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Fairtrade: Contributions Towards Achieving SGD13 – Climate Action

A Comparative Content Analysis of Fairtrade
International and Fair Trade USA Annual Reports

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Abstract

Climate change is an increasingly pressing issue. With the growth of globalization, sustainability has become a fundamental priority for organizations such as the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. Fairtrade (FT) is a movement aimed at protecting workers from exploitation, primarily small-scale producers from the Southern Hemisphere. This movement aims to ensure that workers receive a fair price for their work, thus ensuring sustainable livelihoods and playing a role in mitigating and protecting against climate change. FT, as a movement, aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This study analyses how FT organizations, Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA, communicate their efforts regarding Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG13) - Climate Action. Fair Trade USA reports lack dedicated sections on climate action and the SDGs, while Fairtrade International consistently includes these topics. A comparative analysis reveals that Fairtrade International appears to have a stronger commitment to addressing climate change compared to Fair Trade USA. This research emphasizes the need for FT organizations to improve practices in reporting on climate change. The results suggest implications for policies and practices within the FT movement, highlighting the importance of alignment with climate change mitigation. Suggestions for future research include expanding the sample and considering additional sources of information to improve study conclusions. This study contributes to understanding the efforts of FT organizations in achieving SDG13.

Keywords: Fairtrade, globalization, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG13, climate change, environment

Wordcount: 8 937

Resumo

As alterações climáticas são um tema cada vez mais premente. Com o crescimento da globalização, a sustentabilidade tem sido uma prioridade fundamental para organizações como a Organização Mundial do Comércio e as Nações Unidas. O Comércio Justo (CJ) é um movimento que visa proteger os trabalhadores de situações de exploração, principalmente os pequenos produtores provenientes do Hemisfério Sul. Este movimento almeja a que os trabalhadores obtenham um preço justo pelo seu trabalho e, assim, garantir que tenham meios de subsistência sustentáveis e desempenha, assim, um papel na mitigação e proteção das alterações climáticas. O CJ, enquanto movimento, alinha-se com os ODS. Este estudo analisa como as organizações do CJ, Fairtrade International e Fair Trade USA, comunicam os seus esforços em relação ao Objetivo de Desenvolvimento Sustentável 13 (ODS13) - Ação Climática. Os relatórios da Fair Trade USA carecem de secções dedicadas à ação climática e aos ODS, enquanto que a Fairtrade International inclui consistentemente estes tópicos. Uma análise comparativa revela que a Fairtrade International parece ter um compromisso mais forte com a questão das mudanças climáticas quando comparada com a Fair Trade USA. Esta pesquisa enfatiza a necessidade de as organizações de CJ melhorarem as práticas na elaboração de relatórios sobre mudanças climáticas. Os resultados sugerem implicações para políticas e práticas dentro do movimento do CJ, destacando a importância do alinhamento com a mitigação das mudanças climáticas. As sugestões para investigação futura incluem o alargamento da amostra e a consideração de fontes de informação adicionais para melhorar as conclusões do estudo. Este estudo contribui para a compreensão dos esforços das organizações do CJ no sentido de atingir o ODS13.

Palavras-chave: Comércio Justo, globalização, Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável, ODS13, alterações climáticas, ambiente.

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

As the world faces pressing challenges of climate change and sustainable development, sustainability has become a concern, driving organizations across various sectors of the economy to reevaluate their practices and align them to meet global agendas. Among these organizations, FT entities are crucial players, with an objective to not only promote fair and ethical trade practices but also to address challenges related to the environment and its protection. This study aims to understand how Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA, two key FT organizations, communicate their efforts towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 13 (SDG13) - Climate Action. It is worth mentioning that this study does not aim to measure the impact of FT existing policies and programs to tackle climate change.

The following chapters will explore these aspects, shedding light on how these organizations communicate their alignment with SDG13. Through a comparative content analysis between Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA, the content of their annual reports is examined to understand the extent to which they prioritize and report on climate change and the SDGs.

The literature review conducted for this study explores the complexities of globalization and sustainable development and emphasises their relationship to FT initiatives. Moreover, the literature review highlights the limitations of international trade policies, particularly within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in ensuring equitable benefits for all nations. Furthermore, the literature review explores the SDGs, established by the UN in 2015, which represent a list of objectives to meet to solve global challenges across economic, social, and environmental dimensions. FT initiatives align closely with

the SDGs, aiming at promoting equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability in international trade practices. Finally, the literature review explores FT, its origins, its evolution and impact, the role of certification with its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the different perspectives of the movement.

It is important to note that the basis of this research is the recognition that FT organizations are contributors to sustainable practices, both environmentally and socially. Therefore, understanding the way Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA communicate their efforts towards SDG13 and climate action not only offers insights into their dedication to these objectives but also highlights areas for improvement in FT practices and future research in academia.

By conducting a comparative content analysis of Fair Trade USA and Fairtrade International's annual reports, this research aims to unravel the way they communicate their commitment to SDG13, revealing differences, strengths, and areas for improvement. Moreover, it seeks to close the gap in literature by providing an analysis of how FT organizations address climate change and the SDGs in their reporting practices, thus contributing to a deeper understanding of their role in sustainability. This study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct the comparative content analysis. The reports were chosen for their credibility and summative nature, collected from the official organizations' website. The analysis provides trend identification and allows for comparisons between organizations, shedding light on the emphasis each organization gives to climate change mitigation. The codes analysed were selected based on prior research and official UN descriptions of SDG13. Visual aids, including graphs and word clouds, were used for data interpretation and visualisation. This methodology enables a nuanced understanding of communication patterns regarding SDG13 within these two organizations.

However, as with any research, limitations must be acknowledged. These include constraints such as sample size, availability of reports, and the subjectivity inherent in the coding process. Nevertheless, by recognizing these limitations, opportunities for further research emerge to enrich the understanding of FT organizations' contributions towards climate change mitigation. This research serves as a catalyst towards fostering more transparent and impactful communication practices within the FT movement and facilitating progress towards achieving SDG13 and broader sustainability goals.

This study is structured into six chapters, each serving a distinct purpose. The Introduction sets the context and research objectives, the Literature Review examines existing literature related to the topics of globalization, FT, sustainability, and SDGs, the Methodology details the research method, sample and data collection, the Results chapter presents the findings of the study, the Discussion interprets and analyses the results, and the Conclusion summarizes the main findings and implications.

Chapter 2

2. Literature Review

2.1 Globalization and Sustainable Development

For this research, one must define the concept of globalization, as it is both an enabler and motivator of Fairtrade (FT). It is important to note that, according to Fairtrade America. (n.d.), the term Fair Trade written as two separate words refers to the general term of products being sold fairly, but does not guarantee the independent, third-party verification that Fairtrade has. However, only organizations, brands, and products involved with Fairtrade International can use the Fairtrade (one word) label. Notwithstanding, as it will be presented in this study, the interpretation of this word is not the same for Fair Trade USA. The organization used the term “Fair Trade” like Fairtrade International use “Fairtrade” (Evenson, 2023).

Globalization, as defined by Giddens (1990) is “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1990, p.64), and by Friedman (2000) is “the inexorable integration of markets, nation states and technologies to a degree never witnessed before—in a way that is enabling individuals, corporations, and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before (...)” (Friedman, 2000, p. 27). In other words, globalization is the global agreement of policies reached through negotiation that enables the integration of markets and thus a more integrated world. Globalization is highly connected with multinationalism and international economic integration. Globalization signifies the importance of standard procedures, free trade, international compliance, and international investment. However, according to Kim et al., (2020), criticism came out against

globalism since inequality and unfairness became critical issues among trading nations.

According to Milanovic (2013), in the period from 1988 to 2008 “for the first time since the Industrial Revolution, there may have been a decline in global inequality” (Milanovic, 2013, p.3). While one might expect global development to lead to an overall improvement in people's standard of living, this anticipated prosperity is not uniformly experienced across all regions. As mentioned by Stiglitz (2013), global income inequality has slightly improved as some regional gaps have lessened, notably between Asia and advanced Western economies. The convergence of average incomes among countries owes much to China's and India's growth. However, overall equality among all individuals globally has seen limited progress.

According to the UN's 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report, in terms of income inequality, the global Gini coefficient increased by about 0.5 points, from 62 points in 2019 to about 62.6 points in 2020 (United Nations [UN], 2023). The UN points out that inequality has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its uneven recovery, State-based armed conflict (reaching its highest level since 1945 where around two billion people living in conflict-affected countries in 2020), and the rising living costs due to inflation, with reports of around 89% of the least developed countries between June and September 2022 had food inflation above 5% (United Nations [UN], 2023, p. 10). In sum, the report emphasizes the worsening global income inequality, driven by factors like the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflict, and inflation, urging prompt and fair policy responses.

The fact that opening a country's economy to international trade is not a determining factor in improving people's living conditions in developing countries can be explained by the different ways countries go about that process, mainly through the different World Trade Organization (WTO) accession

processes (Allee & Scalera, 2012). Allee and Scalera (2012) suggest that the impact of trade opening on developing countries varies. Some, as “former colonies”¹ of WTO member countries, gained automatic WTO membership without making institutional changes. In contrast, countries that completed the WTO accession process by lowering customs duties and reforming institutions experienced greater development and improved living conditions due to the innovative changes imposed by the WTO, which stimulated economic growth. Membership in the WTO, therefore, does not lend itself equally to developed and developing countries (Mobariz, 2016). Copelovitch and Ohls (2012) add that this came about since, prior to 1995, when the WTO superseded the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), several states took advantage of GATT’s Article XXVI:5(c)², which allowed them (as “former colonies” of existing GATT members) to join the multilateral trade regime quickly and simply.

