership and provide incentives for expanding their member base. This includes providing a clearer picture of what DFT is and what the future holds for the movement. The educated 'foodie' consumer base of co-ops presents an opportunity to bring the DFT movement to the next level of general public acceptance. This research suggests that DFT products must be labeled in order to promote, educate, involve, and unite members of the alternative food network.

**Long, Michael and Douglas Murray. 2012. "Ethical Consumption, Values Convergence/Divergence and Community Development." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 26(2):351-375.**

This study explores convergence and divergence of ethical consumption values through a study of organic, fair trade, and local food consumers in Colorado. The authors define ethical consumption as the act of purchasing products that have additional attributes in addition to their immediate use-value, to signify commitment to their values and/or support changes to unjust market practices. Convergence refers to the process of consumers simultaneously purchasing a variety of ethically produced goods believing that purchasing these products supports similar values. Divergence refers to the support of one, or only a few ethical products, in the belief that the values some products embody are at-odds with the values behind other products.

This study used a mail survey to a random sample of 903 Colorado residents with a 52 percent response rate. The survey contained six sections with questions about consumer knowledge of organic, fair trade, and local goods, their own general purchasing practices, and level of agreements with attitudinal questions. Almost all respondents were familiar with organic and local food, while 43 percent were familiar with fair trade. The findings show that women were more likely to purchase local and fair trade food. Environmental attitudes were highly associated with purchasing organic food, and to a lesser extent with local and fair trade food. Social and political attitudes are most strongly associated with purchasing fair trade products. Purchasing organic and fair trade products was significantly related to checking where a product was manufactured. Consumers who scored significantly higher on the social factor, that is - expressing concern about social issues and working conditions - were more likely to purchase fair trade food.

The authors examined levels of convergence and divergence between consumers of organic, fair trade, and local food. They found that there were local food consumers who converge with organic and fair trade consumers, and a second group that diverges, consuming only local food, and disregarding organic and fair trade. The authors explain this behavior as a reflection of consumer values, where those who converge embrace cultural diversity as well as global social and environmental sustainability, while those who diverge and exclusively support local food are focused only on local concerns. The authors suggest that understanding which ethical consumers converge and the implications of convergence will be important moving forward. Additionally, they suggest that community development organizers need to figure out whether to engage all ethical consumers in an attempt to attract the largest number of consumers, or to focus on select groups.



**Mead, Amber. 2011. *Assessing the Integration of Domestic Fair Trade into Consumer Food Cooperatives in the United States*. MS Thesis: Southern Illinois University.**

This research includes interviews with co-op managers that are DFTA members, surveys taken by co-op shoppers, and document analysis of Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) meetings. This annotation focuses on findings from the surveys of consumers of the co-op as the other findings are discussed in the Duram and Mead (2014) annotation.

The aim of the survey was to determine the participating co-op shoppers' knowledge of domestic fair trade (DFT). There were 110 survey responses from co-op shoppers in nine states. Survey results indicated that 68 percent of the respondents have heard of DFT. Of the 68 percent that have heard of DFT, 53 percent claimed to have heard of it through their local co-op. These numbers indicate that while managers feel they may not be doing enough to educate their consumers, they are offering some information about DFT. However, 94 percent of survey respondents are members or owners of the co-op, which indicates that the survey respondents likely have greater interaction with the individual co-ops and as a result are more likely to be aware of issues of concern for the co-ops. The author contends that while the survey results may be biased, the results indicate how much knowledge core shoppers have about DFT.

Eighty percent of respondents said they are interested in learning more about or becoming involved in DFT. These numbers suggest that the majority of "core" shoppers care about DFT and would like to receive more information. Survey results indicate that a majority of respondents feel fair trade issues and products are important to them. When compared with the data from the interviews, it appears that customers care about DFT issues, but price increases inhibit them from fully supporting the products, which effects the potential growth of DFT within co-ops.

The author concludes that the National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) could be used as an education liaison between the DFTA and US co-ops to increase co-op involvement with DFT. The findings also suggest the need for regional chapters of the DFTA. Implementing a regional chapter system could lead to benefits including: increase in resources for the DFTA through more membership, better support for members, and increased diversity and stakeholder involvement.

**Howard, Philip H. and Patricia Allen. 2010. "Beyond Organic and Fair Trade? An Analysis of Ecolabel Preferences in the United States." *Rural Sociology* 75(2): 244-269.**

This study presents results from a national random sample mail survey. The results indicate interest in integrating a number of political and ethical values more fully into the food system, as well as strong support for the strategy of ecolabeling. Findings suggest that emerging ecolabel criteria focusing on local production and the humane treatment of animals will appeal to the largest number of consumers.

