



ADVANCING TRADE JUSTICE ADVOCACY IN CANADA

Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs | Global Policy Project

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Developed for Fairtrade Canada



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fairtrade products help to advance the principles of trade justice, however they alone will not result in the transformative changes needed to address persistent global trade injustices. Policy advocacy is increasingly recognized as a tool to create enabling policies that support concepts like fair wages, safe working conditions, and sustainable development. While Canada has seen its share of Fairtrade products grow, it lags far behind likeminded peers like Germany, France and Belgium who have seen advancements on a number of policies relevant to Fairtrade's mandate. Fairtrade Canada faces a unique opportunity in being able to advance a novel advocacy mandate with the benefit of hindsight from its likeminded peers. The objective of this research is to identify good practices of international fair trade policy advocacy, and arm Fairtrade Canada with the wisdom of its peers to pursue these ambitious goals. Through interviews with stakeholders in the fair trade movement in Belgium, Canada, France and Germany, this research seeks to answer the following questions.

Research Questions

1. What relationships, tools and internal structures have been effective avenues to advance fair trade advocacy efforts in fair trade leading jurisdictions?
2. What are the strategies and lessons learned from the advocacy campaigns of fair trade leaders?
3. How do those lessons apply in the Canadian context?

From this research, the following recommendations have been developed for Fairtrade Canada to advance its advocacy efforts.

- **Internal Organization** – It is essential that Fairtrade Canada sets itself up for success through a strong foundation. By ensuring a clear and executive-supported mandate, forming inter-departmental coherence, and investing in fund development, the organization will ensure it is enabled to pursue its advocacy goals.
- **Coalition-Building** – Coalitions are powerful tools to maximize resources, form “strength in numbers,” and open up doors to influence decision-makers, however they must be formed and implemented in a thoughtful way. By strategically identifying allies based on policy issues and potential impact, involving like-minded corporate actors, and collaborating in a “good-cop, bad cop” fashion, Fairtrade Canada can build its social legitimacy as a policy advocacy actor and open doors for relationship building with elected officials.
- **Citizen Engagement** – Citizen engagement is a bottom-up approach that seeks to advance policy changes through awareness-raising and building ground-level support. By mobilizing young voices, creatively utilizing social media platforms, and directly involving the public in advocacy campaigns, Fairtrade Canada will increase the visibility of its own brand while helping to drive policy impact.
- **Building Relationships with Elected Officials** – Many fair trade advocates emphasized the impact of working directly with decision-makers rather than in an antagonistic way. Fairtrade Canada can leverage its trans-partisan appeal, build relationships with both elected officials and their staff, and invest in understanding the Canadian policy cycle and relevant policy windows.

Finally, this research underscores the importance of advancing advocacy efforts in a manner that seeks to address underlying power imbalances at play when representing producers from the Global South. Emerging good practices include creatively engaging producers at a distance, involving producers in decision-making processes, sustaining communication and ensuring that the costs of advocacy are not borne on producers.

ABOUT US

The following project is led by a team of researchers from the University of British Columbia's Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs program.

Celine Ng

Celine Ng (she/her) graduated from the University of Manchester with a BA in Geography. Being fortunate to come from a multi-ethnic background of Swiss and Chinese, and growing up in various regions of the world including, Hong Kong, the US, Switzerland, and the UK; has allowed her to see the world's challenges through both a western and Asian perspective. Her studies focus mainly on sustainable development and ways to reduce disparities with a specific emphasis on health, poverty and education. These topics of interest come from her involvement in projects, including working with NGOs targeted at improving Development Goals in Fiji and volunteering in rural Zambia. These experiences have allowed her to experience challenges of extreme poverty and social inequalities through a new perspective.

Julia McKenzie

Julia McKenzie (she/her) has an academic background in business and economic development, and is driven by her research interests related to food security and development. She works as a Policy Analyst with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada. Prior to pursuing graduate school, she spent five years working in regional economic development and international policy within the non-profit and public sectors in Saskatchewan. The diverse nature of this work exposed her to a range of projects focused on immigrant entrepreneurship, Indigenous engagement, agriculture sector development, and international trade and investment. This was complemented by volunteer work with the Regina Food Bank Board of Directors, YWCA Regina Advocacy Committee, and international development projects in rural Indonesia.

Oliver Zhang

Oliver (he/they) completed the Dual Bachelor's Degree Program between Sciences Po Paris and UC Berkeley, where he obtained a BA in Economy and Society and a BA (Hon.) in Sociology before beginning the Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs Program. Oliver's research focuses on equity and justice for the LGBTQ+ and BIPOC community, on issues including health, housing, and democracy. Recently, Oliver worked at the UBC Arts Co-op Program as an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Analyst, researching and implementing recommendations to make the program more accessible for minority students. Oliver is currently a research assistant at the Center for Studies of Democratic Institutions, conducting policy research on online civil discourse regulation and anti-harassment policies.

Rutu Patel

Rutu Patel (she/her) completed a BSc. in Global Health and Environment from the University of Toronto before the Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs. She has professional experience in health policy, climate policy, and institutional sustainability. Recently, Rutu worked at Environment and Climate Change Canada as a Junior Policy Analyst developing Canada's negotiating priorities for the upcoming international agreement to end plastic pollution. In 2019, she was selected to join a delegation of undergraduate students to the UNFCCC's COP25 where she developed an interest in global climate migration policies. Rutu is now exploring policy responses to climate migration as a Research Fellow at the Centre for Migration Studies.

THE CLIENT



Fairtrade Canada is the Canadian member of Fairtrade International, which has been operating since 1997 with the goal of ensuring that farmers and agricultural workers earn a living income through better prices, decent working conditions and fair terms of trade. One of the main activities of this NGO is to develop and review the Fairtrade Standards, which are set internationally and relate to the price, supply chains, labour, cooperative organization, and governance of agricultural production globally. The mission of Fairtrade Canada is to support the principles of trade justice and sustainable development through increasing the sales of Fairtrade certified products in Canada, maximizing the benefits of Fairtrade to farmers and workers, and supporting others to advance their vision. In the past, Fairtrade Canada has been primarily focused on driving sales of Fairtrade products in Canada through licensing and public awareness campaigns and has recently made a shift to pursue advocacy efforts more keenly. They are looking to engage further with citizens to make a more meaningful impact in the formation of government policy. In the coming year, Fairtrade Canada plans to build an operational advocacy plan that will outline how to influence the trade justice and sustainability discourse in Canada's legal frameworks. This report aims to assist in this process.



Project Description

The international fair trade movement has long advocated to address inequities and injustices embedded in the world trade order. Under the umbrella of this overarching problem, national Fairtrade organizations (e.g., Fairtrade Belgium, Fairtrade Germany, etc.) have acted at the national level to promote the fair trade ethos through public engagement, business relations and policy advocacy. Canada, at large, lags many first-world counterparts in the consumption of Fairtrade products and legislations supporting fair trade.^{1, 2}

With a novel mandate from Fairtrade International to address gaps in advocacy efforts, Fairtrade Canada is looking to leverage increased capacity towards this goal. Therefore, it requires additional knowledge and expertise about advocacy in the Canadian context. The objective of this research is to identify good practices of international fair trade policy advocacy, and arm Fairtrade Canada with the wisdom of its peers to pursue these ambitious goals.

Research Questions

1. What relationships, tools and internal structures have been effective avenues to advance fair trade advocacy efforts in fair trade leading jurisdictions?
2. What are the strategies and lessons learned from the advocacy campaigns of fair trade leaders?
3. How do those lessons apply in the Canadian context?

Methodology

To accomplish this objective, the researchers conducted fieldwork research in countries leading in fair trade –Belgium, France and Germany– specifically through interviews. During the background research phase, the researchers consulted a wide range of academic and grey literature to inform the context and direction of the project. While key political differences and colonial nuances impact the policy process in Europe, they have achieved considerable progress and serve as an inspiration not just for legislation, but for advocacy processes related to fair trade. In essence, they are considered the “DNA” of the fair trade movement and offer lessons with respect to coalitions, networking, and industry collaboration. Meanwhile, recognizing the importance of ensuring alignment with the Canadian context, this research built in a virtual data collection period focusing on Canadian stakeholders to vet the information following fieldwork. The researchers have chosen interviews as their key methodology due to the limited number and unique circumstances of stakeholders, and importance of ensuring a safe space for confidential dialogue. The breakdown of the number of interviews conducted in each country is demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Interviews by Country and Stakeholder

	Fairtrade Actors	Fair Trade Movement Actors	Academics/ Others	Total
Germany	3	2	/	5
Belgium	1	2	/	3
France	1	1	/	2
Canada / North America	/	3	2	5
Total	5	8	2	15



The story behind Fairtrade certifications and trade justice advocacy is a complex one, with significant historical nuance and a wide variety of different actors. The following definitions adds essential context to inform the insights discussed throughout this report. Of particular importance is that Fairtrade Canada (the Client) is a national member of Fairtrade International, which represents one key actor within the broader, more historical fair trade movement. Fairtrade Canada seeks to advance fair trade advocacy in Canada through the insights gathered from international actors within the global fair trade network.