Later, the Doha Development Round³, as explained by Tadem (2016), aimed to make international trade rules under the WTO fairer for developing countries, boosting their development and enabling them to start the catching-up process. However, the Doha Round was not successful. On the one hand, Gallagher (2008) argues that developing nations withdrew from negotiations due to the perceived inadequacy of potential gains from market access, which did not justify relinquishing their domestic policy autonomy essential for crafting effective development strategies. On the other, Baldwin (2006) argues that general developments in the world trading system have made it increasingly difficult for nations to reach multilateral agreements aimed at further liberalizing

¹ Term used by author in source material.

² GATT’s Article XXVI:5(c) : “If any of the customs territories, in respect of which a contracting party has accepted this Agreement, possesses or acquires full autonomy in the conduct of its external commercial relations and of the other matters provided for in this Agreement, such territory shall, upon sponsorship through a declaration by the responsible contracting party establishing the above-mentioned fact, be deemed to be a contracting party”.

³ The Doha Development Round, also known as the Doha Development Agenda (DDA), began in November 2001 at the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its primary goal was to reduce trade barriers globally, aiming to enhance and promote increased international trade. In 2015, the United States government called for an end to the Doha round.

international trade. For the reasons stated above no agreement was reached, and the Doha Round has not yet been concluded. Hence, it can be inferred that the WTO has not succeeded in guaranteeing equitable benefits for all nations through international trade.

In 1987, the UN Brundtland Commission⁴ defined sustainable development (SD) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED], 1987, p.41). It is seen as a process within the context of globalization (Beumer et al., 2018) and is often presented as being divided into three dimensions/pillars: the social, the economic, and the environmental (Hardi & Zdan, 1997). SD is depicted as striving to harmonize and reconcile these three elements, achieving a balanced approach that mitigates conflicts among them (Giddings et al., 2002). As noted by Halkos and Gkampoura (2021) despite advancements made in certain domains, notably the economic aspect, global progress remains inadequate from the anticipated trajectory, particularly concerning social and environmental concerns.

The criticism of globalization that it does not equitably bring prosperity increased regional cooperation, reflected in the rise in free trade agreements (FTAs) at the country level. Furthermore, regional integration agreements, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), European Union (EU), and Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), signify a departure from both multinationalism and globalism (Kim et al., 2020). This reaction to globalization led to deglobalization. If globalization is the process of increasing interdependence among nations, deglobalization represents the process of weakening interdependence among nations (Witt, 2019). WTO argues that the outbreak of WWI in 1914 marked the end of the first

⁴ Founded in 1983, the Brundtland Commission was a sub-organization of the United Nations that aimed to unite countries in pursuit of sustainable development. The Brundtland Commission officially dissolved in 1987 after releasing *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report.

age of globalization and the start of three decades of deglobalization and that after WWII, in 1945, countries embarked on a second age of globalization (World Trade Organization [WTO], 2023).

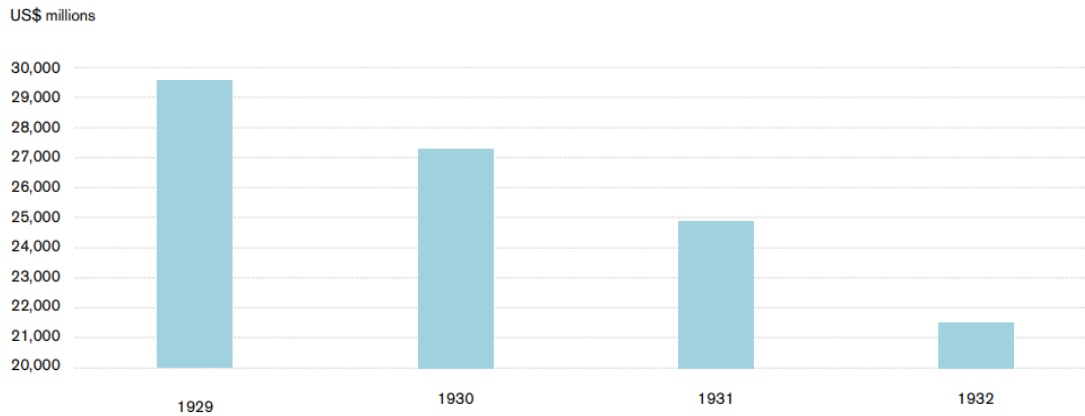


Table 1: The great collapse of world trade, 1929-32

Source: “World Trade Report 2023: Re-globalization for a secure, inclusive and sustainable future”, by World Trade Organization [WTO], 2023, p.17.

According to Kim et al. (2020), since the global economic crisis of 2008, there have been several observations demonstrating deglobalization: (1) import tariff barriers have been strengthened by developed countries, (2) non-tariff barriers (restrictions that arise due to difficult or costly prohibitions, conditions or specific market requirements for the import or export of products) have been imposed, and (3) global value chains have been reconfigured. Furthermore, Witt (2019) explains that a decrease in interdependence implies that, on average, nations depend less on goods, services, or foreign investments in comparison to their domestic economic activities. Put differently, the proportions of trade and investment flows in relation to GDP experience a decline.

An alternative approach to gauge deglobalization involves employing the inverse of the globalization index (Kim et al., 2020). The inverse correlation between these measures can substantiate the idea that a decline in globalization coincides with an increase in deglobalization. The KOF index, encompassing

economic, political, and social dimensions (outlined in Table 2), demonstrates a robust upward trajectory in globalization from 1990 to 2007. However, post-2007, the KOF globalization index indicates a deceleration in its rate of expansion.

Economic globalization	Actual flows	Trade (% of GDP) Foreign direct investment, stocks (percent of GDP) Portfolio investment (percent of GDP) Income payments to foreign national (percent of GDP)
	Restrictions	Hidden import barriers Mean tariff rate Taxes on international trade (percent of current revenue) Capital account restrictions
Social globalization	Data on personal contact	Telephone traffic Transfers (percent of GDP) International tourism Foreign population (percent of total population)
	Data on information flows	International letters (per capita) Internet users (per 1,000 people) Television (per 1,000 people) Trade in newspapers (percent of GDP)
	Data on cultural proximity	Embassies in country Membership in international organizations participation in UN Security Council Missions International treaties
Political globalization	Embassies in country Membership in international organizations (FTA) Participation in UN Security Council Missions International treaties	

Table 2: KOF globalization index

Source: “Observations of deglobalization against globalization and impacts on global business”, by Kim et al., 2020, p.20.

This begs the question: What happens to products that cannot be produced and traded within regional areas or domestic markets (cocoa, sugar, bananas, coffee, etc.), that rely on global value chains and international markets for their production, distribution, and consumption? International organizations such as the WTO have a role in fomenting and regulating international trade. One might argue that its role considering deglobalization is of higher importance. The 2023 World Trade Report by WTO acknowledges that “globalization has given rise to new challenges – environmental strains, increased inequality, seismic shifts in global power – that are fuelling counter-pressures to reverse globalization, unwind interdependence and return to a more divided world of regional blocs”

(World Trade Organization [WTO], 2023, p.16). The report questions if this fragmentation would make the world more “secure, equal or sustainable” (Ibid.). It concludes that “the opposite is true – that fragmentation would leave economies less prosperous, less innovative, less resilient, and less willing and well-equipped to cooperate on the social, environmental, and security challenges they face” (Ibid.) and that “solving today’s challenges actually requires more global openness, integration and cooperation” (Ibid.). One of WTO’s goals is, therefore, to encourage re-globalization. WTO defines re-globalization as follows:

Re-globalization (...) describes an approach that extends trade integration to more people, more economies and more issues. It is an approach that places international cooperation at its centre and recognizes that global problems require global solutions. However, re-globalization is not simply more globalization. Rather, it calls for a reform of the multilateral trading system to ensure that the principles of secure, inclusive and sustainable trade are respected. Re-globalization encompasses the reduction of trade barriers for those that have remained at the margins of the trading system, from least-developed economies to workers in the industrial heartlands of advanced economies. Thereby, re-globalization advances resilience through diversification, inclusiveness through development, and sustainability through knowledge diffusion. This includes strengthening cooperation and coherence with other multilateral fora and across issues. And through all these advances, re-globalization unlocks trade’s potential to drive solutions to key challenges of today. (World Trade Organization [WTO], 2023, p.22)

It is in this context that FT is analysed, by reaping the rewards of re-globalization and channelling them toward the southern hemisphere producers at the beginning of the global supply chains, which on their own are unable to engage in international trade to ensure their sustenance and economic survival. As it will be presented in the following section, FT tackles the three pillars of SD

by supporting producers to continue producing and improving their living conditions through the payment of a fair price, by boosting the development of their communities, and by guaranteeing environmentally sustainable production, as well as shedding light on alternative views on FT where northern producers also participate in the movement.

2.2 What is Fairtrade?

The FT movement can be traced back to religious charities and the recovery effort after World War II (Low & Davenport, 2005), as well as decentralized local initiatives such as the opposition to capitalism, decolonisation, alternative lifestyles, and the emergence of indigenous initiatives which empowered producers in the southern hemisphere (Gendron et al., 2009), making it difficult to pinpoint a single date that represents the beginning of FT. The creation of the Ten Thousand Villages project in Puerto Rico is significant for the creation of FT (Low & Davenport, 2005), but also the foundation of SERRV International, in 1949, in the Americas, the opening of the first formal FT shop in the USA, in 1958, and the sale of handcrafts by Oxfam from the late 1950s.