The authors summarize previous research that shows that boycotts (a strategy that asks consumers to buy something as compared to not buy something) appear to be even more effective than boycotts in changing organizational behavior. In regards to ecolabeling as a strategy, consumers must have confidence in the claims made by the ecolabel and must be certain of their authenticity and enforcement. Therefore, the authors suggest the most successful ecolabels rely on third-party certification. The authors warn that the transformative potential of ecolabels should not be overestimated, as market pressures tend to eventually erode standards that present obstacles to capital accumulation. Yet, ecolabels remain one effective tactic as part of a more comprehensive approach.

This study's survey was mailed to 1000 randomly selected respondents in 2006, with 476 surveys completed. The results showed that product labels were the top choice as a source of information, with a brochure or retail display being a close second. These results support the use of ecolabels in efforts to encourage political and ethical consumerism, although the authors assert that other means of providing information at the point of purchase may also have strong appeal. In survey questions asking respondents to rank interest in specific food-system topics, treatment of animals, environmental impacts, and working conditions had mean scores between 7 and 7.5 (on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest). Interestingly, wages scored significantly lower than working conditions. When asked about preference for ecolabel criterion, respondents expressed stronger preference for local and humane criterion, compared to living wage, U.S. grown, and small-scale, which received lower rankings.

The authors conclude that the results of this study may help guide prioritization when multiple criteria are being considered for an ecolabel. This study indicates that consumers are interested in changing the direction of the food system to one that places a greater emphasis on political and ethical values, particularly local production and the humane treatment of animals. The authors suggest that producers committed to ecological sustainability and/or social justice can utilize this information to adjust their production or marketing practices to align with consumer preferences.

**Fridell, Gavin. 2009. "The Co-Operative and the Corporation: Competing Visions of the Future of Fair Trade." *Journal of Business Ethics* 86:81-95.**

This study provided an analysis of the fair trade network in the US and Canada through a comparative evaluation of two different fair trade certified roasters: Planet Bean, a worker-owned co-operative in Guelph, Ontario and Starbucks Coffee Company. For the purpose of this annotation, the focus is primarily on the author's assessment of Planet Bean.

Planet Bean is a Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO) certified worker-owned coffee importer/roaster co-operative that sells 100 percent fair trade, organic coffee. Planet Bean has constructed what the author considers to be an expansive stakeholder model of fair trade, one which includes not just workers and farmers in the global South, but workers in the global North as well. Their core strategy is developing co-operative ownership and control of production as an organization, which its members view as equivalent to fair trade standards in the global North. At the time of the study, Planet Bean was still fairly new, having only four members and three employees. However, it was in the process of constructing a full worker-owned co-operative that would be connected to other co-operatives in a new model designed to address the lack of capital experienced by co-operatives in general. Planet Bean seeks to provide local employment and a democratic work environment. Its members hope to provide a positive alternative to the unstable employment that predominates among the retail sector of the Canadian coffee industry.

Planet Bean differs from other conventional corporations that participate in fair trade through its commitment to selling 100 percent fair trade coffee beans and the centrality it places on raising awareness about fair trade and the injustices of the current global system. The author suggests that its cooperative project in the Global North represents an attempt to further broaden the definition of fair trade to encompass more stakeholder needs. However, the co-operative's broad vision may limit the reach of the network to a relatively narrow sector of farmers and workers. In the author's comparison of Planet Bean and Starbucks, he contends that the fair trade network in the global North appears to be stuck in between the vision of the co-operative and the market-reach of the corporation.

**Thorn, Emily. 2009. *The Meaning of Markets: How the Domestic Fair Trade Association Understands Creating Social Change Using Market Initiatives*. MA Thesis: University of Montana.**

This study examines domestic fair trade in North America. The author sought to understand how those formulating and guiding the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA) perceive the role of domestic fair trade (DFT) in the market place. In 2009, eight of the nine Board Members and the Executive Director agreed to phone interviews for this study. Among the eight Board Members were two representatives from each of three sectors: farmworkers' organizations, intermediary trading organizations, and NGO/civil society organizations. The other two Board Member participants included one representative from the farmer associations/farmer co-operative sector and one representative from the retailer/consumer co-operatives sector. Additionally, the author used extensive public information about the DFTA from their website, as well as media articles written about the DFTA from 2003-2008.

For some members, fair trade was defined abstractly in regards to social justice and equity, while for others fair trade was a more concrete display of how fairness is operationalized for farmworkers, farmers, processors, and consumers. The most common view of what social justice means for DFT were transparency, empowerment, and sustainability. All participants mentioned empowerment of farmworkers in their definition of social justice. Participants expressed the desire to go beyond environmental claims for sustainability to social claims for justice.

Interviews illuminated DFTA members' awareness of the struggles facing a market-based initiative. Each interviewee used either international fair trade, organics, or both to illustrate the potential successes and obstacles for DFT. The major threats participants identified to an authentic and transparent movement were the weakening of standards and the subsequent loss of confidence by consumers in a market-based initiative that is not transparent and trustworthy.