“Most worrying to us is the possible interpretation that simply producing and selling more fair trade products may suffice to achieve the fair trade movement’s vision of a world in which justice, equity and sustainable development are at the heart of trade structures and practices.”⁴

-Elena Lunder and Sergi Corbalán

Fairtrade as a Label

In contrast to the broader fair trade movement, the Fairtrade label acts as an independent certification system that embodies many of the same values behind the broader fair trade movement. Fairtrade International develops and reviews the Fairtrade Standards that certify companies that meet stringent requirements related to human rights, the environment, and decent livelihoods. Fairtrade Canada acts as a national Fairtrade organization responsible for overseeing and advising businesses and licensing the use of the Fairtrade Marks. Fairtrade Canada is one actor within the broader fair trade movement and Fairtrade system, however they belong to the “most recognized and trusted sustainability label in the world.”³

Despite the powerful market-based impact of Fairtrade certifications in tangibly working to counter unjust trading practices for producers, it does have its limits. This was clearly raised by Elena Lunder and Sergi Corbalán in the “Fair Trade Handbook,” and demonstrates the need to go beyond market-based movements and work to impact the system through broader policy interventions. That’s where Fairtrade Canada’s advocacy efforts come in.

Fairtrade as a Movement

A commonly used definition of fair trade, as agreed upon by the Fair Trade Networks in 1998, is that “fair trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South. Fair Trade organizations (backed by consumers) are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade.”⁵

The fair trade landscape has since evolved beyond primarily addressing economic injustices against farmers and producers in the Global South. Recent advocacy in the fair trade movement has included efforts to address a wide range of social issues, such as improving gender equality and the quality of lives of rural communities, and environmental issues such as the protection of biodiversity, deforestation, and sustainable development.



Advocacy

According to the Alliance for Justice, advocacy can be defined as “any action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others”.⁶ Advocacy covers a spectrum of activities including letters to and meetings with policymakers, public statements, opinion editorials, field missions, education, and mobilization through events.⁷ It is a broad definition, but accurately represents the tools at Fairtrade Canada’s disposal to seek policy change within Canada.

European Countries and Fair Trade:

Where are they now?

As Fairtrade Canada continues to develop its advocacy efforts, it has the advantage of learning from national Fairtrade organizations that began a similar journey many years ago. Europe in particular has made significant steps to advance the fair trade advocacy movement (See Table 1). Among the European countries leading in fair trade, three countries were identified – Germany, Belgium, and France – that are doing exceptionally well and could offer valuable lessons to Canada. A rapid increase in the sales of fair trade products has been observed in all three countries over the past five years. Many of these successes can be attributed to a combination of government support and NGO-backed advocacy movements and initiatives that have not been sufficiently replicated in Canada.

Table 1: Comparing Fairtrade Advocacy Progress

FEATURES	CANADA	BELGIUM	FRANCE	GERMANY
National Human Rights Due Diligence Legislation	✗	✓	✓	✓
Legal Recognition of Fair Trade	✗	✓	✓	✓
Non-legal National Policy Recognition of Fair Trade	✗	✓	✓	✓
Advancement of Sector-based Trade Justice Policy Campaigns	✗	✓	✓	✓
Government Funding of Fair Trade Initiatives, including Fairtrade	✗	✓	✓	✓

Germany

Germany is a country leading in fair trade advocacy thanks to a combination of reputational, legislative and market-based indicators. While it is easy to look at recent progress and attribute it simply to contextual differences, Germany's fair trade advocacy efforts have evolved considerably over the years.

A recent study developed by Fairtrade Deutschland demonstrated that strong fair trade commercial growth occurred in the mid- 2000s, however political activity was not strongly activated until 2010.⁸ By 2015, fair trade has received broader support on all political levels. In particular, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Service Agency Communities in One World (SKEW) on behalf of the BMZ have evolved into promoters and advocates of fair trade.⁹ The fair trade system in Germany primarily consists of a fair trade-supportive government (BMZ and SKEW), Fairtrade certification organizations (Fairtrade International, Fair Trade Deutschland), broader fair trade movement actors (Forum Fairer Handel, Fairband, Weltladen-dachverband) and religious-based actors (Christian Relief). Above all, Germany stands out due to its recent progress on human rights due diligence. The extensive advocacy efforts made possible the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act was published in the German Federal Law Gazette, which entered into force on January 1, 2023¹⁰ with the objective of safeguarding human rights and the environment in the global economy more effectively. The law will expand to impact companies with 1,000 employees or more beginning in 2024.¹¹

Belgium

The fair trade movement has a deep history in Belgium, dating back to the world shops of the 1960's.¹² Fair trade is politically prominent in Belgian society as evidenced by several legislative feats such as the 2013 federal law that solidified fair and sustainable trade in the Belgian Development Cooperation's core objectives and the 2017 federal resolution to 'Make Belgium a Fair Trade country.'¹³ Fair trade is also prominent in Belgium, where 88% of households purchase at least one fairtrade product for consumption.¹⁴ Belgium's market-based contributions produced €3.5 million in Fairtrade Premiums for producers, proving to be the driving force of impact.

In addition to market share and Premiums, Belgian fair trade actors have impacted the movement through advocacy. As the host of European Union institutions, Belgium's fair trade advocacy is closely tied to European Union (EU) level advocacy where various legislations related to human rights due diligence (HRDD), deforestation and sustainable coffee and cocoa have been under works.

France

France is a leading country in the sales of fair trade products both inside and outside of the EU, as a result of both North-South trade initiatives and small farmers movement. France has witnessed a rapid growth in total fair trade product sales in the past 15 years, which has amounted to 2 billion euros in 2021.¹⁵

France being the pioneer of fair trade is the result of its multiple legislations that aim to integrate fair trade into French society. French law has incorporated the definition of "fair trade" since 2000¹⁶, with the most recent addition in January 2023 to include the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and agroecology.¹⁷ The French Corporate Duty of Vigilance law of 2017 also requires companies to create and implement publicly available vigilance plans for which they can be held accountable .¹⁸ The French Climate and Resilience Law adopted in July 2021 officially recognizes fair trade as an accelerator of ecological transition due to its promotion of environmentally friendly production methods.¹⁹

Actors in the advocacy field exist on many different levels. At the government level, the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) offers funding support to a variety of events and initiatives on fair trade advocacy. At the society level, France is home to eight different labeling organizations, such as Max Havelaar France, that all set out to protect producers and the environment. These organizations are united under the national fair trade platform Commerce Equitable France (CEF). With more than 30 member organizations, the platform works to organize dialogues between actors and institutional representation and promote fairer trade relations.



What is Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD)?

Stemming from the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct, there is a growing call for governments to implement legislation that requires companies to carry out human rights due diligence. HRDD legislation is guided by the following framework, originating from the UNGP: ²⁰



1) The state's duty to protect against human rights abuses



2) Corporate responsibility to protect human rights, going beyond company policies



3) The right of victims to access effective remedies to human rights violations

HRDD legislation is perceived as being aligned with Fairtrade values, and has been driven globally by actors involved in the fair trade movement more broadly. Countries like France, Germany and Sweden have taken the lead on implementation, with countries like Canada remaining in the deliberative phase due to the potential impact on corporate actors.





PART 3: INSIGHTS

Our Findings from Europe

3.1 SUCCESSFUL ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

This section outlines key findings on successful advocacy strategies, as shared by interviewees in Belgium, France and Germany. See **Appendix 1** for a full list of the specific campaigns and approaches.

3.1.1 Building Relationships with Elected Officials and their Staff

Maintain political relationships

Relationships with elected officials need to be both built and maintained through frequent contact. Sometimes, it is simply a matter of making up a task or seeking feedback in order to keep the network alive. This relationship maintenance pays off when seeking support on policy advocacy. Some key tips:

- The first few months post-election are key to establish relationships. Members of parliament will have to make commitments and decide how they want to appear while in office. It is important to prioritize contact at this time.
- Have actionable, concrete items to partner on. This helps to solidify the relationship, while also making their lives easier.

Work across political spectrum

It pays to have relationships with parliamentarians across the political spectrum. Conservative-leaning officials benefit from gaining an ethical appearance without the need for hard-handed regulations (liberal appeal), while liberals expand their audience by appearing more business-friendly (conservative appeal). One interviewee described this phenomenon as Fairtrade being like “puppies,” and drawing appeal regardless of political affiliation due to its association with both the market and social justice. By taking the time to understand political values of authority, autonomy and solidarity, messages can be framed to effectively target these groups.

Know the appropriate legislative audience

German advocates raised the importance of targeting the appropriate legislative audience based on goals, relationships, political will, and potential impact. For these reasons, these advocates often target the EU-level for policy advocacy, while primarily directing awareness raising efforts to federal elected officials. Canada may not have the same political system, but a similar comparison can be drawn between federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions. Trade policy may be more aligned to the federal government, while procurement may be appropriate for lower levels of government.

Address political turnover

Relationships with government officials are built over time, which takes a considerable amount of effort. When they move on, which is a frequent occurrence, you are required to put in the work of building alliances again and again. To mitigate this precarity, one strategy is to supplement political relationships with work directly with the Ministry.

Advocacy in Practice

European Parliament Breakfast

- The Fair Trade European Parliament Breakfast is held annually during Trade for Development Center (TDC)'s Fair Trade Week. It brings together members of civil society organizations, fair trade produce organizations and members of the European Parliament (MEPs), presenting an opportunity for them to discuss relevant fair trade topics and ideas.
- This event has become a key opportunity to build an advocacy network and maintain relationships with elected officials.
- Organizers state that something similar could also be arranged as an evening event for further networking.

Work from “within”

As evident in a variety of campaigns and initiatives, working closely with policymakers is often more effective than public “finger-pointing.” One instance that is incredibly illustrative of this point is in the case of Germany’s HRDD legislation, a relationship with a uniquely supportive politician was essential to its progress. The Minister of Corporation, despite identifying with the Conservative party, was touched by the trade injustices observed during international fieldwork. They effectively acted as a champion for the cause and was paramount to having the legislation pass. This demonstrates the impact of working directly with the government rather than in an antagonist manner.