The first organizations focused on FT were born in the late 1980s, such as the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) and the International Fair Trade Association (IFAT) (Gendron et al., 2009); Low & Davenport, 2005). In the late 1990s, FLO, EFTA, IFAT, and NEWS came together to create an informal working alliance known as FINE. This coalition emphasized their established collaboration among organizations to advance fair trade initiatives (cit. in World Fair Trade Organization-Europe [WTFO-Europe], 2013). FINE took the initiative to establish a clear definition of FT:

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 (...). (cit. in Reynolds & Bennett, 2014; World Fair Trade Organization-Europe [WFTO-Europe], 2013)

FT certification guarantees, by using a standardized label, that the products are manufactured and distributed under strict social, environmental, and economic standards (Fair Trade Certified, n.d.). According to Fairtrade International, being certified means that an independent auditor (FLOCERT) checks the supply chain of a certain product to ensure its compliance with Fairtrade Standards (Fairtrade International, n.d.-a). It imposes compliance to a defined set of social, environmental, and organizational standards that govern production phases and subsequent exchanges between traders and producers (Reynolds et al., 2007). However, as pointed out by Renard (2005), certification can be a barrier to the FT market since only certified producers and buyers have access to it.

FT labels transformed the FT supply chain, redefining it and serving as a signalling tool for conveying product quality and social attributes to conscientious consumers lacking the time or information to inquire about them. These labels facilitate the synthesis and translation of such information at the consumer level (Renard, 2005). Corporations have also become interested in FT. According to Pousa and Nuñez (2014), corporations are motivated by coercive pressures (mainly from advocacy groups and from the media), by strategic positioning, as well as by increasing market share and profits. Aydoğmuş et al. (2022) add that an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) combined score is positively and significantly associated with firm value. Furthermore, With the expansion of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agenda, numerous businesses aim to incorporate FT goods into their product portfolios or adopt broader FT practices in their operations (Smith, 2009). The growth and sustainability of this movement are supported by consumers' perception that

they are helping to mitigate exploitation and meeting foreigners' claims for assistance. According to Goff (2018), this is what makes consumers opt for these products. As concluded by Coelho (2015), consumers who buy FT products in Portugal prefer social standards that prioritize worker welfare, embrace FT values, and stress the environmental principles linked with organic agriculture.

Still on the topic of certifications, various certifiers have emerged within the global food production system, each following its trajectory and focus. These certifiers aim to mitigate the adverse aspects inherent in global food supply chains (Grunert et al., 2014). Standards and certifications, ranging from Organic, Biodynamic, UTZ Certified, Child Labour Free, Animal Welfare Approved, to Fairtrade, address nearly every ethical concern within food production, encompassing aspects like environmental protection, health, social justice, and animal welfare (Dragusanu et al., 2014). As noted by Dragusanu and Nunn (2014), FT stands as the most globally recognized certification system focused on addressing social justice and equity in trade practices today. Some examples of FT certifiers include FLOCERT and SCS Global Services.

However, FT has some limitations which include the oversupply of certified products, leading to a dilution of benefits for each producer due to the same demand for a greater number of products (de Janvry et al., 2015), the emergence of less strict certification labels which may confuse consumers about the authenticity of the products (Dragusanu & Nunn, 2014) as evidenced in Annex 15, ambiguous protection for workers hired by certified cooperatives (Darko et al., 2017; Doherty et al., 2013; Dragusanu & Nunn, 2014), and challenges achieving gender equality due to cultural obstacles that hinder their full access to means of production (Darko et al., 2017).

In 2011, Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA ended their organizational alliance due to "different perspectives on how best to achieve [their] common mission (...)" (Fairtrade International & Fair Trade USA, 2012). This separation

resulted from a disagreement over whether to include large coffee plantations and unorganized small coffee growers in the FT system (Modelo, 2013). Fair Trade USA, in favour of including large producers, decided to leave Fairtrade and adopt a strategy based on achieving efficiencies that would entice major corporate purchasers to buy more FT goods. Opponents of this model suggest that this strategy departed too much from the movement's fundamental focus to empower small-producer organizations. From this event, two perspectives on FT were born (Modelo, 2013). Vivas (2008, p.159) summarized the differences between the “traditional and dominant” FT model employed by Fair Trade USA and the “global and alternative” perspective followed by Fairtrade International and others:

Elements for differential analysis	Traditional and dominant perspective	Global and alternative perspective
Production criteria	List of criteria. The cornerstone of its definition of fair trade.	Impossibility of simplifying fair trade to a series of criteria. Global perspective of the entire chain, not just production of origin.
Relationship with Southern producers	Assistance. Monetary North-South transfer. Quantitative perspective.	Strategic ally. Internationalist solidarity. Qualitative perspective.
International trade	Trade liberalization. Opening of Northern markets to products from Southern countries.	Food sovereignty. Derailment of the WTO.
Imports	Any product produced according to fair trade criteria is eligible for import.	Products that are produced here with equivalent social and ecological components should not be imported.
Transformation	Transformation with multinational companies is justified to achieve lower costs.	It does not work with multinational transformation corporations, but with actors of the alternative economy: artisans, cooperatives, etc.
Distribution and sales	More sales equals higher profits for producers in the South. Sales in large supermarkets are an achievement of consumers and the movement.	Denouncement of the instrumental use of fair trade by large supermarkets. Promotion of short and proximity channels. Fair trade stores are key players.
Guarantee labels	Guarantee of production origin. Expansion of distribution and sales markets.	Direct opposition. Alternative: a label that guarantees that an organization is part of the fair trade movement.
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	Alliance with the business world, as an actor of social transformation.	Denouncement of corporate marketing as an instrument to legitimize unfair commercial practices.
Alliances	Ideologically related organizations and members of the same sector. Distancing from the alterglobalization movement.	Farmer groups and consumer cooperatives, at local, state, and international levels. Participates in the alterglobalization movement.
Definition of fair trade	Reductionist vision. Fair trade = North-South.	Global and holistic vision. Fair trade = North-South; North-North; South-South.

Table 3: Differential elements between the actors of the "traditional and dominant" and "global and alternative" perspective of the fair trade movement

Note: Adapted from Vivas, E. (2008). *El movimiento por un comercio justo: debates y desafíos*. Mientras Tanto, 106, p.159.

From this table, one highlights the definition of FT, which from the “global and alternative” perspective acknowledges “north-south”, “north-north” and “south-south” transactions. To this point, WFTO-Europe has called, in 2021, FT

enterprises and movements to “recognize and include Northern Fair Trade producers such as small-scale farmers, artisans, and marginalized groups in Europe” (World Fair Trade Organization-Europe [WFTO-Europe], 2021), showing how it aligns itself with the “global and alternative” perspective of FT in this regard. Furthermore, the transformation of raw materials is now only admissible with actors from the alternative economy, mainly FT stores, and not with large multinational companies. As an example, CIDAC, a Portuguese non-profit association selling FT products from “Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, particularly Portugal” (CIDAC, 2024), is aligned with the “global and alternative” model. However, these two perspectives subscribe to the same principles of FT.

From this section, one can conclude that the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and FT initiatives exhibit a clear overlap. As an example, Fairtrade International claims to influence all 17 SDGs and emphasizes twelve goals closely related to its operations. Aligning its indicators with the SDGs allows Fairtrade International to integrate its efforts into a worldwide movement addressing issues of inequality, social equity, and environmental justice (Fairtrade International, n.d.-b). Furthermore, this alignment was made clear in 2018 upon the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by UNCTAD and the Brussels-based Fair Trade Advocacy Office. The following section will explore the SDGs and how they are interconnected with FT.

2.3 The UN’s Sustainable Development Goals

Between 2000 and 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) represented a United Nations initiative for global mobilization aiming to accomplish significant social priorities universally (Sachs, 2012). These goals

primarily focused on low-income countries and urged support from wealthier nations (Carant, 2017; Sachs, 2012). In contrast, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the UN in 2015 as a replacement and extension of the MDGs address global challenges applicable to all countries, placing particular emphasis on sustainability.

The SDGs agenda comprises 17 goals and 169 associated targets. Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs emphasize the need for a global partnership that fosters collaboration across nations that brings “together Governments, civil society, the private sector, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilizing all available resources” (United Nations [UN], 2015, p.25). Biermann et al. (2017) emphasized that the SDGs are the most ambitious goal-oriented global initiative to date that integrates the three pillars of sustainability—economic, social, and environmental—in one comprehensive development agenda. The table below summarizes the 17 SDGs, with the respective number of targets and indicators:














SDG		
 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	<p>Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere</p> <p>Targets: 7</p> <p>Indicators: 13</p>	 <p>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p> <p>Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation</p> <p>Targets: 8</p> <p>Indicators: 12</p>
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>	<p>Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</p> <p>Targets: 8</p> <p>Indicators: 14</p>	 <p>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p> <p>Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries</p> <p>Targets: 10</p> <p>Indicators: 13</p>
 <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p>	<p>Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages</p> <p>Targets: 13</p> <p>Indicators: 25</p>	 <p>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p> <p>Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable</p> <p>Targets: 10</p> <p>Indicators: 15</p>
 <p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p>	<p>Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all</p> <p>Targets: 10</p> <p>Indicators: 12</p>	 <p>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</p> <p>Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns</p> <p>Targets: 11</p> <p>Indicators: 13</p>
 <p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p>	<p>Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls</p> <p>Targets: 9</p> <p>Indicators: 13</p>	 <p>13 CLIMATE ACTION</p> <p>Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts</p> <p>Targets: 5</p> <p>Indicators: 8</p>
 <p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p>	<p>Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all</p> <p>Targets: 8</p> <p>Indicators: 11</p>	 <p>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</p> <p>Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development</p> <p>Targets: 10</p> <p>Indicators: 10</p>
 <p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p>	<p>Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all</p> <p>Targets: 5</p> <p>Indicators: 6</p>	 <p>15 LIFE ON LAND</p> <p>Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss</p> <p>Targets: 12</p> <p>Indicators: 14</p>
 <p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	<p>Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all</p> <p>Targets: 12</p> <p>Indicators: 16</p>	 <p>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</p> <p>Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels</p> <p>Targets: 12</p> <p>Indicators: 17</p>
		 <p>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> <p>Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development</p> <p>Targets: 19</p> <p>Indicators: 24</p>

Table 4: SDGs, targets, and indicators

Source: “SDGs trade-offs associated with voluntary sustainability standards: A case study from the coffee sector in Costa Rica”, by Rubio-Jovel et al., 2023, p.2.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted in 2015 by the UNGA clearly states that “Governments, international organizations, the business sector and other non-state actors and individuals must contribute to changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, including through the mobilization, from all sources, of financial and technical assistance to strengthen

developing countries' scientific, technological and innovative capacities to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production" (United Nations, 2015, p.8). Thus, FT organizations are clearly linked since the inception of the SDGs.