The interviewees emphasized four goals listed in their mission statement: the formation of a coalition representing all the stakeholders in the food system, the creation of alternative economic models that embody social justice, the education and empowerment of the consumer, and the role of policy in the transformation of the food system. At the time of the study, the DFTA was not interested in introducing a labeling initiative, but rather sought to endorse or discredit market claims about social justice. The DFTA members all referred to creating opportunities for new ways of business to thrive in and transform the marketplace. The author argues that for fair trade to do so, it will have to demonstrate that a business model based on social justice can be viable in the market place and can extend beyond the market to influence policy and consciousness. The author concludes that domestic fair traders will need to be reflexive and resilient, willing to reform, and open to the possibilities to transform the market.

**Brown, Sandy and Christy Getz. 2008. "Towards domestic fair trade? Farm labor, food localism, and the 'family scale' farm". *GeoJournal* 73:11-22.**

This article analyses publicly available documents about the Domestic Fair Trade Association (DFTA), including minutes of meetings of the Domestic Fair Trade Working Group (the precursor to the DFTA), participant observation at two domestic fair trade meetings, and a pre-pilot audit of a North American social justice certification initiative closely aligned with the DFTA. Fourteen interviews with activists, farm labor organizers, farmers, and NGO representatives in 2006 were included in this study (data also discussed in Brown and Getz 2015).

The authors assert that US-based alternative food movements have primarily framed resistance to the conventional food system in terms of environmental and personal health goals, as well as frameworks like 'family-farming' and local food. By avoiding definitions of social justice based on class or labor relations, the sustainable and organic movements have failed to address farm worker issues. The authors contend that the domestic fair trade effort must address this contradiction to advance its social justice goals. They acknowledge that the DFTA has successfully pushed for a meaningful engagement on farmworker issues, however this has taken place with an assumption that farmer and farm worker interests are equivalent. The research suggests that farm worker organizations within the DFTA have been marginalized, leading the authors to question the power of farm worker voices in shaping organizational outcomes. Farm worker issues were not formally incorporated into the agenda in early meetings, which led to the initiation of the farm worker caucus. The participation of farm worker groups has been critical in making the DFTA more explicit about its position on labor rights.

This research points to several, interrelated challenges that the DFTA must consider. The first is the need to examine the distinction between "movement" and "market". While fair trade may attempt to adopt ethical conventions, as a system it cannot be separated from the market conventions in which it is anchored. The authors contend that the movement would benefit from an analysis of both the advantages of certification and the dangers of taking on such an incentive-based approach. Second, the movement should clarify the differences that exist between the global South and US "family farmers," specifically the cultural and political-economic contexts in which producers operate. US regional differences must also be explored. Lastly, the DFTA should develop ways for labor to be represented within the organization and in the certification and labeling programs it endorses. The DFTA must confront the critical differences between various food system actors - especially migrant farm workers - if it is to meaningfully incorporate all voices.



**Howard, Philip H. and Patricia Allen. 2008. "Consumer willingness to pay for domestic 'fair trade': evidence from the United States." *Renewable Agriculture and Food Systems* 23(3):235-242.**

This article introduces 'proto-' efforts in the US for fostering safe and fair working conditions, including The Food Alliance, Wholesome Harvest, The Local Fair Trade Network, and Equal Exchange (a US fair trade coffee pioneer which has introduced three 'fair-traded' products sourced from a co-operative of African-American farmers). Many of these organizations are involved in the Domestic Fair Trade Working Group. At the time of this study, no systematic research had been conducted on consumer support for domestic fair trade.

The authors sought to learn how willing US consumers are to pay a fair trade premium for domestic strawberries. They addressed this question in a national survey in the spring of 2006. More than 17 percent of respondents reported purchasing organic food at least once a week. Frequent organic customers were three times more likely than other consumers to be willing to pay more for domestic fair trade, an estimated 69 cents more per unit. A question that asked if respondents consider the environment when making purchases found that on a 7-point scale from strongly agree (1), to strongly disagree (7), the mean score was 4.2. Those with annual household incomes above \$75,000 would pay a median of 29 cents less than those in the low-income group. After controlling for other variables, respondents with the highest education and highest incomes were less willing to pay for domestic fair trade criteria.

The authors conclude from this study and other research that there is not, as is often assumed, a simple negative relationship between income and willingness to pay extra for organic food. Consumers of varied income levels appear to be interested in purchasing organic and fair trade items. While the authors suggest that the results should be interpreted with caution due to the well-known gap between attitudes expressed on a survey and actual consumer behavior, they assert that there is a strong potential market opportunity for domestic fair trade.

**Jaffee, Daniel, Jack R. Kloppenburg, Jr., and Mario B. Monroy. 2004. "Bringing the "Moral Change" Home: Fair Trade within the North and within the South." *Rural Sociology* 69(2):169-196.**

This study looked at five North American initiatives that the authors identify as "proto-" fair trade projects: Red Tomato, Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC), the Family Farmer Cheese, the Midwest Food Alliance and the United Farm Workers (UFW), and the Fair Trade Apple Campaign.