3.1.2 Communication and Audience Targeting

Mobilize and empower youth populations

Young adults and youths represent the future of the fair trade movement globally. Despite this, much of the support-base for the fair trade movement remains older generations due to historic popularity of the movement. Interviewees emphasized that if Fairtrade does not do a generational jump and get young voices involved, they will become obsolete within 20 years. Multiple fair trade advocacy organizations have focused on the mobilization of youth in their citizen engagement campaigns. One strategy effectively led by a French fair trade organization is working with university students and having “fair trade youth ambassadors” on campus.

Cater to diverse audiences with respect to age

While youth voices must be included, all generations have a role to play in the fair trade movement and should be involved in advocacy campaigns. For example, left-leaning seniors are some of the most politically active and generous donors to the fair trade movement in Germany. Stakeholder engagement and advocacy campaigns need to thoughtfully understand the needs and values of different populations to ensure meaningful and sustained involvement.

Leverage social media platforms

Many fair trade organizations consider social media to be a valuable asset to effectively engage citizens, especially youth and young professionals. Social media is particularly beneficial for its wide reach and relative cost effectiveness. Through short video creation on TikTok, one German organization successfully raised public awareness of supply chain issues and the organization itself. Similarly, a fair trade organization in Belgium has successfully engaged online influencers to amass youth support for fair trade issues. While challenging, it is important to keep the messaging high level enough to be engaging but detailed enough to appropriately convey the policy problem. Social media is a powerful tool for some goals but should not be used for others that are more complex or abstract. For topics like procurement that are less “sexy” and more abstract, internal lobbying directly to politicians is more effective than citizen engagement through social media.



Get creative in your engagement

Recognizing the importance of including diverse populations in citizen engagement efforts, many fair trade organizations are getting creative. In order to facilitate knowledge transfer, one fair trade organization in France created quick, easy-to-understand board games differentiating the country's multiple fair trade labels that can be used at public-facing events. Fairtrade Canada could develop similarly interactive materials to educate the public on Canada's global supply chain issues.

Maintain good relationships with the media

The media played an important role in the shift of Max Havelaar's public perception from a marketing organization to an organization that influences political discourse and produces solutions to sustainability issues. It has also supported German fair trade actors in holding policymakers accountable when "working from within" strategies fail to produce action. Media becomes a stronger tool at your disposal when pre-existing relationships can be pulled on during times of need.

3.1.3 Building Advocacy Coalitions

Coalition and relationship building is key

Following the release of the German study "Does Fair Trade Change Society?",²¹ one organization shifted their campaign focus from partnerships with other fair trade organizations to instead adding their voice to strong existing civil society initiatives. Joining steering groups is a fantastic way to pursue strategic alliances. In many cases, the fair trade lens is missing from these conversations and adds value from inclusion. To achieve political change, joining forces rather than launching individual campaigns is essential. Many organizations echoed this advice, emphasizing the need to scan society, and piggy-back off existing advocacy capacity rather than start from scratch. This begins with a thoughtful stakeholder analysis, effectively identifying "friends and foes." Allies for advocacy can also be found in other sustainability certifying NGOs (e.g., Rainforest Alliance in Germany and Belgium), even if the relationship is competitive in other domains.

Influence the influencer

With a number of prominent advocacy actors, it is important to identify the key players with a greater ability to influence the direction of the ongoing policy agenda. For example, one Belgian organization actively chooses to align its fair trade agenda with strong existing civil society organizations. With limited resources, it pays off to work closely with the larger Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that are likely to influence decision makers, as this indirect pathway may be more effective when facing limited resources and building an advocacy presence.

Advocacy in Practice

l'initiative française pour un cacao durable - French Initiative for sustainable cocoa (Max Havelaar France)

The French Sustainable Cocoa Initiative is a successful campaign led by Max Havelaar France that brings together multiple stakeholders in the French cocoa and chocolate sector, including the state, producers, retailers, civil society organizations, as well as research and academic institutions.

In order to influence the policy of the French government, multiple initiatives (lobbying, citizen engagement, awareness campaigns, communications etc.) need to happen at the same time. Coalition-building aids in this process, as other organizations can not only share their knowledge and expertise on regulating the supply chain, but also take on tasks such as drafting and sending out public letters. This strategy allowed Max Havelaar France to direct the majority of their resources into securing meetings with French decision-makers, making the advocacy effort more efficient and productive.

Use the "good cop, bad cop" strategy

Actors in Belgium and Germany highlighted the importance of using the "good cop, bad cop" approach to advocacy. In some instances, partnering with NGOs whose mandate allow for freedom to make more aggressive demands from industries and decision-makers (ex. Oxfam) was crucial. Fair trade actors were able to complement this through a "good cop" strategy that leverages existing business and corporate relationships and offer tangible policy solutions. For example, one fair trade organization in Belgium acts as a "middle player" in advocacy due to their relationship with companies, but leverages that relationship as a strength in advocacy efforts to mitigate NGO critiques for their limited ability to communicate confrontationally. Some Canadian actors validated the utility of this approach for government advocacy as well, where partnering NGOs can use aggressive and cooperative approaches in tandem to influence decision makers.



Consider partnering with the “competition”

Other labeling organizations may seem like competing actors, but they often share similar visions with respect to policy advocacy. Sometimes, having a “common enemy” (often corporate actors or labeling companies that do not follow Fairtrade standards) may help with coalition-building that seeks to dismantle systemic barriers for trade justice and ecolabelling organizations.

Start the conversation and take small wins

Joining existing coalitions is helpful, but sometimes Fairtrade leadership is necessary as evident in the following case study.

Advocacy in Practice

Coffee Taxation in Germany

Some topics are appropriate for, and require, Fairtrade leadership. In the case of advocacy to remove tariffs on fairly traded coffee, one fair trade organization chose to lead dialogues and was able to successfully bring the discussion to the government. While this work did not successfully result in the removal of tariffs, it did launch a series of other discussions on the removal of tariffs on other Fairtrade goods. These conversations persist to this day, suggesting that even without legislative success, efforts can result in a chain reaction of further efforts.

3.1.4 Prioritizing Coalition Membership

Issue-based targeting

With limited resources available to most NGOs, not all coalitions can be given a full effort. Several interviewees recommended choosing allies by current issues rather than organizational mandate, as this often results in the identification of existing networks. For example, in the case of the European Human Rights Due Diligence legislation, a broader network for corporate accountability was a gathering space for advocacy partners that may not have been otherwise connected. French organizations echoed this, stating that issue-based identification resulted in partnerships with more environmental-focused organizations covering complementary topics like biodiversity and deforestation.

Strategic prioritization

Following the identification of these partners, it is important to determine where to prioritize focus. Two key questions can guide this – what is a *feasible number* of coalitions to manage, and where can you have the *most impact*? When determining this potential impact, it is beneficial to look at the idea of “additionality,” and identifying what conversations will not happen if a fair trade actor were not present. Advocacy efforts can be prioritized where the fair trade presence is essential and adds value. This will be dependent on both coalition size and the need for fair trade expertise and may require some trial and error and ongoing reflection to truly determine.



3.2 INTERNAL STRATEGIES

Country	Summary of Internal Organizing Approaches
Germany	<p>In the case of one organization, resources are provided primarily through government funding, licensing fees and membership fees. An annual budget of 40,000 euros dedicated towards policy advocacy activities, which are led by one staff member and are focused on building relationships with political actors. This position is supported by an additional colleague that is responsible for research, content creation and agenda-setting.</p> <p>In another organization, resources are approximately 90% reliant on government funding, with the remaining 10% being acquired through private donations. Public funding is connected to public education work, yet it also enables advocacy activities. Private funding is largely sourced from a left-leaning senior population, which is aligned with historic popularity of the fair trade movement.</p>
Belgium	<p>Different organizations in Belgium had varying advocacy capacities. Among organizations interviewed, the size of advocacy staff ranged from 1 to 3 people. Often, advocacy budget was allocated together with related tasks such as research, education, communications, or public relations. In those cases, “advocacy” may not be explicitly stated in the job titles of each person, however many actors mentioned the inextricable contributions of those teams or persons to the overall advocacy efforts of the organization. One actor stressed the importance of budget allocation for events, travel and media monitoring. Overall, Belgian actors benefited from public funding available to NGOs to source their advocacy, public engagement and education-focused activities.</p>
France	<p>In France, organizations receive funding from the French government as financial support for advocating for sustainable development.</p> <p>In one organization, the funding that they receive from the French government is limited but continuous. With 4 people doing advocacy and 1 person mobilizing the public, they manage to organize effective advocacy campaigns thanks to partnerships with other organizations.</p> <p>In another organization, aside from the funding support from the French government, they looked to the recruitment of volunteers and the development of youth programs at university campuses to increase public awareness of fair trade. Paired with the collaboration with various civil society organizations in France, the mobilization of youth and volunteers allowed the organization to effectively organize movements and initiatives to bring public attention to fair trade.</p>

3.2.1 Lessons Learned on Internal Organization

Consider investing into fund development

Where possible, interviewees stressed the importance of hiring a staff member that is fully dedicated to raising funds. Despite the common belief that NGOs cannot afford to staff these types of positions, a fundraising position typically pays for itself within 1-2 years and provides security to pursue an organization’s mandate. Since Canada’s government is less connected to the fair trade movement than European counterparts, this effort becomes particularly important for Fairtrade Canada.

Seek out mandate clarity

It is absolutely essential that organizations are clear and supported in their vision for advocacy. A clear, realistic mandate needs to be supported by both internal executives and an organization’s Board of Directors, as this provides an advocacy department with the authority to get the job done. When pursuing a newly developed mandate, like advocacy, this governance support is critical.