Considering the link between FT and SDGs and given how Fairtrade International states that "by aligning our indicators with the SDGs, we unite our actions to a global movement that directly addresses inequality, and social and environmental justice" (Fairtrade International, n.d.-c) and how Fair Trade USA similarly state that "Fair Trade USA™ standards promote direct and meaningful impact within six SDG areas (...). Our work may at times contribute to SDGs beyond these six" (Fair Trade USA, n.d.-a), it would be interesting to understand how these two organizations communicate their commitment to SDG13 in their annual reports. This is, therefore, the research question this thesis addresses. The following chapter will elucidate the methodological choices made to address it.

Chapter 3

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

With a link between FT and the SGDs established, this thesis focuses on addressing one of the 17 goals: Goal 13, Climate Action (SDG13). Given the importance of the environment as one of the three pillars of sustainability and the organizations' explicit commitment to it, this paper aims to conduct a qualitative content analysis. To this end, it will adopt a mixed method approach in order to compare Fairtrade International's Annual Reports and Fair Trade USA Annual Reports with the most recent data available for both organizations to allow for a comparative analysis. This also allows for trend identification. These two organizations were chosen based on the literature review, where it was noted that Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA have adopted different views and approaches to FT. The research question aims to understand how Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA communicate their commitment to SDG13 and compare them. To further understand the objective of this study, the following table is presented to synthesize it:

Main Question	Secondary Questions
How does Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA communicate their commitment to SDG13 in their Annual Reports?	a) With what frequency are words that refer to SDG13 mentioned in Fairtrade International's Annual Reports? b) What does Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA highlight in their reports towards SDG13?

Table 5: Main and secondary research questions
 Source: Own elaboration

3.2 Research Methods

This comparative content analysis research with a focus on document analysis will use mixed methods to answer its research question, thus applying qualitative and quantitative methods. As described by Bowen (2009), a document analysis systematically reviews and evaluates both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material. Moreover, a document produces information, whether in the form of excerpts, quotes, or complete passages, which are subsequently categorized into themes, classifications, and examples through content analysis (Labuschagne, 2003). Therefore, document analysis is a form of content analysis focused solely on documents. A document analysis has its strengths and weaknesses which were identified by Morgan (2022) based on authors Blackstone (2019), Bowen (2009), and Merriam and Tisdell (2016).

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fewer ethical concerns to deal with.• Unobtrusive form of research.• Cost-effective method.• More opportunities to do research that would otherwise be difficult to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited information.• Fewer opportunities to check for bias.• Not enough data to complete a study that matches the researcher’s interests.

Table 6: Strengths and limitations of conducting a document analysis

Source: Retrieved from “Conducting a Qualitative Document Analysis” by Morgan, 2022, p.70.

The use of a mixed method approach aims to heighten knowledge and validity in answering the research question and thus a more comprehensive and richer information will be acquired (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). According to Morgan (2022), for a document analysis (comparative or otherwise), researchers commonly decide between employing quantitative or qualitative methodologies. In quantitative investigations, researchers may opt for comparative content

analysis, utilizing numerical data and statistical approaches with the aim to interpret and comprehend information in their context. As for qualitative, it is used to highlight the significance of statistics and explore how individuals interpret experiences to shape their worldview (Morgan, 2022). Ultimately, using both methods allows for triangulation (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The integration of both methodologies enables researchers to attain a more holistic comprehension of the topic at hand. In sum, this thesis will do a comparative document analysis of the content within the chosen documents.

3.3 Data Collection

Data for this study was collected from publicly available annual reports published by Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA. The organizations spell “fair trade” differently due to their historical evolution and organizational trajectories (Evenson, 2023). These documents were chosen because of their summative nature, meaning that the annual reports provide an overview of the organizations’ efforts during a given time frame. Additionally, the reports can be compared since they follow a similar structure and content in line with what is expected of annual reports, and because they are the most official and legitimate form of information provided by the organizations, especially when compared to website information which can be changed any time without providing a date of said changes. Additionally, this sample was chosen based on Kridel’s (2015) criteria and adapted visually by Morgan (2022) in the following way:

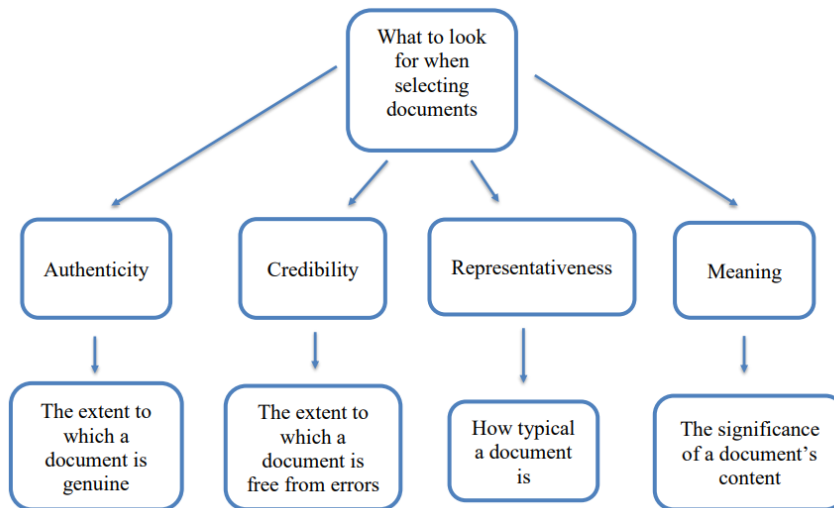


Figure 1: Factors to use for selecting documents.

Source: Retrieved from “Conducting a Qualitative Document Analysis” by Morgan, 2022, p.71.

The reports chosen are genuine, meaning that there was a confirmation of authorship, date, and location of publication. They are credible, meaning that the sources are free from error and distortion. They are representative, meaning that the documents are typical and published annually, with a few missing years from Fair Trade USA which will be explained further. Finally, the significance of the document’s content is in line with answering the research question. These annual reports were obtained through the organizations’ official websites and their organizational databases. Selection criteria for the reports include, apart from the criteria stated above, the year of publication, and having as a title “Annual Report”. It is important to note that Fairtrade International calls all their reports “Annual Reports” even though they include two years in their reports. Hereby are listed the documents analysed:

N	Name of document	Date of publication	Source
1	Fairtrade International 2022 Annual Report	21 Jun 2023	Fairtrade International, 2023
2	Fairtrade International 2021-2022 Annual Report	12 Oct 2022	Fairtrade International, 2022
3	Fairtrade International 2020-2021 Annual Report	27 Oct 2021	Fairtrade International, 2021
4	Fairtrade International 2019-2020 Annual Report	8 Dec 2020	Fairtrade International, 2020
5	Fairtrade International 2018-19 Annual Report	15 Nov 2019	Fairtrade International, 2019
6	Fair Trade USA 2021 Annual Report	July 2022	Fair Trade USA, 2022
7	Fair Trade USA 2020 Annual Report	July 2021	Fair Trade USA, 2021
8	Fair Trade USA 2018 Annual Report: Celebrating 20 Years	August 2019	Fair Trade USA, 2019
9	Fair Trade USA 2017 Annual Report	August 2018	Fair Trade USA, 2018
10	Fair Trade USA 2016 Annual Report: 2016 Almanac	2017	Fair Trade USA, 2017

Table 7: List of documents analysed
Source: Own elaboration

This sample poses epistemological obstacles which hinder this investigation. To conduct a year-by-year comparison between organizations, the sample should include reports corresponding to the same date. However, this was not possible in this investigation since, for Fair Trade USA, the annual reports for the year 2022 and 2019 were missing from their official website. As for Fairtrade International, they do have reports from 2022 to 2018, allowing for a five-year historical analysis, but not reports prior to this date (reports dated 2017 and 2016 and before). Thus, with the data available it was not possible to compare reports to their corresponding year. However, this investigation still provides trend analysis and substantial comparison between the two organizations. It is important to note that both organizations were reached via email to request the missing reports to no success.