In interviews with Red Tomato staff, the authors found that fair trade principles uphold the organization's approach to facilitating market access for small sustainable farmers. Although Red Tomato is a spin-off of the US fair trade pioneer coffee company Equal Exchange, the words "fair trade" are almost completely absent from their public materials and point of sale advertising. Red Tomato has chosen to frame its public message in terms more familiar to North American consumers, using words like "family farm" and "local."

In their research of FSC, the authors found that the initiative makes a direct effort to utilize the "moral charge" of fair trade in its outreach. The Federation partners with Red Tomato to bring produce grown by African-American family farmers to the New England market. The Family Farmer Cheese is a joint project of the Wisconsin-based dairy farm advocacy group Family Farm Defenders (FFD) and a cheese manufacturer, Cedar Grove Cheese. The Family Farmer Cheese initiative has a label and a guaranteed price for milk. The label does not refer to fair trade, however it distinctively links farmers, consumers, and processors.

The Midwest Food Alliance is the initiative that most closely resembles the criteria-certification-labeling arrangement of international fair trade. The Alliance has a set of "Guiding Principles" which it uses as a framework for their formal certification of producers. However, it makes no reference to "fair trade" and focuses more on the sustainability of particular production practices rather than the livelihood of particular kinds of farmers. In their profiling of the UFW Fair Trade Apple Campaign, the authors found that the union hopes to unite growers and laborers, as a fair price for apples will benefit both. The initiative centers upon a living wage and fair respect for labor rights.

The authors suggest that addressing issues of class and collective action would help unpack the term "family farmer" and begin to shine light on characteristics that uphold a sustainable structure of agriculture. Each of the initiatives discussed above utilizes labeling to convey key messages to consumers about social conditions of production. Moreover, expanding consumers' conceptualization of fair trade could help establish fair trade domestically. They also suggest that US domestic fair trade initiatives could benefit from an active dialogue with their Southern fair trade counterparts.

## **Part II:**

# **Media Analysis of Domestic Fair Trade**

## Media Analysis Summary

Domestic fair trade is most commonly portrayed in the media landscape as an on-going discourse regarding farmworker wages, working conditions, and rights. Articles identified using the search term “domestic fair trade” which specifically discuss DFT focus on the need for recognition of unfair labor conditions in North America. However, a small percentage of articles discuss DFT in regards to fair prices for farmers, with no mention of farmworker difficulties. There are articles that express the general need for DFT certification and labeling, while others discuss farms that are now DFT certified. The DFTA is typically mentioned in regards to someone who is part of the organization.

Articles identified using “fair labor” as the search term typically discuss the Fair Labor Standards Act and other US labor laws. Almost all of these articles take the side of the farmer. The majority of these articles use very emotive and loaded language to explain how imposing such mandates would put the family farmer out of business. Additionally, there were a few articles discussing farmers facing criminal charges for breaking labor laws.

Many articles under the “food co-operative” search term discuss various co-ops and their missions, which include DFT values like fair wages and labor practices, but never explicitly refer to domestic fair trade. “Food Justice Certified” is referenced for its certification and social justice standards, including farms and stores that have been FJC certified. However, labor is not always mentioned alongside FJC.

Articles including the search term “farmworkers” often discuss events that promote awareness of farmworker issues, including fair labor and working conditions. These educational awareness events are often on college campuses. There are also reports on how farmworkers are affected by droughts and freezes. The majority of these articles take a pro-farmworker stance and speak to the urgency of recognizing the issues surrounding farmworkers in North America. There are also articles reporting on contemporary farmworker campaigns and protests. A few articles that included “local food” equated eating local with fair labor practices, while others spoke of the challenges faced by local food initiatives and their ability to maintain fair labor practices.

Overall, the media discusses concerns relevant to domestic fair trade - particularly fair labor practices, but does not regularly use the term domestic fair trade. Domestic fair trade campaigns - like “Fair Trade towns,” are more often found in articles printed in places like Vermont and the Pacific Northwest. There is an obvious bias towards farmers when labor laws are the focus of the article, where the livelihood of the farmer takes precedence. There is typically an accurate portrayal of the hardships farmworkers face when farmworker concerns are the focus of the article. There were a few accounts of overly optimistic portrayals of farmworkers, where migrant-owned farms were highlighted as examples of farmworker successes. Depending on the search term of the article, there appear to be various points of emphasis within the context of domestic fair trade that reflect a pattern of biases and interests across the media landscape.

