

Fairtrade and Its Role in Sustainable Development of the Agri-Food System: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Fairtrade aims to promote equitable trade relations between developed and developing countries. By guaranteeing producers a fair price for their goods, it seeks to alleviate poverty and improve the livelihoods of farmers and workers in marginalized regions. However, the sustainability of Fairtrade practices has been a subject of ongoing debate. The aim of this review is to critically explore Fairtrade impact on economic, social and environmental sustainability of agri-food systems by applying the PRISMA methodology and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analysis. PRISMA guidelines were used to conduct a systematic literature review of works related to sustainability and Fairtrade. The review has helped to identify strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats to fulfilling the role of Fairtrade certification in sustainable development of global and local agri-food systems. Most of the reviewed papers explored consumer behavior regarding Fairtrade and have practical implications which is positive as consumer-driven strategies are particularly important for systemic change and the long-term success. While Fairtrade has made significant strides in promoting sustainable and ethical practices, improving producer livelihoods and working conditions, it still faces obstacles such as market competition with other certification schemes and uneven distribution of benefits within producer communities which consist of smallholder farmer cooperatives and commercial plantations. The final price of Fairtrade products is significantly affected by the value added by retailers contrary to the key objectives of the system. This undermines consumer confidence in the whole system.

Keywords: Fairtrade, food, sustainability, agri-food system, ethical consumption, PRISMA