The documents were analysed using a comparative content analysis. A content analysis is “a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within a set of texts” (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007, p.167). It converts verbal information into numerical data, facilitating not only descriptive analysis but also enabling researchers to conduct further statistical tests on the material (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). This method also allows the identification of trends in the data. The rationale behind the words selected to be quantified by hand for the purpose of this content analysis were chosen based on a prior study conducted on the presence of certain words and expressions related to the SDGs by Ribeiro-Duthie et al., 2020. However, since this study focused on all SDGs, the words/expressions related specifically to SDG13 were deemed insufficient to study the breadth of the question. For this reason, to conduct a more complete analysis, more words/expressions were chosen based on the words mentioned by the UN to describe SDG13 (Fairtrade International, n.d.-c). and the three pillars of sustainability, in particular environment (Fairtrade International, n.d.-c).

Exclusion criteria includes any words/references mentioned in table of contents and footers and headers of the documents as they do not contribute to the analysis, as well as any organizations, institutions or businesses containing any words in the codes in their official name or acronym. Annex 14 provides the full list of these organizations not considered. Any hyperlinks found in the text containing the codes were also excluded. All codes were checked in their American English and British English spelling, as well as their plural and singular form. Codes containing the same words, for example, “climate” and “climate change” or “sustainable” and “Sustainable Development Goals”, were not duplicated and were instead counted as only one entry in the data. Below is a table detailing the explicit code for the content analysis:

N	Word/expression	Variations of codes included in the analysis
1	Environment	Environmental; environmentally
2	Sustainability	Sustainable; sustainably
3	Climate	Climate change; climate action; fight climate change; combat climate impacts; climate mitigation
4	Natural disaster	Deforestation/reforestation
5	Awareness	Climate awareness
6	Resilience	Climate resilience/resilient
7	Eco-friendly	Recycling; recycle
8	Carbon emissions	Greenhouse gas emissions
9	SDG13	Sustainable Development Goals/SDG; United Nations/UN

Table 8: Code list
Source: Own elaboration

To address the secondary question b), this research draws conclusions on the codes specified above based not only on their frequency and other statistical information, but also on the interpretative nature of a qualitative analysis. Circular graphs (Annex 1 through 12) and tables were created to visualize the data, as well as word clouds (generated using the “worditout.com” online tool). Word clouds are “visual presentations of a set of words, typically a set of tags, in which attributes of the text such as size, weight or color can be used to represent features (e.g., frequency) of the associated terms” (Havley and Keane, 2007), and allow for the identification of patterns of words and phrases, or the lack thereof, in text data.

After stating the main and secondary research questions and arguing for a mixed methodological approach of content and comparative analysis to answer them, this thesis will proceed to present the results of the research in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

4. Results

In this section, the results from the content analysis are presented, starting by outlining the data collected from each organization and then proceeding with the comparative analysis.

4.1 Fair Trade USA

The Fair Trade USA Annual Reports have an average of 29 pages. None of the reports have an exclusively section dedicated to climate action or the SDGs in general. The data collected based on the criteria from the section above was converted into tables and figures for easier understanding and visualization. Looking at the frequency analysis, in particular Annex 6, there was a peak in the presence of selected terms in 2016 (58 terms) with a drop in 2017 (16 terms). This is approximately a 72.41% decrease in code frequency. From 2017 onward the frequency increases, although due to the lack of data available for 2019, it is unclear if the trend would have been impacted by this missing data. Looking at the codes with a fine comb, the result of the total number of codes identified is as follows:

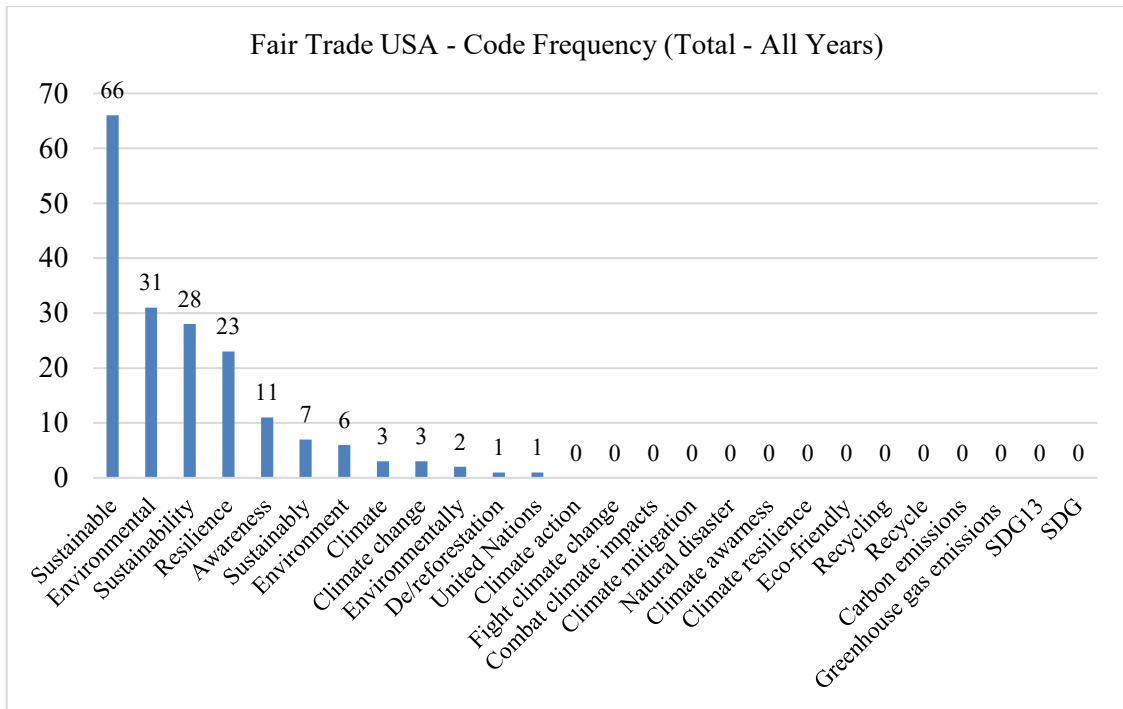


Table 9: Fair Trade USA: Code Frequency (Total – All Years)
 Source: Own elaboration

To show this data in a more visual way, this thesis presents a word cloud to illustrate the most mentioned words overall in the reports as it provides a big picture of the data and allows for the identification of patterns of words and phrases, or the lack thereof, in text data.



Figure 2: Word cloud for Fair Trade USA reports
 Source: Own elaboration

The word most identified throughout the reports was “sustainable” with a frequency of 66, followed by “environmental” (31) and “sustainability” (28). Notably, there were only three mentions to “climate change” and none to SDGs, both in its written form and in acronym form as evidenced in Annex 1 through Annex 5. “United Nations” was mentioned only once (Annex 3) in the context of fishing communities, where the report states “according to the United Nations, the small-scale fisheries sector is estimated to employ some 37 million people worldwide” (Fair Trade USA, 2019). As per Annex 3 and Annex 5, it is only in the 2018 and 2021 reports where the term “climate change” appears.

In their context, the reports state how small-scale family farmers continue to confront significant obstacles, ranging from unpredictable global markets to the impacts of climate change but does not explain in what ways. The 2018 report also explains how “producer support services help farmers boost productivity (...) and develop climate change resilience” (Fair Trade USA, 2018, p.17) through “the Fair Trade minimum price and Community Development Fund” (Ibid.). Again, it is not specified in what ways this minimum price and the fund help

develop climate change resilience. In the 2021 report, Fair Trade USA states that through “target indicators” they gather “climate change resilience activities” data, but do not specify which. Looking at the most mentioned word, “sustainable”, it is mainly used to describe “agricultural practices”, “development”, “livelihoods”, “communities”, “production practices” and “supply chain partners”. One concludes that the organization uses the term “sustainable” to either describe Fair Trade USA’s ability to be financially sustainable as an organization or to describe the practices the FT farmers/producers employ. The most important point to highlight is that there was not a single mention to the SDGs.

Focusing on the environment, Fair Trade USA claims that “Fair Trade standards cover four main pillars of sustainable development: Empowerment, Community and Individual Well-being, Income Sustainability, and Environmental Stewardship” (Fair Trade USA, 2017). Indeed, all reports cover the topic of “environmental stewardship”, and all contain the word “environmental”. The reports use this term in the context of “working environment” as in working conditions and “protection of the environment”. In the 2020 report, the organization states that their “standards prohibit use of the most harmful agrochemicals and offer incentives for farmers to grow organically. We require producers to implement sustainable production practices and protect natural resources” (Fair Trade USA, 2021) in its “Impact Outcomes” section.