Ensure internal coherence

It is similarly important to ensure there is internal coherence in objectives. Different departments must be mindful of the pursuit of conflicting goals. This is particularly important for business engagement and advocacy arms of the organization, due to inherent potential for conflict. Actors acknowledged the value of taking steps to seek inputs from all departments when developing advocacy plans, and maintain clear and continuous communication within the organization.

Partner to build capacity

Limited funding amplifies the benefits of coalition building. Coalitions can help to enlarge the range of funding options available, and are powerful support systems to rely on for event mobilization. Some private organizations also offer in-kind professional services, which can help greatly to build capacity. Despite this need for partnerships, it is important to be mindful and selective of partnerships to avoid public scrutiny on conflicting mandates or conflicts of interest.

3.3 POTENTIAL BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO ADVOCACY

Competition laws

Germany has found anti-trust laws to be a considerable barrier in the advancement of sustainability and sector-based living wage work, as it prevents the ability to speak about price. With the presence of similar legislation in Canada, Fairtrade Canada may benefit from seeking to mitigate this barrier during roundtable discussions and similar stakeholder engagement efforts.

Legislative implementation

While the general idea of legislation may effectively pass, the details are what can have the most pronounced impact on fair trade outcomes. Advocacy NGOs need to stand by a topic following the completion of an official campaign to ensure that it is implemented fully as intended, without the influence of opportunistic lobbyists.

Unsupportive governments

Many public leaders are not supportive of fair trade legislations, and it can be difficult to advance as the populations being advocated on behalf of do not live in the country at hand. International strategies can often be dismissed in favour of domestic priorities.

Election cycles limit systemic change

Government administrations typically follow election cycles with short mandates, and may focus on immediate challenges that bring out “quick wins”, rather than effecting systemic changes that would provide a better environment for fair trade to grow. Short-sighted elected officials may resist the topic despite the reality that fair trade can contribute to long-term economic, social and environmental benefits, including the economic and social empowerment of women, increasing the negotiating power of farmers, and preserving biodiversity.²²

Advocacy in Practice

“Hour of the lobbyist”

The “hour of the lobbyist” occurs after legislation has passed and civil society attention is no longer placed on the topic, when lobbyists work to weaken the law or influence implementation. To minimize the impact of the “lobbyist hour,” NGOs must build a phase for implementation into their advocacy plan.

Social legitimacy of Fairtrade amongst NGOs

Some NGOs do not recognize Fairtrade as an NGO because of its relationship to corporate actors and certification process that operates within the bounds existing trading systems. As a result, Fairtrade can sometimes be perceived as lacking a vision for profound structural change. Fairtrade organizations pursuing advocacy mandates need to build trust amongst other NGOs in order to mitigate this barrier to social legitimacy.

Competing issues and priorities

There are an endless number of advocacy topics competing for the limited time and attention of decision-makers. This is a common theme identified in all four countries. In order to minimize the challenge encountered when various groups compete for attention on a number of independent issues, it is helpful to find co-benefits with likeminded organizations and work together on advancing multiple fronts. This process often requires much relationship building and research to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the multiple social, economic, and environmental issues at stake.

“Buy local” campaigns drive competition to international fair trade products

In France, there is a growing recognition of the importance of “buying local”. This is reflected by a few fair trade labeling organizations such as Biopartenaire and Agri-Éthique that certify locally produced fair trade products in France. The growing attention to local fair trade initiatives has created difficulties for organizations that advocate for fair trade between the North and the South, as it becomes difficult to explain how buying local is not always ideal, and that some local labeling organizations may engage in fair-washing and green-washing behaviors. Similar “buy local” initiatives can be seen worldwide, including in Canada, where contradicting initiatives can weaken fair trade movement efforts.



Grassroots mobilization in online spaces

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many advocacy campaigns, and has forced a long-term shift in how advocacy campaigns are conducted. Travel budgets are more heavily scrutinized, and the management of hybrid modes of operation that have both online and in-person components adds an extra layer of complexity to grassroots mobilization. Many non-profit organizations already function on a shoestring budget, which creates an additional challenge in managing resource-intensiveness of shifting between online and in-person environments. In the context of Fairtrade Canada, this shift towards virtual conduct can benefit the organization with respect to grassroots mobilization given the increased norm of online connections.

There are no “golden bullet” policy solutions

One interviewee stressed the challenge of seeing direct outcomes from most policy advocacy efforts. “One cannot push one button and expect to change the whole system. Rather your job is to maintain a resilient mindset and push several buttons to move the system a little bit.” The payoff from advocacy victories may not be immediate and may accrue over longer periods of time. Several actors emphasized the need for advocacy goals that manage internal expectations and give space for the policy cycle.

Business and advocacy functions may contradict one another

Fairtrade is unique in its reliance on business partnerships for its continued operation, and many advocacy efforts can be anti-capitalist in nature. This can limit the organization’s ability to advocate on all topics, and increase reliance on external partners with additional freedom outside the bounds of business relationships. It is important to ensure that the business and advocacy arms of Fairtrade organizations act coherently and in support of one another, rather than one seeking to “burn down the house it lives within.” While these limitations can frustrate external advocacy partners, one interviewee stressed that “advocacy is not inherently more noble than pursuing market share if the latter directly benefits producers.” Both functions must support, rather than contradict each others’ work.

Minimal volunteers

Compared to NGOs like Oxfam, the structure of many fair trade organizations do not have the same grassroots “army” of volunteers and supporters to assist in their work. One strategy shared to mitigate this absence is to politically activate Fair Trade Towns and mobilize the program toward advocacy in addition to fair trade sourcing. While general volunteers can help to ease human resource constraints, the Fair Trade Towns model takes this relationship to another level as it results in increased ownership and leadership from community partners that take the work on themselves.



DECOLONIZING ADVOCACY EFFORTS



One of the key emerging questions in policy advocacy is the concept of decolonizing advocacy efforts.

In Canada, decolonization typically refers to abolishing colonial institutions and establishing the right and ability of Indigenous people to practice self-determination over their land, cultures, and political and economic systems. In the context of trade, colonial relations manifest in the form of unfair compensation of workers, lack of respect for human rights, and the absence of producer voices in policy discussions.

Fairtrade advocates worldwide are exploring how best to decolonize advocacy efforts and actively address existing power imbalances between advocacy actors in the Global North and producers in the Global South. Fair trade advocacy efforts are being revisited and reconsidered to ensure that producers are meaningfully involved in the advocacy process. As Fairtrade explores similar questions in their advocacy efforts, they can consider the following insights shared by advocacy groups doing similar work.



Acknowledging the importance of decolonizing advocacy work in Europe, actors stated that:

Decolonization has not historically been on the fair trade agenda.

In fact, older generations of staff and coalition members often resist decolonization conversations due to a lack of awareness of power imbalances and positionality, considering themselves the “good guys” due to the nature of their work. There has been considerable progress in the Fairtrade system since producers were given 50% votes at the Fairtrade General Assembly in 2012, but much work is left

Many challenges exist with respect to tokenism and the “white gaze.” To meaningfully raise awareness and bring in the views of producers you need to include actual footage of regions and have people from these areas speak themselves. Unfortunately, considerable financial, language, and professional barriers exist that complicate the process of bringing these voices into a conversation that occurs in the Global North. At the most basic level it is essential that any engagement costs to bring producers into conversations are borne by Fairtrade and not the producers themselves. Further, it is important that conversations are ongoing and not simply built around a single event.

Not all fair trade-relevant legislation is perceived as benefitting producers. An emerging dialogue is related to value imperialism and human rights due diligence legislation. This is because producers are often asked to take on the burden of due diligence without compensation as big companies try to keep costs down. With this contradiction in mind, advocates need to be mindful of the unintended impacts of policies on driving further unfair trading conditions onto producers.

Economic challenges have reduced internal urgency to address decolonization. Many organizations are still recovering from the economic impacts of COVID-19, and face increasing pressure to

generate revenue through the growth of Fairtrade products in the context of high inflation and interest rates. For this reason, decolonization is not being sufficiently prioritized in many organizations.

The term “decolonization” invokes different responses.

Despite being asked the same question, interviewees had drastically different responses to the question “how do you decolonize your advocacy strategies to make sure that voices from the North and the South are equally represented?”

This can potentially be attributed to the colonial history of the countries where the organizations are located. For example, organizations in Belgium seem to have picked up the question immediately, but the question created slight confusion when first posed to an interviewee from Germany.

Even within the same country, generational differences may also contribute to a difference in understanding of and reaction to the word “decolonization.” For example, a participant at the executive level took personal offense to the term “decolonization,” while the concept was very well-received by another participant whose work is in youth engagement in the same organization.

Is decolonization truly possible? One participant highlighted that the promotion of cocoa or coffee alters agricultural patterns in producer nations, which reinforces systems of dependency. For this reason, it may not be possible to truly decolonize Fairtrade given its relationship to the current trading system. Further, producers face real barriers to meaningful participation since much of the fair trade movement is based in Europe.



Emerging strategies to decolonize advocacy

Engage youth ambassadors

Engage politically conscious youth, as these populations are often more connected with the importance of decolonization and represent an essential generational shift to aid in the longevity of the fair trade movement. One organization found that by working with young people who grew up in the Fairtrade system, these groups are more comfortable and have a greater capacity to speak about issues facing their community. This idea, through the use of “youth ambassadors,” helps to avoid tokenism and ensure that dialogue remains meaningful. It is important to be conscious that this work does not alienate groups with less awareness, as anti-colonial work requires recognition of issues before launching into deep debates.