## Media Analysis Tables

**Table 2.1: Articles for Particular Search Terms**

domestic fair trade	31
local food & farmworkers	26
local food & fair labor	18
food justice certified	8
local farmers & fair labor	8
food co-operative & labor	7
family farming & fair labor	4
Total	102

**Table 2.2: Regions Articles Printed**

West	Northeast	Midwest	Southeast	Southwest	Canada	No Region listed
40	34	12	9	4	2	1



**Table 2.3: Section of Newspaper Articles Printed (Audience):**

News	27
Other*	20
College Newspaper	12
No section listed	11
Local/State Local News	8
Opinion/Commentary/ Columnists/ Editorial	7
Food/Grocery Examiner	6
Business/Business News	6
Blogs	3
Life/Living	2

\*other includes sections such as 'community,'  
'weeklies' & 'entertainment'

**Table 2.4: Reach/Circulation of Newspaper:**

1,000-4,999	8
5,000-14,999	14
15,000-44,999	29
45,000-100,000	13
100,001-500,000	14
500,001-999,999	2
1,000,000 +	1
Circulation unavailable*	21

\*most of the papers where circulation was unavailable were from small, local newspapers or news distributors who provide news to a range of sources

**Table 2.5: Number of Articles per Underlying Article Themes:**

Farmworker labor conditions	16
Domestic fair trade certification or labeling	14
Farmworker labor practice bills	12
Local fair trade initiatives or events	10
Farmworker awareness/food justice events at universities	9
Local fair trade in co-ops	8
Food Justice Certified	7
Contemporary farmworker movements	7
DFTA meetings and focus on DFTA individuals	6
Conferences that discuss domestic fair trade	5
Domestic fair trade values	4
Elevation of farmer challenges over farmworkers	2
Immigrant farmers	2

## **Part III:**

# **Consumer and Market Research on Domestic Fair Trade and Related Initiatives**

## Section I: Summary of Academic Research

The following section reviews academic research on consumers and markets of fair trade and other related initiatives. The second section reviews non-academic research in the same field. The reported research discusses findings about consumers of fair trade and other ethical consumption habits, values and motives behind fair trade consumption, willingness to pay for fair trade products, and recent patterns in sustainable consumption. This review discusses recent and relevant studies on market and consumer research, however it is not exhaustive as there is a breadth of research in this field.

### *Research on Consumers' Food Values and Motives in Ethical Consumption*

Ethical consumption is often seen as a key way in which individuals understand and work to address social and ecological problems (Johnston and Rodney 2011). Research in this area has illuminated how concerns for the environment and locally produced goods fuel ethical consumption. While fairness and farm labor concerns are often ignored in these studies, there could still be potential to expand the domestic fair trade consumer base in markets that appeal to ethical consumers. Research conducted on consumers of fair trade products revealed that the values these consumers hold often embody universalism. Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature are the basis of universalistic values (Doran 2009). Both fair trade consumers and organic consumers reported a willingness to support non-conventional products in an effort to break away from mainstream food and agricultural products. Additionally, there appears to be consumer support for third party certification and ecolabels. Again, this research suggests the need to expand consumer awareness of domestic labor issues in order to grow the domestic fair trade movement.

A study published in 2013 analyzed consumers' primary motivations for attending farmers' markets, preferences for product features, and differentiated produce (Gumirakiza 2013). The results of this study found that the primary motivation for consumers to attend farmers markets is to purchase produce, followed by social interaction, purchase ready-to-eat food, and buying packaged foods, arts and crafts. The probability of attending a farmers' market primarily for purchasing produce increases based on: the frequency of visits, education level, concerns for diet/health, agriculture enthusiasm, income above sample mean, primary shopper, willingness to join a CSA program, and being female and married. This study found that those consumers who buy products with low environmental impact, who are willing to join community supported agricultural programs, and who consider themselves to be agriculture enthusiasts are more likely to purchase locally-grown produce. WIC participants were found to have a high preference for product variety, organic, and freshness. Lastly, participants were willing to pay high premiums for conventional local produce, medium premiums for organic produce, and no premium for conventionally grown produce of unknown origin.

A study was conducted in Toronto, Canada to better understand how consumers from different class backgrounds understand ethical eating and how they work these ideas into everyday food practices (Johnston and Rodney 2011). It focused on how food practices are shaped by social discourses. The findings reveal that class status and income enable strong engagement, albeit not guaranteed, with the dominant ethical eating repertoire. The authors found that economic and cultural privilege seems to facilitate awareness of ethical eating. Participants from marginalized socio-demographic and ethno-racial backgrounds appeared to

have less access to this repertoire, although this does not mean that they are unethical in their consumption practices. These participants drew on the particular ethical eating repertoires to which they had access and which required less economic and cultural capital.

The results of a 2010 study indicated that there is interest in integrating a number of political and ethical values more fully into the food system, as well as strong support for the strategy of ecolabeling (Howard and Allen 2010). This study also suggests that emerging ecolabel criteria focusing on local production and the humane treatment of animals will appeal to the largest number of consumers. In regards to ecolabeling as a strategy, the authors assert that consumers must have confidence in the claims made by the ecolabel and that they must be certain of their authenticity and enforcement. Therefore, the authors suggest the most successful ecolabels rely on third-party certification.