4.2 Fairtrade International

The Fairtrade International Annual Reports have an average of 24 pages. All reports except the 2018-19 report have dedicated sections to climate change, but in contrast the 2018-19 report has a dedicated page to the SDGs while the others have part of a page. Looking at the frequency analysis, in particular Annex 12, there was a peak in the presence of selected terms in the 2021-22 report (125),

with an increase in the following year to 98 terms. This represents a 21.6% decrease. Despite this decrease, there is an overall upward trend in code presence. The codes surged by 98.04% from the 2018-19 to 2019-20 report, followed by a 11.88% frequency increase to the 2020-21, and then a 10.62% rise to the 2021-22 report. Looking at the codes with a fine comb, the result of the total number of codes identified is as follows:

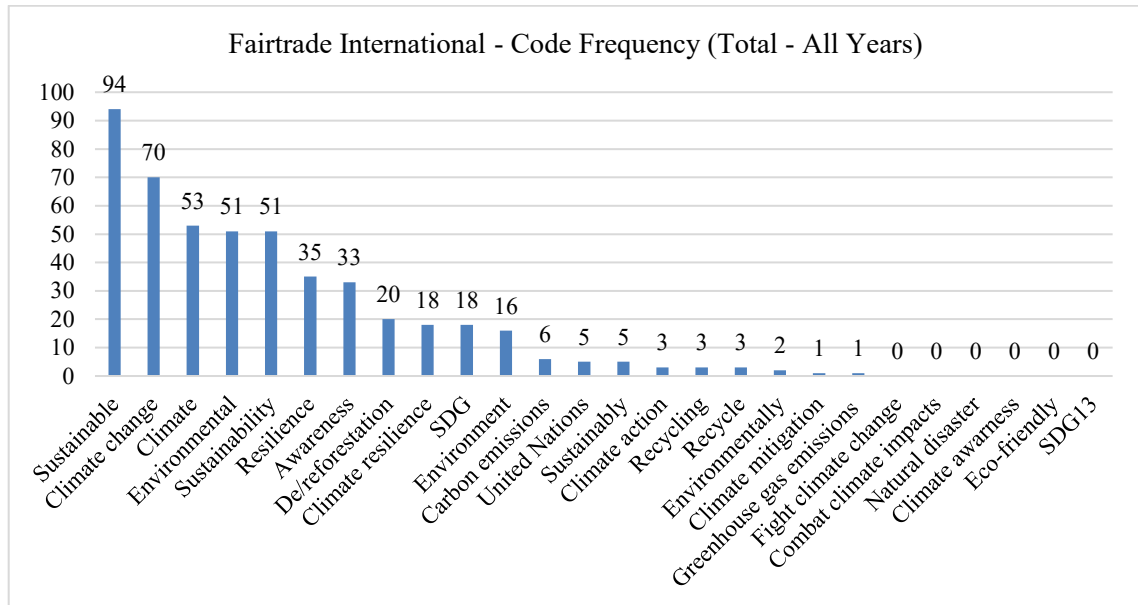


Table 10: Fairtrade International: Code Frequency (Total - All Years)
Source: Own elaboration

To show this data in a more visual way, one presents a word cloud to illustrate the most mentioned words overall in the reports. This allows for the identification of patterns of words and phrases, or the lack thereof, in text data.



Figure 3: Word cloud for Fairtrade International reports
Source: Own elaboration

The word most identified throughout the reports was “sustainable” with a frequency of 94, followed by “climate change” (70) and “climate” (53). Notably, there was no direct reference to SDG13 as evidenced in Annex 7 through Annex 12. This is not the case for the term SDG, which was mentioned 18 times. “United Nations” was mentioned five times in the context of showing “support for SDGs”, explicitly pointing out which SDGs it supports, and the alignment with its principles. As for “climate change”, an expression present in all reports, it is mentioned in the context of “human rights and environmental due diligence”, the “UN COP27 climate conference” and “COP26 global climate meeting” where Fairtrade International was present, first-hand accounts from farms experiencing the negative effects of climate change, in the adoption of “climate resilience practices in line with agroecology”, “advocacy”, “climate academies” where their programmes cover components from “training farmers on planting new, more climate-resilient crop varieties, to distributing more energy-efficient cookstoves, to diversifying incomes using different crops or non-farm activities” (Fairtrade International, 2020). There are also mentions of “raising awareness” campaigns

related to climate change and building “climate resilience”. It is important to highlight an excerpt from the most recent report, 2022, where Fairtrade International states and summarizes its efforts in tackling climate change:

The three Fairtrade producer networks support cooperatives in responding to climate change. An analysis and systematization of Fairtrade climate-related projects show a focus in three main areas: climate change education (such as the EXCHANGE programme that reached 470,000 producers in five Latin American countries with climate change-related messages in 2021), design of climate adaptation plans, and training on best practices for climate resilience. In total, more than 500 producer organizations are adopting climate resilience practices such as agroforestry, organic mulching, and diversifying incomes. (Fairtrade International, 2023)

From this excerpt, the reader can understand Fairtrade International’s work towards combating climate change, even if in a descriptive way.

4.3 Comparative Analysis

Comparing both organizations, one can draw some conclusions from this analysis. Firstly, both organizations do mention climate change and point out how it is a challenge for FT farmers and producers. However, Fairtrade International makes its commitment to the issue more explicit given the amount of times climate change related terms were used in their reports. In the table below this information can be viewed in a visual way:

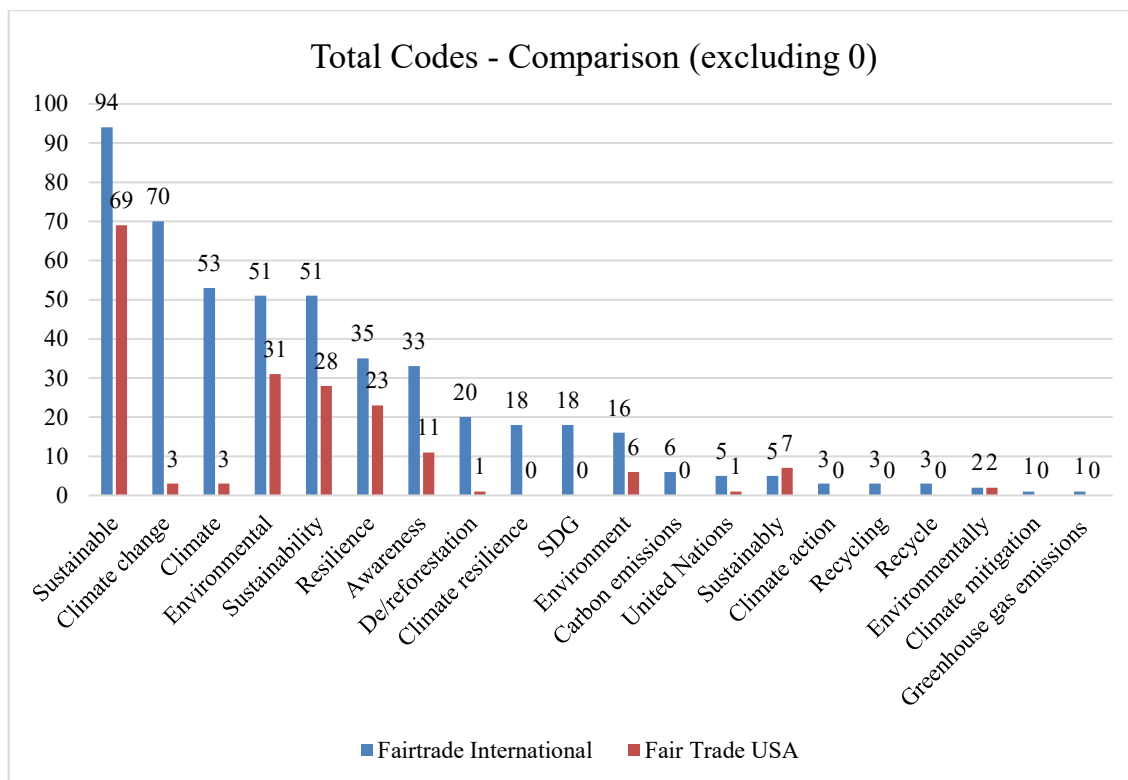


Table 11: Total Codes - Comparison (excluding 0)
Source: Own elaboration

Based on this data, Fairtrade International mentioned all words/expressions with more frequency than Fair Trade USA except for “sustainably”. Notably, “climate change” is mentioned 70 times by Fairtrade International while only 3 times by Fair Trade USA. This represents a 95.71% difference across all reports. Similarly, for the word “climate”, Fairtrade International mentions it 53 times while Fair Trade USA only 3. This represents a 94.34% difference. Expressions mentioned by Fairtrade International but not Fair Trade USA include “climate resilience”, “SDG”, “carbon emissions”, “climate action”, “recycling”, “recycle”, “climate mitigation” and “greenhouse gas emissions”.

Over time, as seen in Annex 6 and Annex 12, an upward trend is observable in both organizations, with their peaks being 2016 for Fair Trade USA and 2021-22 for Fairtrade International. It is important to mention that both organizations include their financial statements at the end of each report, and both have a letter

from their CEO at the beginning of the documents. As expected from an annual report, both organizations highlight their achievements, first-hand testimonies from FT farmers and producers, and include data in the form of graphs and tables.

Chapter 5

5. Discussion

After presenting the results, this section now discusses and evaluates them considering the research question, the methodology and potential limitations, as well as framing it within the literature review. The aim of this research was to understand how Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA communicate their commitment to SDG13 in their annual reports and this section will explain how this question was addressed.

FT is connected to sustainability. As mentioned in the literature review, sustainability is divided into three dimensions/pillars: the social, the economic, and the environmental (Hardi & Zdan, 1997). As argued by Giddings et al. (2002), it aims to harmonize and reconcile these three elements, achieving a balanced approach that reduces conflicts among them. However, as stated by Halkos and Gkampoura (2021) while advancements have been made in specific areas, notably the economy, global progress still falls short of the expected trajectory, especially regarding environmental issues. This is what was observed in both organizations' reports, where a bigger emphasis was placed on economic and social goals rather than on the environment. Notwithstanding, it was observed that both FT organizations do mention all three pillars of sustainable development.

Based on the data collected, Fairtrade International appears to have a stronger emphasis on sustainability, climate change, environmental issues, resilience, and awareness compared to Fair Trade USA. Fair Trade USA, on the other hand, has fewer mentions across these categories, indicating a potentially lesser focus on these issues. Fairtrade International shows a significantly higher focus on climate change compared to Fair Trade USA. Moreover, when analysing the commitment

to SGDs, the fact that Fair Trade USA does not have dedicated sections in its reports to the SDGs it aligns itself with tells the reader that, even though the organization strives to achieve sustainability objectives, it is not clear the overlap with SDGs. Fairtrade International makes it clear that it is indeed aligned with the SDGs, even though SDG13 specifically is not mentioned. However, Fair Trade USA does mention in all reports its commitment to “environmental stewardship”, and thus does not dismiss entirely its commitment to environmental objectives.