Build stronger ties with producer networks

One actor highlighted the importance of building trust through in-person visits to producer networks. This is particularly important due to inconsistent levels of engagement being observed among regional producer networks. In-person visits allow advocates to understand what less engaged producer networks need to build trust, which is crucial in enabling free and open engagement.

Open seats at the table

Go beyond awareness-raising campaigns and involve producers in advocacy efforts. One example of this approach is the involvement of producers at the European commission, parliament, and council. In one case, the cost of compliance with a proposed Directive landed on producers, so bringing them into those conversations was essential to ensure that cost to different actors was sufficiently accounted for. See the adjacent case study for more detail on this.

Raising Producer's Voices

Leverage virtual engagement

The COVID-19 pandemic, while devastating, has opened up doors that allow for easier work with international connections. Organizations can take advantage of the flexibility gained through increased virtual partnerships, like organizing an online speaker event to discuss working conditions on-the ground. One actor leveraged this by inviting an organization in India to record something, then shared it at a local conference. Another effective strategy discussed as a result of the pandemic was virtually partnering with a journalist who was doing existing work on-the-ground, since international travel was not available for the fair trade

Advocacy in Practice

Smallholder Farmers Invited to the European Parliament to Discuss EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) in Agricultural Value Chains

On Feb 20th, 2023, in a collaboration between Fairtrade Advocacy Office (FTAO), Fairtrade International, Rainforest Alliance and Solidaridad Network, four smallholder farmers and representatives from coffee, cocoa, cotton and palm oil sectors were invited to speak directly to the European Parliament in Brussels. The speakers were able to highlight the potential negative impacts of the CSDDD on smallholder farmers. They highlighted, among other things, the importance of mandating living wages to ensure compliance with the human rights and environmental standards laid out under CSDDD.

By inviting smallholder farmers from the Global South, the advocacy actors were able to establish Global South producers as constituents of EU-level policies, even if they are not citizens of EU countries. Decolonizing in this context, meant taking smallholders' issues seriously and helping them raise their voices to the decision makers.



Photo credit: Steven De Winter/ Solidaridad

actor themselves. This type of partnership could continue outside of the pandemic in the presence of limited travel budgets.

Engage producers in media partnerships

In press work, one fair trade organization in Belgium requests producer quotes to ensure their voices are heard. Seeking direct quotes for the press is a practical way of amplifying on-the-ground voices in everyday works.

Hire advocates for producer networks

Fair trade actors can consider providing funding to producer networks to build advocacy capacity. This would allow them to participate more fully in the agenda setting process for the whole Fairtrade system.



PART 4: CONNECTING THE DOTS

Canadian advocacy has evolved considerably over the past 40 years, with advocacy organizations becoming key players in the policy sphere and a core function of the non-profit sector.²³ Advocacy organizations provide a powerful opportunity for citizens to interact with and influence policy makers.²⁴ Within the fair trade movement, organizations like Oxfam, the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA), World Vision Canada and the Canadian Fair Trade Network (CFTN) have grown their advocacy influence. These organizations work to promote policies that support human rights, focusing on issues such as fair wages and working conditions for workers in developing countries, environmental sustainability, and trade justice. Although these organizations have grown their influence as intermediaries between society and the government, they also face numerous challenges to policy participation.²⁵

4.1 EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY TACTICS

Invest resources into expert policy analysis

One of the primary “value-adds” of advocates, in the context of both coalitions and lobbying to politicians, is having evidence-based policy analysis that focuses on concrete, solution-focused proposals. This helps to build a business case to capture space on the broader policy agenda, and position oneself as a strong coalition partner.

Secure media coverage to advance arguments

Media publications are excellent resources to put the spotlight on issues, increase engagement across wide audiences, and place pressure on decision-makers. Relationships with journalists can be built over time to ease the publication process.

Consider participating in global coalitions (not only domestic)

Building relationships with international organizations is a good way to increase visibility and influence and maintain on the cusp of leading advocacy efforts. It also helps to create pressure within the Canadian context as one partner with larger global movements. It also helps to increase an organization’s reputation and perceived social legitimacy.

Seek out like-minded industry partners

In the presence of extensive “anti-corporate” discourse, it’s worth reminding oneself of the variety of businesses that are genuinely advancing the goals that you advocate for. It’s important to take the time to identify and build those industry partnerships, as they help to build and ground your own arguments.

Support coalition members’ engagement with politicians

In the absence of one’s own capacity to engage directly with elected officials, it is beneficial to support stronger coalition members’ in doing the same. Often this comes down to shared letter writing, supporting research efforts, or leveraging one’s network.

Organize sit-ins with elected officials

Parliament sit ins can help gain the attention of policy and decision makers, particularly for organizations that have lower influence in the political landscape.

Building partnerships through a “consensus starting-point document”

Working within coalitions can be challenging due to the wide variety of interests and mandates associated with a given topic. A helpful tool to overcome this is a shared working document that directly addresses that variety of viewpoints involved and progressively builds out a shared vision to guide advocacy efforts.

Build a strong base with diverse stakeholders

There is a need to build a community around the shared interest of trade justice. As pointed out by one interviewee, this can be achieved by hosting annual roundtables with trade justice-related organizations and by mobilizing grassroots projects such as Campus Ambassadors to create a dialogue on campus with youth.

4.2 POTENTIAL BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO ADVOCACY

Complex NGO relationships

Each NGO faces their own limitations, based on their organizational mandate. For example, registered charities require a certain distance from political conversations, while organizations focused on accountability need to take a harder line on certain issues. Each relationship is nuanced and reliant on social acceptability and reputation, which can complicate coalition-building opportunities.

Getting politicians to take action

The most significant challenge is moving beyond awareness and getting policymakers to act on issues. It is important that advocacy organizations take advantage of policy windows and pursue concrete recommendations. Advancing Canadian policy requires a strong business-case and sees less movement on files that rely on an ethical argument than what is observed in European countries.

Appropriate level of communication

It is difficult to keep language high-level enough to gain the interest of advocates, while detailed enough for decision-makers to adopt and respond.

Private sector implications

Smaller non-profit organizations have limited influence on issues that impact businesses. It is difficult to get businesses on board with legislation, like Bill S-211, that does not always align with their corporate interests. Germany took an interesting route in gradually introducing human rights due diligence legislation to minimize the effect on small and medium enterprises, which helped to gain support.

Limited resources

Many advocacy organizations in Canada are non-profit groups that rely on grants, donations, and fundraisers to support their work. There is a perceived competition for public resourcing, making it difficult for groups to accumulate funds over a sustained time frame. The limited funding creates uncertainty and often hinders organizations' ability to sustain advocacy efforts. Compared to similar organizations in Europe, funding is significantly more challenging in the Canadian context.



4.3 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR CANADA?

The previous sections have outlined the insights gathered from fair trade actors in European countries and relevant stakeholders in Canada. Fairtrade Canada operates in a different context and occupies a unique position from the European and many Canadian stakeholders, respectively. To address these differences, this section discusses the insights as they relate specifically to Fairtrade Canada. The discussion draws upon topic-specific insights from European stakeholders and context-specific insights from Canadian stakeholders, putting them in conversation with one another. The topics discussed below inform the following Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis.

Fairtrade and politics

Nearly all advocacy actors stressed the importance of political relationships to achieve advocacy success. A few factors complicate the potential for political relationship building for Fairtrade Canada, compared to the European stakeholders. Firstly, the European stakeholders benefited from a high political appetite for fair trade as a policy issue, due in part to the colonial history of those countries. In the Canadian context, this is much more challenging. Fairtrade Canada may struggle to capture the same space on the policy agenda due to lower awareness and political alignment to fair trade issues overall. Additionally, politicians are most motivated to address their own elected platform issues, which leaves little room for additional effort when fair trade policies are not directly aligned with their campaign promises. In contrast, Fairtrade Canada can benefit from relatively trans-partisan support for fair trade. European stakeholders shared their similar experiences in seeking support across the political spectrum, which was echoed by Canadian stakeholders. They found alignment with fair trade can make politicians appear more ‘people-’ or ‘business-’ friendly—which has an appeal, particularly in election years. This presents a real opportunity to increase political engagement and improve the appeal for other organizations to partner with Fairtrade Canada in advocacy.

Corporate relationships

Fairtrade Canada has a range of corporate relationships it is uniquely positioned to leverage. Using these relationships, Fairtrade Canada can gather industry perspectives on policy issues and solicit industry buy-in, which most other CSOs are not well positioned to do. This unique positionality can be an attractive element for coalition-building with other CSOs. At the same time, having corporate relationships can complicate advocacy efforts and put the organization in difficult positions. Various Canadian stakeholders emphasized the sizeable challenge posed by corporate actors’ stronghold on policy issues in Canada. To avoid taking contradictory and uncomfortable positions on matters concerning corporate relationships, it is important to take measures to mitigate these risks internally and externally to harness the benefits of these relationships for advocacy. Amongst these include the “good cop, bad cop” approach to advocacy amongst coalition members.

Capacity for advocacy

A major constraining factor for Fairtrade Canada is the limited capacity for advocacy at the organization. Most of the European stakeholders benefited from (strained but) adequate staffing and budgets, enabled by copious public funding. According to Canadian interviewees, Canadian public funds available to NGOs are relatively limited, posing capacity challenges. Stability in resourcing advocacy is an important input for success, so Fairtrade Canada must prioritize sustainable staffing and budget.