Research was conducted to determine consumers' food value systems by utilizing best-worst scaling (Lusk and Briggeman 2009). Results revealed that safety, on average, is the most important food value and significantly more important than origin. Nutrition, taste, and price are generally the next most important values. Environment, fairness and tradition were found to be the least important food values. Less than three percent of respondents picked natural, convenience, appearance, environment, fairness or tradition as their most important food value. People who placed a high importance on fairness tended to place low values on the more self-centered values of taste, price, convenience, and appearance. Respondents for whom naturalness, fairness and the environment were most important were more likely to have previously bought organic food and to state a higher willingness to pay for organic food, coinciding with other findings on organic and fair trade consumers.

A study found that the most important values by loyal fair trade consumers – those who reported buying fair trade products whenever available – were values embodying universalism (Doran 2009). People who prize this value also feel strongly about protecting the natural environment. This confirms other findings that having a concern for nature is closely linked to concern for the welfare of all humankind. In this study, loyal fair traders ranked self-direction values higher than non-fair trade consumers, suggesting that fair trade consumers promote breaking from convention and paying higher prices for products that are often hard to find. This study found that young consumers are no more ethical than older individuals, as proposed by other studies. Additionally, gender and education were not influential factors in the decision to consume fair trade products.

A study exploring the decision-making process of Canadian organic food consumers (Hamzaoui-Essoussi and Zahaf 2009) found that those who typically buy organic products did so because these products were believed to be more nutritious, tasty, better looking, fresher, and less uniform. Essentially, these consumers support all “non-mass marketed” products. The typical organic product consumers identified in this study focus on buying vegetables and dairy products. The authors analyzed where these consumers buy their organic products. Open markets, specialty stores, and co-ops were the main distribution channels reported. It was found that all consumers look for the certification and label when buying organic food. Participants in this study did not mention farmers or farmworkers in their purchase reasoning, highlighting the need to educate consumers on domestic fair trade related issues. Distribution, price, certification and labeling are all linked to consumers' level of trust when consuming organic foods. This is an important finding to consider in regards to the potential of domestic fair trade labeling.



### ***Willingness to Pay Research<sup>1</sup>***

Numerous studies have been conducted to understand how willing consumers are to pay premiums for international fair trade products, but few study willingness to pay for domestic fair trade. Overall, studies reveal that there are consumers willing to pay more for fair trade products. The fact that some consumers are less willing to support fair trade products suggests that consumers may lack information or concern about fair trade or may reflect financial constraints. In support of other findings, some of these studies show a positive correlation between organic consumers, concern for the environment, and willingness to pay for fair trade products. However, these findings suggest that it is necessary to educate consumers on domestic farm labor issues to increase the support for domestic fair trade products.

A study published in 2008 sought to learn how willing US consumers are to pay a fair trade premium for domestically produced strawberries (Howard and Allen 2008). The two purchasing behavior variables, buying organic weekly and considering the environment, were associated with the highest percentage increases in willingness to pay for strawberries picked by farmworkers with a living wage and safe working conditions. The results showed that 86.3 percent of respondents reported that they were willing to pay a 5-cent premium per pint of strawberries. Most ethno-racial groups were more willing to pay more than white non-Hispanic respondents, led by Asian/Pacific Islanders who were willing to pay 25 percent more than white non-Hispanic respondents. Women were willing to pay a higher premium than men. Frequent organic customers were three times more likely than other consumers to be willing to pay more for domestic fair trade. After controlling for other variables, respondents with the highest education and highest incomes were the least willing to pay for domestic fair trade criteria. The authors suggest that efforts to establish domestic fair trade should begin by targeting retail outlets frequented by these types of consumers.

A rare experimental study on international fair trade was conducted to examine actual purchasing behavior at a major grocery store chain in Northeastern US. The authors found that having a Fair Trade label on two types of bulk coffee in a chain grocery store increased sales by almost 10 percent compared with a generic placebo label (Hainmueller, Hiscox and Sequeira 2014). This study found that consumers exhibit different levels of price sensitivity when considering the Fair Trade label. Consumers buying the lower priced coffee were price sensitive and were unwilling to pay a premium of nine percent to support Fair Trade. Consumers buying higher-priced coffee were much less price sensitive and were willing to pay an eight percent premium when the price premium was associated with support for Fair Trade. The authors assert that these findings suggest that there is substantial support for Fair Trade. This provides additional support for developing a domestic fair trade label.

A study conducted a meta-analysis of over 80 published and unpublished research papers across a large number of product categories to understand differences in willingness to pay for socially responsible products (Tully and Winer 2014). The authors were specifically interested in whether the beneficiary of the social responsibility program – humans, animals, or the environment – affects willingness to pay. Contrary to studies that show consumers are willing to pay more for organic than fair trade, their results indicate that products that offer human benefits, such as good working conditions, may be able to obtain a greater price premium and have a

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<sup>1</sup> Willingness to pay research should be interpreted with caution due to the well-known gap between consumers reported attitudes and intentions, and actual buying behavior.

wider appeal than those focusing on animal or environmental benefits. This is an important finding for domestic fair trade advocates focusing on social justice issues.