Fairtrade International’s commitment to SDG13 related issues is more explicitly expressed when compared to Fair Trade USA. This is not only observable in the frequency analysis or the word clouds conducted, but also in the content analysis of the reports. Even though both reports average about the same pages (Fairtrade International has an average of 25 pages and Fair Trade USA has an average of 29 pages), the importance given to climate change is not equal. This does not mean, however, that Fair Trade USA is not having the same impact, only that in its annual reports it is not as clearly stated. One cannot assume that the higher the number of mentions correlates to a bigger impact on climate change mitigation and the communities it affects, in particular FT farmer communities.

Regarding the literature review, Fairtrade International states that “by aligning our indicators with the SDGs, we unite our actions to a global movement that directly addresses inequality, and social and environmental justice” (Fairtrade International, n.d.-c) and Fair Trade USA similarly state that “Fair Trade USA™ standards promote direct and meaningful impact within six SDG areas (...). Our work may at times contribute to SDGs beyond these six” (Fair Trade USA, n.d.-a). This research shows that indeed the two organizations are aligned with the SDGs although they do not state explicitly they take actions towards SDG13.

Still on the literature review, the results from this research reflect the views from Vivas (2008) "traditional and dominant" and "global and alternative" perspective of the FT movement. This research suggests that Fair Trade USA is in line with the "traditional and dominant" perspective and that Fairtrade International is in line with the "global and alternative" perspective. To this end, Vivas (2008) describes how the former impacts the environment (ecology) and how the latter views natural resources and land as rights to the local people. As argued by Vivas (2008), in analysing international trade relations and the WTO strategy, the "traditional and dominant" perspective advocates for removing international trade barriers and opening Northern markets to Southern countries' products. This perspective contends that market access is the solution to alleviate poverty in Southern countries. However, it overlooks the social, ecological, and economic costs associated with export-oriented policies and neglects the needs of local populations. In contrast, the "global and alternative" perspective champions food sovereignty, allowing people to determine their own agricultural policies and maintain control over the land. It emphasizes local food production to meet the needs of the population, rejecting genetically modified agriculture controlled by the industry and geared toward food exportation.

Reflecting on the methodology employed, it is worth noting that both organizations have more sources in their official websites where information on the SDGs is provided. In particular, Fair Trade USA bases its "Theory of Change" on the SDGs, as showed in Annex 13. The organization explains that it is "a visual representation of how the strategies and activities of an organization impact the lives and livelihoods of others over time" (Fair Trade USA, n.d.-b). Likewise, Fairtrade International has additional information on its commitment to the SDGs on its website (Fairtrade International, n.d.-d). As this is an exploratory investigation, it did not consider these other sources for, as justified in the

methodology chapter, annual reports present reliable, unchangeable, official information.

The implications of this research include providing Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA with a review of their available annual reports. To this end, the organizations may use this information and its results to reflect on their communication strategies, namely if they deem it necessary to increase the frequency of words and expressions used related to SDGs and SDG13 or if they should have dedicated sections about the SDGs in their reports. Furthermore, it provides a codebook to be applied in further research on other FT organizations based on Ribeiro-Duthie et al. (2020) initial codebook.

Chapter 6

6. Conclusion

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing its key research findings in relation to the research question, as well as the value and contribution thereof. It will also review the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for further research.

To conclude, this research aimed to understand how Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA communicate their efforts towards SDG13 and conduct a comparative content analysis to find any differences and similarities. It was concluded that Fairtrade International more explicitly expresses its commitment to SDG13 while Fair Trade USA is not as clear in its communication based on the frequency analysis and interpretation of the data collected. Thus, the contributions of this research include providing these organizations with data so they can reflect on the way they communicate their efforts towards SDG13 and encourage them to rethink or keep their current strategies.

This thesis conducted a content analysis of annual reports from Fair Trade USA and Fairtrade International. The key findings suggest Fair Trade USA's reports lacked dedicated sections for climate action or the SDGs. A notable decrease in code frequency was observed from 2016 to 2017 for that organization, with a subsequent increase in later years. Fairtrade International's reports typically included sections on climate change, with a dedicated page or section to the SDGs in their reports. There was an overall upward trend in code presence, particularly notable in the 2021-22 report. A comparative analysis revealed that while both organizations addressed climate change, Fairtrade International demonstrates a stronger commitment, evidenced by the frequency of related terms in their reports. The absence of substantial mentions of the SDGs in both

organizations raises questions about the alignment of FT practices with sustainability, which aims to preserve and sustain the society, the economy, and the environment.

This research contributes to the literature by providing an analysis of how FT organizations address climate change and the SDGs in their annual reports. It highlights the differences in approach between Fair Trade USA and Fairtrade International, shedding light on areas where one organization may prioritize sustainability efforts over the other while still identifying their commitment to sustainability.

Some limitations to this research have been identified in previous chapters such as the sample size, the lack of corresponding years for report comparison, the selected organizations, the type of sources analysed, and time constraints. Another limitation of this study is the subjectivity of the researcher's choice of codes for the frequency analysis. The attempt to base the code on Ribeiro-Duthie et al. (2020) was to limit any potential biases. Nonetheless, other researchers and their interpretation of the codes could make the study more holistic.

The results of this study may lead to further research exploring the effectiveness of sustainability reporting in FT organizations. Policymakers in the sustainability field may benefit from understanding the varying degrees of emphasis on climate change and the SDGs among FT organizations. These findings suggest a need for FT organizations to enhance their reporting practices regarding climate change, potentially influencing future policy and practice within the FT movement.

To discuss further research, it is important to point out that this research was exploratory. Given time and wordcount restraints imposed to conduct this research, in order to enrich the findings of this research, it would be beneficial to expand the sample and consider other sources of information provided by Fairtrade International and Fair Trade USA when it comes to SDGs and in

particular SDG13. Likewise, as pointed out before, it is an epistemological limitation that a year-by-year comparison between reports was not possible for this research given the lack of reports available in the organization's websites, so including those missing years would allow for a year-by-year comparison. Additionally, to expand this exploratory research, and in line with Ribeiro-Duthie et al., (2020), a sample ranging more years would be beneficial to conduct a longitudinal analysis. This would allow for a more in-depth understanding of potential trends, especially with the introduction of the SDGs (based on the MDGs) in 2015.

Furthermore, analysing other sources of information such as videos produced by the organizations and interviews from their leaders could enrich the findings of this research. Likewise, admitting that to understand the success of annual report and the information it communicates one must question individuals who have read them, it would be enriching to conduct questionnaires to assess how individuals outside of the organizations perceive the information presented. Given that the FT movement relies on the conscious consumption of FT goods, it is paramount to understand the perception of the following factors: the content, the degree of clarity, the transparency, their understanding and interpretation of the content. Ultimately, it would be interesting to investigate if they gain more knowledge on FT efforts towards climate action after reading the reports. Another suggestion on further research is to employ a similar study as this one but analysing different FT organizations, in particular other FT labelling organizations to understand how different organizations communicate their own efforts towards SDG13. As mentioned in the literature review, the large number of FT organizations may confuse the consumer in terms of their impact, so to enrich the data it would be interesting to understand the efforts of other organizations.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to understand the extent to which FT organizations prioritize and report on climate change and the SDGs, thus highlighting areas for improvement and further research within the FT movement and broader sustainability discourse.

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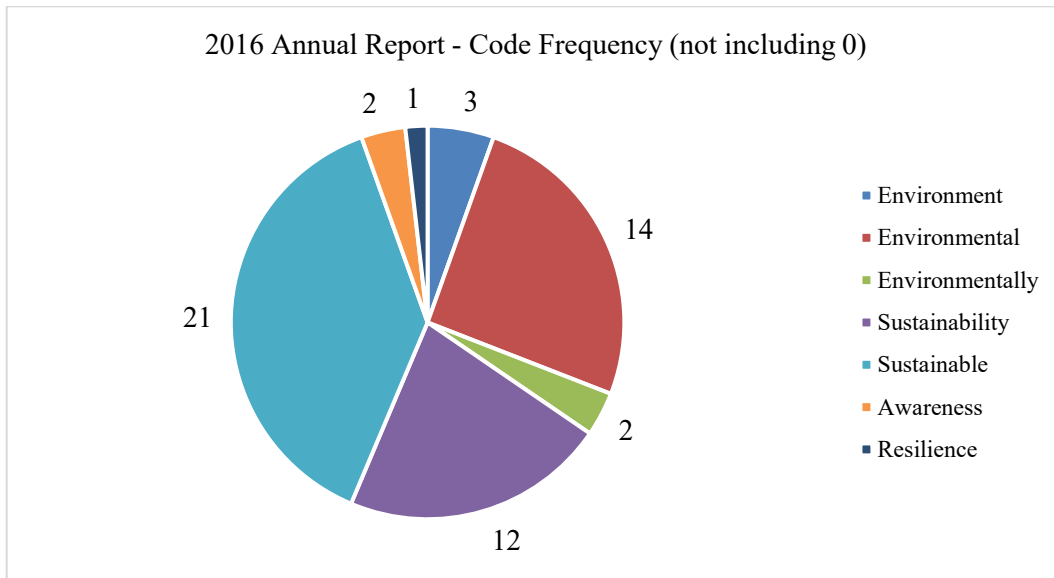
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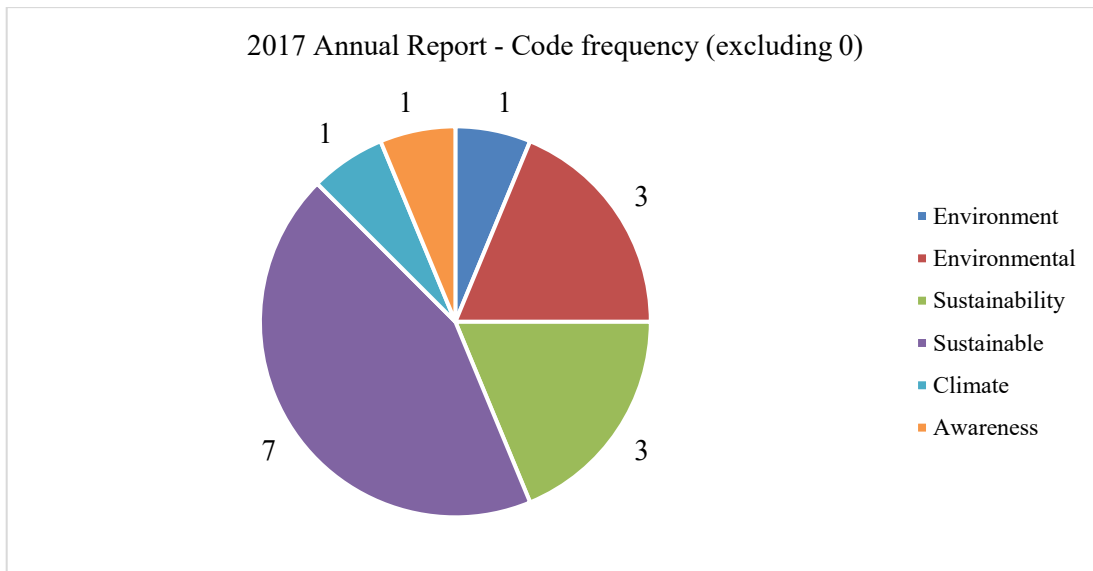
8. Annexes