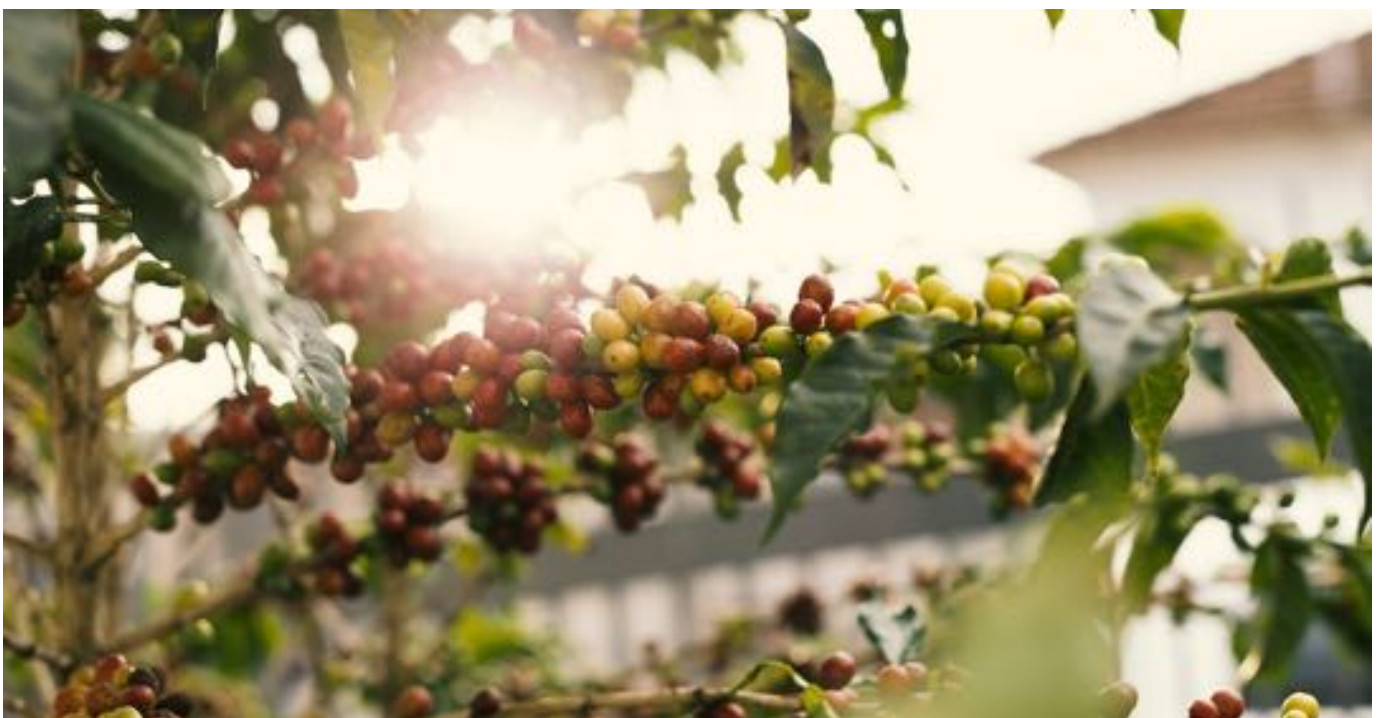
Reputation

Compared to Europe, Fairtrade Canada is likely to face reputational challenges in advancing fair trade advocacy. Due in part to colonial history, as well as European participation at the helm of the fair trade movement, European stakeholders benefit from a more supportive environment. In Canada, however, there are continued efforts to establish and maintain the legitimacy of Fairtrade as a “force for good”. While the awareness of the Fairtrade label is increasing in Canada (i.e., highest at 42% recognition in 2021)²⁶, broader factors are simultaneously undermining public trust, confidence and loyalty. While not unique to Canada, without the established societal support of European markets, they present more of a challenge to Fairtrade Canada. The proliferation of sustainability labelling (particularly “fair-washing” corporate-owned labels); high inflation and cost of food; and buy-local campaigns pose discursive challenges to fair trade advocacy. These factors may also complicate coalition-building with progressive organizations. While not unique to Canada, without the established societal support of European markets, they present more of a challenge to Fairtrade Canada. To rise above these challenges and to mobilize public support for Fairtrade, a combination of marketing, communications advocacy, and citizen engagement are needed. Fairtrade Canada will need to consider the mitigation of these issues for advocacy success.

Overall, Fairtrade Canada can pursue diverse set of relationships to establish a network of support for advocacy and foster an appetite for policy change.

Finding Allies

Fairtrade Canada will need to find allies at two levels; building coalitions with like-minded organizations and increasing public engagement. In terms of like-minded organizations, Fairtrade Canada has the opportunity to greatly improve connections with CSOs that operate with similar goals. With more frequent use of internal corporate fair trade labels, Fairtrade can build trust with CSOs by making an effort to distinguish itself as one of the most trusted sustainability labels in the world. This will build protection from the notions of “fair washing,” which may greatly diminish barriers to coalition-building with progressive groups. For public engagement, like other national fair trade organizations (NFOs), Fairtrade Canada has an existing array of programs such as Fair Trade Towns, Fair Trade Campus, Fair Trade Ambassador and more. These programs present an opportunity to increase grassroots engagement for fair trade advocacy. It may also help to mitigate the previously mentioned challenges of low political appetite and threatening discourses surrounding fair trade. Several European stakeholders highlighted their experience or ambitions for boosting grassroots engagement for advocacy using these programs and other efforts, including social media campaigning and youth engagement. Overall, Fairtrade Canada can pursue diverse set of relationships to establish a network of support for advocacy and foster an appetite for policy change.



For strategic application and brevity, please see the following SWOT analysis demonstrating the above findings.



STRENGTHS

- **Corporate Relationships:** FTC has business relationships while most other CSOs don't
- **Reputation:** Public awareness of the Fairtrade Mark in Canada is increasing (42% recognition in 2021, at its highest ever²⁷)
- **Finding Allies:** Existing grassroots programs (e.g., Fair Trade Towns and Schools)



WEAKNESSES

- **Capacity of Advocacy:** Limited funding available compared to registered charities and larger NGOs
- **Corporate Relationships:** Internal struggle between "burning-down-the-system" and working within it



OPPORTUNITIES

- **Corporate Relationships & Finding Allies:** Can leverage corporate relationships for collective advocacy agendas, while building relationships with likeminded social enterprises
- **Fairtrade & Politics:** Can pursue trans-partisan relationships with thoughtful framing due to Fairtrade's appeal across political spectrums



THREATS

- **Reputation:** Issues of social legitimacy persist due to proliferation of sustainability labels, inflation, perception of "fair-washing" and buy-local movements
- **Fairtrade & Politics:** Fair trade is currently not a prominent platform issue in Canada, which can make it challenging to gain political support
- **Corporate Relationships:** Industry has strong influence over Canadian decision-makers, and are often resistant to change



PART 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been selected based on their **urgency, feasibility**, and potential for **direct impact** towards policy outcomes. Urgency reflects the timeliness of each recommendation, and the order in which each step should be pursued. Feasibility reflects the level of control that Fairtrade Canada has over related actions, as well as financial costs. Finally, impact is assessed relative to direct policy outcomes. While all recommendations have been chosen for their impact, some have a more direct ability to influence policy change and have been ranked correspondingly. The colors below correspond to the score, with higher scores marked by darker colors.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Internal Organization

Overview

Before Fairtrade Canada can begin to meaningfully pursue advocacy goals, they will need to appropriately resource and organize advocacy efforts within the organization. Mandate clarity, internal coherence and predictable funding are important pillars for NGO advocacy. Mandate clarity will ensure the advocacy team possesses the agency to do their job when a commonly agreed upon ambition is supported by strong executive buy-in. Internal coherence is similarly essential to foster a productive advocacy team, ensuring that the advocacy and labelling arms of the organization work in tandem through complementary objectives. This is critical as Fairtrade organizations have the potential for internal conflict due to the complexity resulting from business relationships with Fairtrade certified brands and retailers. Continuous communication and compatibly developed goals are necessary for advocacy success. Finally, predictable internal resourcing allows for appropriate staffing and funding for advocacy efforts. In the absence of sustained government funding found across many European countries, it is worth considering placing dedicated resources towards the acquisition of new funding sources. A Theory of Change appropriate for Fairtrade Canada’s advocacy efforts can be found in Appendix 2, which will help to establish a unified organizational approach to advocacy.

Considerations

This recommendation is foundational, before active advocacy efforts can begin to make impact, which makes it a highly urgent item to address. Ensuring mandate clarity, internal coherence and predictable internal resourcing can help to mitigate the organizational risk of taking conflicting positions on policy issues that concern producers, businesses and civil society. This recommendation is well within the control of Fairtrade Canada as it requires only internal changes, however it does come at a financial cost, thus ranking feasibility at 4. If addressed in a timely manner, these strong foundations for a novel advocacy department will only bolster the chances of success. Finally, while this recommendation is indispensable for advocacy, it alone is not capable of achieving advocacy success, therefore it has been rated moderately for impact.





RECOMMENDATION 2: Coalition-building

Overview

Coalitions, across the board, are essential to doing advocacy effectively. This is beneficial to ease resource constraints through shared activities, and can open doors to influence policy decision-makers. While it is tempting to pursue a high quantity of coalitions to increase potential impact, capacity limitations require a thoughtful selection of relationships to expend energy towards. This can be done strategically by identifying allies based on 1) policy issues and 2) potential impact from Fairtrade Canada’s presence within the coalition, with frequent reassessment to ensure best use of resources. One tool to ease in this process is an investment into Fairtrade Canada’s own value proposition as an advocacy partner, whether that is research, content development, or campaign-relevant expertise. While coalitions are typically built between existing CSOs, another strategy is to involve likeminded corporate actors that are embodying the values of Fairtrade. These actors can play a unique role as a “business champion” of the fair trade movement. Finally, Fairtrade Canada operates in a unique context due to their relationship with both civil society and corporate actors, which places political limitations on how aggressively certain advocacy efforts can be framed. Fairtrade Canada can leverage relationships with more aggressive advocacy stakeholders and play a “good cop, bad cop” strategy that allows for both policy advocacy and maintenance of essential corporate relationships.