A 2011 study explored the differential values and interactive effects of the sustainable production claims: organic, fair trade, and carbon footprint (Onozaka and McFadden 2011). The results showed that an average consumer does not significantly value the fair trade claim for tomatoes when associated with domestic sources. However, willingness to pay values were positive and significant when the fair trade label was applied to local or international products. The authors hypothesize that this could be because of a perceived benefit to nearby farmers and farmworkers, or for small farms in developing countries. These findings suggest that the welfare of farmers and farmworkers in developing countries may be assumed to be significantly lower than those in the US, pointing to the need to educate consumers on the harsh realities facing farmworkers in North America.

A consumer choice experiment conducted in five Mid-Atlantic States compared marginal willingness to pay for fresh tomatoes with the attributes locally grown, state marketing program promoted, and organic from either a grocery store or a farmers' market (Carroll, Bernard and Pesek 2013). For the three geographically largest states—Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland—a product claim of local (an area smaller than their state borders) was preferred over those that were part of a state program. This study found that the majority of Mid-Atlantic consumers either do not see a need for organic tomatoes or simply do not have the inclination to pay more for them. The results show that in this region consumers are more concerned with locality and place than production methods, a finding that suggests there might be ways to link domestic fair trade to something unique about the location of production.

### ***Research on Awareness and Knowledge of Domestic Fair Trade and International Fair Trade***

Research finds that overall awareness of fair trade is increasing in North America. While there is limited awareness of *domestic* fair trade, the evidence that there are knowledgeable consumers willing to support fair trade in general is promising for the domestic fair trade movement. A key question is whether domestic fair trade can build on the growing market and understanding of international fair trade. Further promotion and education of domestic fair trade, especially on college campuses, would strengthen the movement and help it to gain momentum among young consumers. However, some studies suggest that there are some detractors from, and suspicion towards fair trade in general. Further exploration of this finding would be beneficial to determine how to either bring those consumers on board or focus on increasing consumption from the most likely consumers.

In a study conducted in Michigan to gauge consumer behavior toward, and awareness of, international fair trade, the results showed that 58.3 percent of respondents had heard of the fair trade movement and that 26.5 percent have “knowingly purchased” a fair trade product (Taylor and Boassen 2014). Furthermore, if there was no cost difference, 67.6 percent of respondents indicated that they would select fair trade products over non-fair trade items. The authors contend that the fact that nearly one third of respondents reported that they would avoid purchasing a fair trade-certified product otherwise identical in price and quality, suggests that there are some detractors from the movement.

Additionally, the results showed that politics, age, gender and educational attainment are all statistically significant factors in willingness to pay for fair trade, while income and geographic location are not. Specifically, a one-unit increase in conservatism on the political scale reduced willingness to pay for fair trade by 16 cents. Men indicated a nearly 72 cent lower

willingness to pay than women. This study found that higher degrees of educational attainment are associated with a higher willingness to pay for fair trade. Conservatives, men, and those with higher incomes are more likely to believe they should **not** pay a premium for fair trade products because “all voluntary trade is fair,” while liberals, women and those with lower incomes are more concerned that the movement may inadvertently harm those it intends to help. Because of the findings that over 62 percent of respondents were unwilling to pay any premium at all, the authors believe that many may view the fair trade movement suspiciously.

In a study highlighting the interactions between consumer food co-operatives and Domestic Fair Trade, two common themes emerged: (1) Domestic fair trade concepts are central to co-op activities, and (2) many challenges exist for incorporating domestic fair trade into co-op business practices (Duram and Mead 2014). Due to the findings from their research, the authors contend that food co-ops are the ideal venue for educating consumers about domestic fair trade issues. This research suggests that promoting domestic fair trade may be an effective way to educate and involve consumers in the movement. Additionally, the authors suggest that creating a domestic fair trade label would be beneficial in gaining consumers’ confidence in the movement.

A 2014 study seeks to better understand student purchasing habits and views of international fair trade at the University of Kentucky (Lyon, Ailshire and Sehon 2014). Of the 185 survey participants, 37 percent responded that they had learned about fair trade in the classroom. Approximately 20 percent of respondents stated that they felt very comfortable explaining fair trade to a friend, whereas 50 percent expressed some doubt about their ability to do so, and 30 percent felt completely uncomfortable explaining the concept. Just over half of the respondents correctly identified the definition of fair trade. Only 52 percent reported that they had purchased a fair trade product at least once, and only 5 percent answered that they routinely purchase fair trade products when they are available. When asked to choose an answer(s) that most clearly represented what or who they thought fair trade primarily benefitted, 81 percent selected producers, 67 percent selected consumers, 58 percent selected people from other countries, 51 percent selected the environment, and 48 percent selected people in the United States. The fact that almost half of participants included people in the United States as beneficiaries of fair trade reveals some awareness of domestic issues. This research also finds that several students were not familiar with what fair trade labels look like (e.g. Fairtrade International, IMO Fair for Life, etc.). Several participants felt they should know more about Fair Trade than they do. Other participants expressed a general understanding of Fair Trade’s goals, even if they lacked specific knowledge of the certification process and price structures.