Considerations

By building civil society relationships and participating in active advocacy coalitions, Fairtrade Canada will build its social legitimacy as a policy advocacy actor, and open up doors for relationship building with elected officials. As such, this should be pursued urgently following internal organization. With that said, Canadian advocacy relationships remain complex as actors vary in reputational strength and openness to working with all partners, which ranks this moderately in feasibility. Finally, strong coalition relationships benefit more than Fairtrade Canada’s own social legitimacy. They also present an impact through “strength in numbers,” the sharing of resources and expertise, and networking opportunities. This impact is high, but remains a 4 as it does not necessarily assume access to elected officials.

Urgency



Feasibility



Direct Impact





RECOMMENDATION 3: Citizen Engagement

Overview

Citizen engagement is another essential piece of the puzzle for creating effective advocacy campaigns. Different from directly influencing policymakers to enact policies and address trade injustice through a top-down method, citizen engagement is a bottom-up approach that seeks to push for policy changes through awareness-raising and building ground-level support. When citizens are engaged and informed, they can demand transparency from businesses and policymakers, holding them accountable for their trade-related actions and policies. Aside from the accountability mechanism, citizen engagement work can also create a sense of community, and promote a sense of solidarity between consumers who are aware of human rights abuses and environmental injustices in the global supply chain. The sense of community could then be helpful when pressuring elected officials and policymakers to enact laws for ethical consumption. Moreover, citizen engagement work can contribute to greater visibility and reputation-building for Fairtrade Canada’s brand, and may be of great help further down the road when organizing letter-writing campaigns and protests to pressure elected officials and policymakers to generate effective changes in trade policies.

Incorporating our learnings from the interviews conducted with both the European and Canadian stakeholders, Fairtrade can pursue this recommendation through youth empowerment and the mobilization of young voices. By working with university students and fostering youth leadership, Fairtrade Canada will be able to create, among youths, a sense of ownership and investment in the fair trade movement within Canada. Fairtrade Canada can similarly enhance citizen engagements efforts through the innovative

use of social media platforms, and development of materials that cater to citizens with diverse backgrounds. Finally, more targeted efforts to involve the broader population into campaigning efforts like letter-writing campaigns and protests can help to drive impact while increasing the visibility of Fairtrade Canada’s own brand.

Considerations

Following Fairtrade Canada’s internal organization, citizen engagement is something that can be pursued in tandem with coalition-building efforts to build legitimacy, ranking urgency at 4. Citizen engagement efforts are well within the realm of Fairtrade Canada’s ability to lead and develop, and are generally cost-effective with a number of existing programs that can be expanded upon. Particularly, using social media for citizen engagement can have a wide reach while being cost-effective, and therefore is a feasible recommendation for Fairtrade Canada. Citizen engagement is undoubtedly a highly impactful tool to raise awareness and place items on the government agenda, however they are unlikely to have the same direct impact on policy change as “working from within” through lobbying efforts. Further, citizen engagement campaigns often do not result in immediate results in the short-term. For this reason, the impact is felt in a less direct manner.





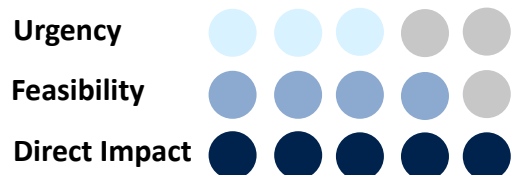
RECOMMENDATION 4: Building Relationships with Elected Officials

Overview

Building relationships with elected officials is also important for effective advocacy, as these decision-makers are more likely to listen to those they know and trust. These relationships take time to build, however the potential impact is high as the relationships can help to increase Fairtrade Canada’s visibility, influence, and impact in pushing for legislative changes by working “from within”. For Fairtrade Canada to build and develop these relationships with elected officials it is important they have a good understanding of the policy cycle and landscape, find common ground in the policy agenda, and take advantage of existing policy windows. While intuitively Fairtrade may appear to be a more progressive issue, it is beneficial to build relationships across the political spectrum. Fairtrade Canada has the advantage here, as fairtrade is a topic that appeals to many, giving them the opportunity to leverage support from politicians across the spectrum. Conservatives are more likely to support certification systems than hard-handed regulations, and their support of the matter helps them to build ethical reputations. Similarly, its market focus helps liberal politicians appear more business oriented. To ease in this process, it is important for Fairtrade Canada to invest time into policy analysis resulting in concrete, actionable policy recommendations rather than “pointing fingers.”

Considerations

Given Fairtrade Canada’s relatively recent entry into Canadian advocacy, it may be beneficial to first prioritize coalition-building with civil society to increase social legitimacy before considering building relationships with elected officials. This increased legitimacy is likely to be powerful in opening up doors to decision-makers. Gaining support and building relationships with elected officials is not a simple process. It takes time and effort to build trust and maintain relationships in the long run. Additionally, as politicians frequently focus on specific issues of interest, Fairtrade-relevant policy may not be a highly prioritized item in the government agenda, thus ranking feasibility at moderate.





This cross jurisdictional study on good practices in fair trade advocacy spanning four countries, Canada, Belgium, France and Germany, identified four key components for advocacy. These include internal organizing of advocacy departments, building coalitions, pursuing public engagement and fostering relationships with elected officials and their staff. These recommendations were assessed against three criteria: urgency, feasibility and direct impact. In order to identify the direct next steps, the following order of implementation is recommended with urgency as the key criteria.

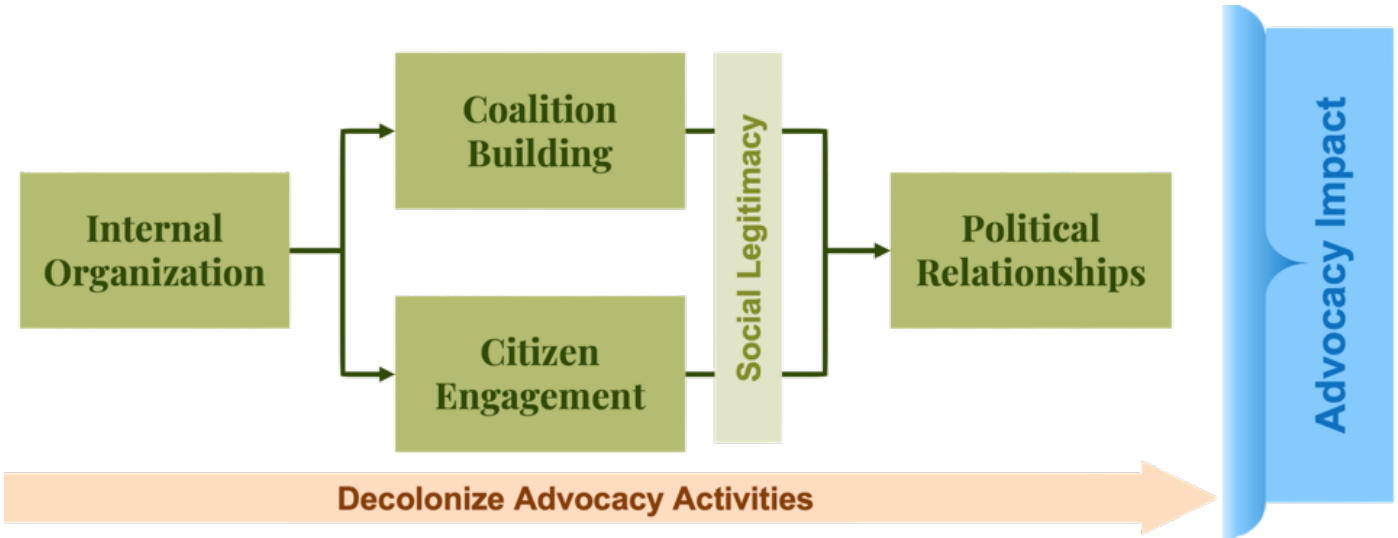


Diagram: Suggested order of implementation, left to right

The above diagram outlines the suggested order of implementation as well as the relationships between each of the four recommendations. It is essential to first organize internally, which will lay the foundation that sets the advocacy department up for success moving forward. Thereon, concerted efforts in coalition building and citizen engagement will boost the social legitimacy of Fairtrade Canada. By bolstering its presence as a significant voice on trade justice policies, this will help to unlock access to political relationships that often drive the highest direct impact on policy change. Simultaneously, the organization can implement good practices learned from the field to decolonize advocacy efforts. These practices must be applied across all advocacy activities, with a continued commitment to learning and adapting.

Together, these activities will help drive advocacy impact for Fairtrade Canada as it carves out its unique place in the Canadian advocacy landscape.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1

Effective Campaigns & Strategies in Europe

The table below highlights recent advocacy campaigns identified by interviewees as successful endeavours. These examples have informed the 'Insights' section above. This table captures the specific examples shared by research participants in more detail.