The authors conclude that it would be useful to better publicize Fair Trade products that are commonly found on mainstream retailers’ shelves. Additionally, the authors call for more incorporation of Fair Trade principles and ethical commitments into university cultures to bring about more fair trade awareness among students. This is especially important as it supports other findings in this report that suggest students are key constituents in stimulating the domestic fair trade movement.

## Section II: Summary of Market Research by Research Firms

The Fair Trade USA Report on Consumer Insights (2016) compiled consumer research conducted by a variety of market research firms and concluded that US consumers now consider social justice issues equally as important as environmental concerns. Demographically speaking, 36 percent of millennials reported social justice and well-being as purchasing decision factors, compared to 26 percent of generation X and 29 percent of baby boomers (The Hartman Group 2014). This data suggests that millennials may fuel a growing demand for fair products. Additionally, 47 percent of millennials reported avoiding buying products from companies with poor labor practices. The 2015 Cone Communications Millennial CSR Study found that millennials are universally more engaged in corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts.

A recent study found that the percent of US consumers who recognize major sustainability labels (USDA organic, Fair Trade Certified, Rainforest Alliance Certified, etc.) has increased from about 35 percent to 55 percent from 2012-2015 (Natural Marketing Institute 2015). Two of the key barriers to purchasing sustainable products were identified as: (1) there is not always an option to purchase such products (85 percent) and (2) they don't know what social or environmental claims they should prioritize (53 percent) (Cone Communications 2015). To learn about a company/product's social or environmental commitments or impacts, over 80 percent of consumers look to both the product package and store signs, with 91 percent of consumers agreeing that: "I have a more positive image when a company supports a social or environmental issue" (Cone Communications 2015). Although most research focuses on food purchases for home consumption, most consumers believe food prepared at restaurants and other food service outlets should be Fair Trade and/or Organic, with 27 percent of consumers saying they are willing to pay 5 percent more for Fair Trade products and 14 percent being willing to pay more than 5 percent (Technomic 2016).

A Globescan study on international fair trade products found that: 34 percent of US consumers recognized the Fair Trade USA certification label; 75 percent said Fair Trade certification makes them feel "very positive or positive" about products; 30 percent said Fair Trade is "likely to increase their purchase interest;" and over half said "independent third-party certification is the best way to verify" a product's social and environmental claims (Globescan and Fairtrade International 2011). On all these measures US consumers fall far behind their European counterparts, suggesting the need to increase America consumer awareness and support for fair trade. For example, the 2013 Fair Trade USA Be Fair Survey of 3,785 American adults found that only 19 percent of participants reported purchasing Fair Trade certified products, while 28 percent reported buying organic, and 43 percent reported shopping at a farmer's market (Fair Trade USA 2013).

In the Hartman's Group 2015 Transparency Study participants were asked, "What does sustainability mean to you?" Fifteen percent of participants included Fair Trade in their understanding. When asked, "Which attributes are the most important to you when deciding which foods and beverages to purchase?" Twenty-three percent of respondents selected Fair Trade, with Product Safety/Healthfulness being the top attribute at 56 percent. When the same question was asked in regards to personal care products, 16 percent chose Fair Trade as one of the most important attributes. When participants were asked "Which of the following attributes of a grocery store make it more likely that you'll shop there?" Seventeen percent of respondents selected Fair Trade. This report suggests that due to the heightened attention to social benefits

around animal and employee welfare, consumers are increasingly demanding honesty and transparency when they make purchases (Hartman Group 2015).

### ***Conclusion***

This section provides useful insight into the academic and market research firms' findings on consumers' attitudes towards, knowledge of, purchasing of, and willingness to pay for domestic fair trade and other related initiatives. There are very few studies conducted on domestic fair trade consumption specifically. However, there is evidence that US consumers are increasingly concerned and aware of social well-being issues and that these concerns are shaping their purchasing behavior. Unsurprisingly, there appears to be a correlation between the social and environmental values embodying universalism and ethical consumption. There is a growing consumer demand for 'locally produced' commodities, which could open up potential markets for domestic fair trade. Research has revealed that consumers value certification and labels in their purchasing choices, suggesting that there may be a substantial untapped market for domestic fair trade certified products. This research has revealed the importance of young adults in domestic fair trade, as both the most likely potential consumers and proponents of the movement. With the increasing consumer demand for fair and sustainably produced items, there is potential for the domestic fair trade market and movement to grow, especially as social welfare concerns become more widely incorporated into notions of sustainability.



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