Belgium

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Beyond Chocolate	'Beyond Chocolate' is a publicly funded multi-stakeholder collaboration between industry, civil society, social impact investors, trade unions and universities to create a sustainable chocolate industry. ²⁸ Current targets are 100% sustainable chocolate by 2025, living wages for cocoa growers, and an end to deforestation by 2030. ²⁹ This is supported by €2million in funding for sustainable cocoa projects by the Belgian Development Cooperation.	Fairtrade Belgium represents CSOs at Beyond Chocolate. It is working closely with NGO partners as well as industry to facilitate productive dialogue.
EU Directive on Human Rights Due Diligence	In December 2022, the European Council adopted its negotiation position on the CSDDD to regulate corporate sustainability practices, which include corporate responsibilities to "identify, prevent, end and mitigate impacts on human rights and the environment." Throughout 2023, the EU Council will negotiate the legislation with the EU Parliament. ³⁰	Human Rights Due Diligence was not initially seen as a fair trade topic. FTAO amended the framing of the issue in terms of worker conditions and pricing and were able to bring producer concerns into the policy frame.
EU Directive on Unfair Trading Practices in Agriculture and Agrifood Legislation	In 2019, the European Parliament and Council adopted the EU Directive on Unfair Trading Practices in Agriculture and Food Supply Chains. The Directive lays out a list of black (banned) and grey (conditionally permissible) practices to limit the negative impact on marginalized producers. ³¹ Practices included long payment timelines, short-notice cancellations of perishables, commercial retaliation and more.	FTAO was successful in expanding the scope of the legislation to include producers in the Global South, which was not originally on the agenda. They worked with EU farmers to achieve this. The threat of unfair competition from producers in the Global South motivated the partnership.
Clean Clothes Campaign	The Clean Clothes Campaign is a coalition of EU-based organizations and NGOs that support living wages and mandatory human rights due diligence in the garment sector.	A fair trade movement actor sits on the Board of this coalition, as their primary method of engagement with this issue. From that position, they are able to concretely influence the efforts. They highlighted such engagements can be taxing and must be undertaken strategically, as there are opportunity costs.

Germany

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
<p>Fairtrade Town *also held outside of Germany</p>	<p>The goal of this campaign is to promote fair trade through engagement and multi-stakeholder coordination at the municipal level. Municipalities may join following the fulfilment of five criteria related to governance, marketing, engagement and availability of fair trade products.³²</p>	<p>Fairtrade Towns are effective, but most effective when the emphasis is on gathering a diverse steering group and working to raise the collective standards for a Fair Trade Town beyond the minimum. The value comes from this steering group rather than from the Fairtrade labelling itself.</p>
<p>EU Supply Chain Legislation “Myth Busting”</p>	<p>A key barrier to the supply chain legislation was the fear of unintentional consequences for least developed countries. Germany created a “fact-checking” list as an evidence-based response to counter this discourse.</p>	<p>This strategy is effective for arming yourself and your allies with evidence-based information, but equally serves to demonstrate the value of your organization through research tools.</p>
<p>Roundtables – “Food for Biodiversity”</p>	<p>Many variations of roundtables exist, with “Food for Biodiversity” being one example. It brought together various companies, trade associations, and certification organizations in the food retail sector with environmental groups and research institutes to form an alliance that seeks to protect biological diversity.³³</p>	<p>Roundtables are essential, but their efficacy varies depending on the actors that it consists of. As in many instances, you are only as “strong as your weakest player” and some actors have the ability to drag conversations down.</p>
<p>Fair Trade European Parliament Breakfast *also held outside of Germany</p>	<p>This is an annual event bringing together parliamentarians and fair trade actors to discuss relevant fair trade topics and build relationships.³⁴ While not unique to Germany, German interviewees stressed the impact of the event for their own advocacy purposes.</p>	<p>This has been a powerful connection opportunity. Future iterations of similar events may choose to consider evening events with a more social angle to “keep the conversation going.”</p>

France

ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN	DESCRIPTION	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Fairzone	The goal of this annual campaign is to raise awareness about the values of fair trade products, and how fair trade can make their businesses more sustainable. With this campaign, the organizers developed a fair trade game. This game invites people to come to figure out what kind of labels there are, and what commitment each label represents, accompanied by a detailed guide.	The Fairzone campaign was a powerful campaign that aims to raise awareness among citizens and businesses on the value of fair trade products. Although not directly used for policy advocacy, it can be readapted to raise awareness about the efforts of fair trade organizations, and engage citizens in the movement.
L'initiative française pour un cacao durable - French Initiative on Sustainable Cocoa (FRISCO)	The FRISCO campaign aims to bring together both public and private stakeholders in the cocoa sector to advocate for a thriving and sustainable cocoa production system that centers the benefit of cocoa farmers and the supply chain issues. ³⁵ The organizers of this campaign demanded interviews, meetings, and concrete policy change from policymakers. This was described as “knocking on the doors” of all big-named ministries and secretaries of France. (e.g. Ministry of Ecology). They also collaborated with other labelling and civil society advocacy organizations in sending out letters to the public.	Coalition-building turned out to be an important piece of the advocacy puzzle for this campaign, as it would have been difficult if Max Havelaar was working on its own. Communication efforts took much more time than expected, which has informed future project plans.
Fair Future	This is a coalition-led program funded by the French Development Agency (AFD). The program is led by youth, and primarily involves students. While headquartered in Paris, is also has a presence in Strasbourg, Rennes, Toulouse, and Normandie. Each region is independently led by their own teams, primarily through volunteers. Paris’ regional campaign brings organic, Fairtrade products to people experiencing homelessness.	This campaign has been effective in raising public awareness of fair trade, and educating the public on the value of fair trade products. It also advances the organization’s own reputation from a public relations perspective.
L'addition - Cheque	This Paris-based campaign mobilizes restaurants and cafés to include more organic, locally sourced and fair trade products. Tactics included writing a guide for restaurants to help them source new types of food. In this campaign, they mobilize restaurants and cafes to include more fair-trade, organic, and locally sourced products.	The campaign was not very successful because of the timing in line with the COVID-19 pandemic. With a number of restaurants closing down as a result of pandemic restrictions, the program did not have sufficient resources to keep running.
Génération Equitable - Fair generation	This initiative started at college campuses, and aimed to mobilize young people within the fair trade movement. The campaign recruits college students and supports them to develop initiatives that make their campus more fair-trade-friendly, (i.e. having fairly traded products in the cafeteria)	This movement really highlights the importance of youth in the awareness-raising and advocacy stages. The organization itself has many college students as members, while also making sure that people of all age groups are represented.

APPENDIX 2

Theory of Change for the Advocacy Department

The following visual provides a sample theory of change for Fairtrade Canada's burgeoning advocacy department. These objectives, if adopted, can be further developed in alignment with the broader organizational vision to further enhance internal coherence.

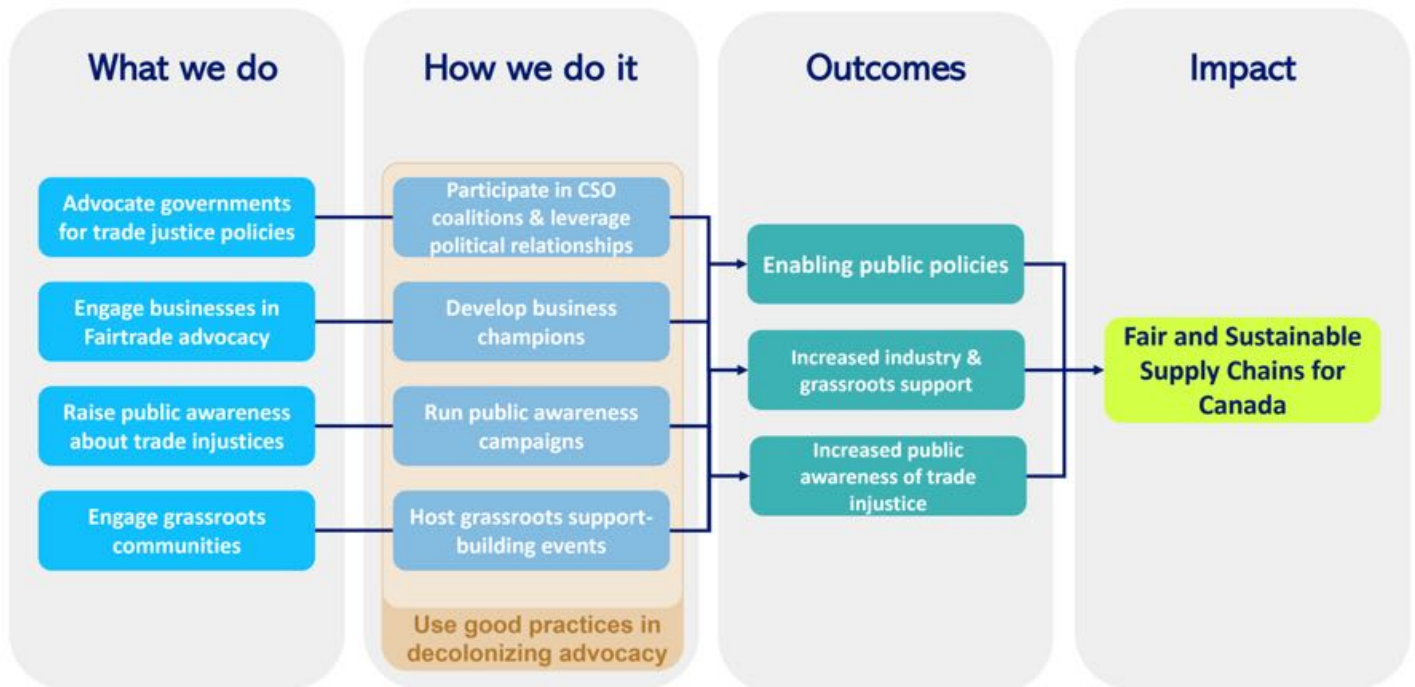


Diagram: Sample Theory of Change for the Advocacy Department at Fairtrade Canada

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