Annex 1 – Fair Trade USA 2016 Annual Report - Code Frequency (not including 0)



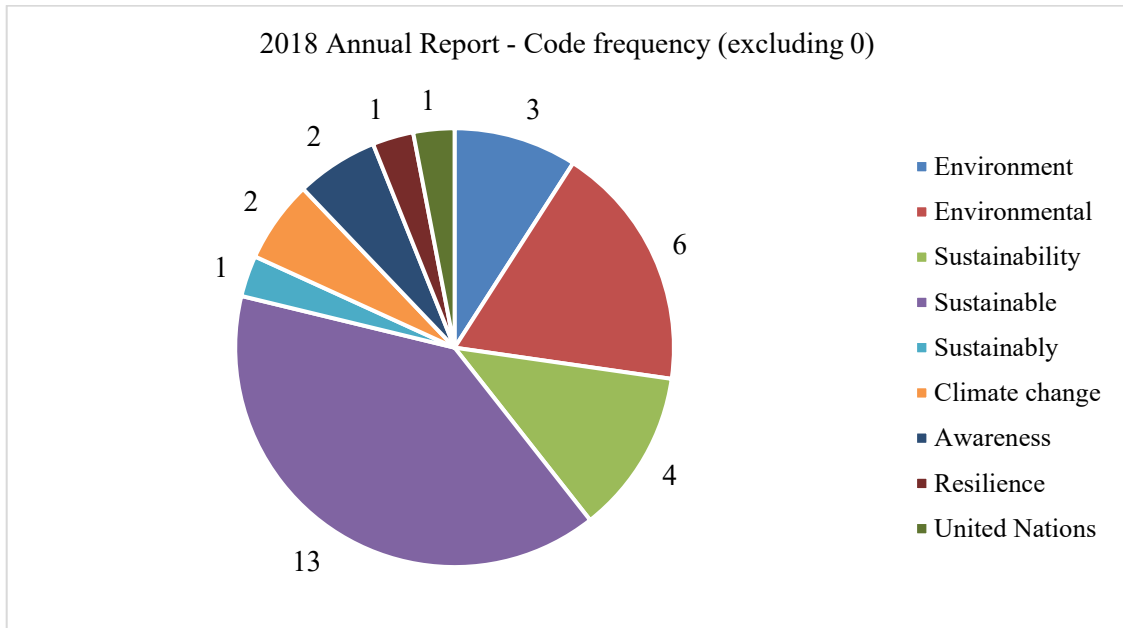
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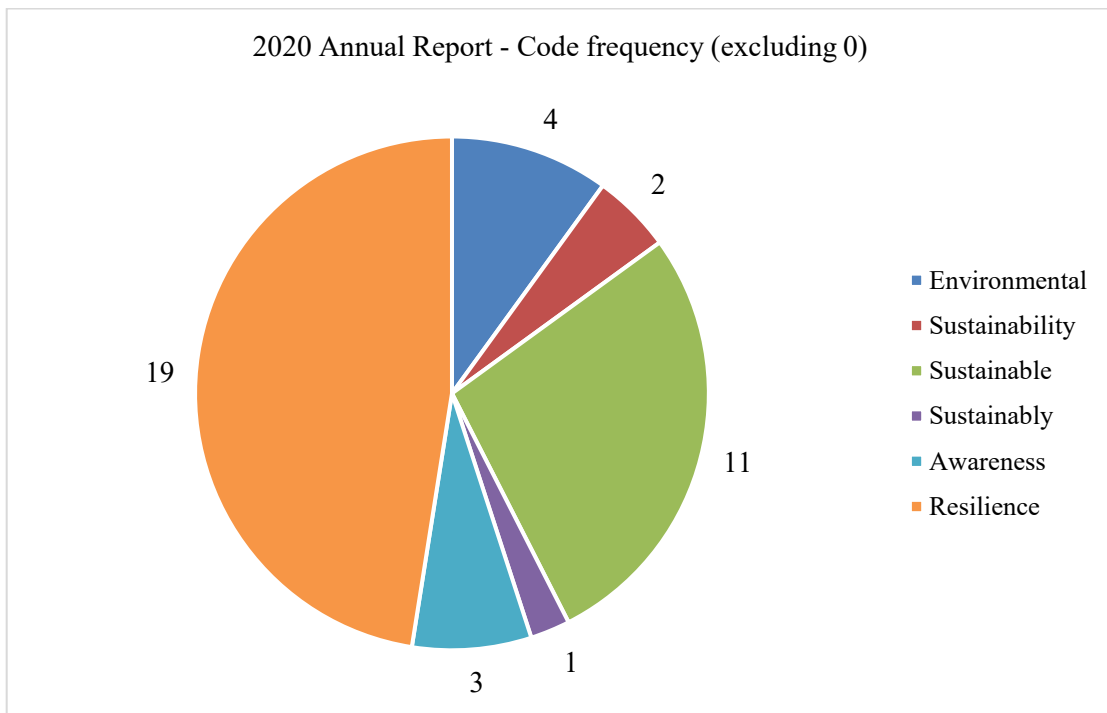
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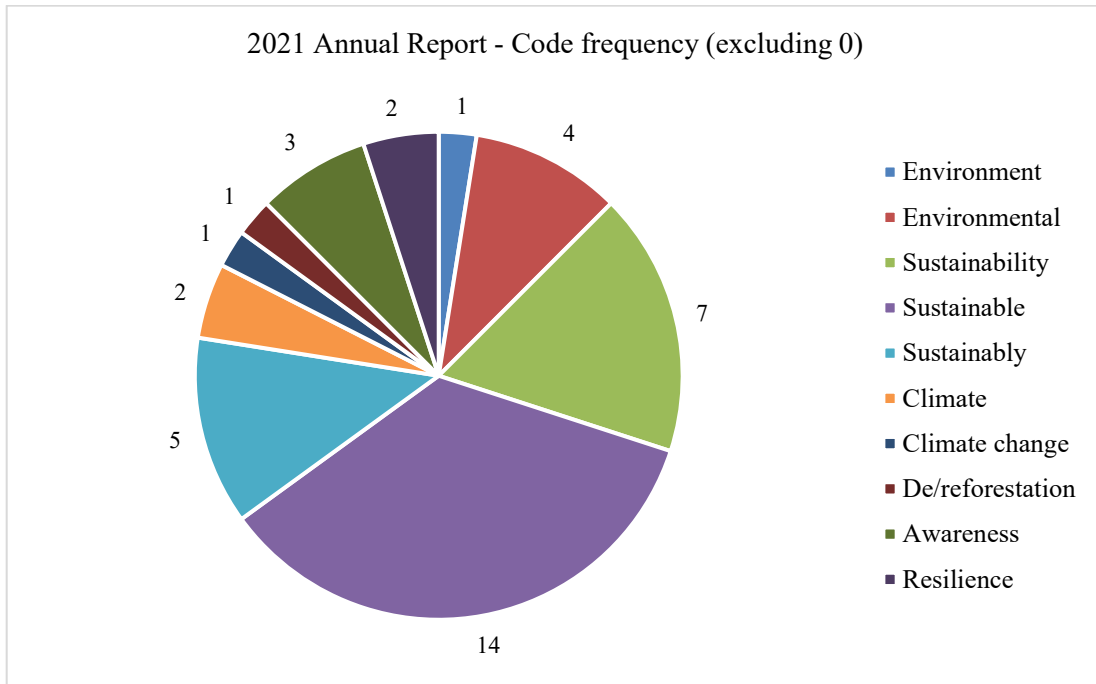
Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 4 – Fair Trade USA 2020 Annual Report - Code Frequency (not including 0)



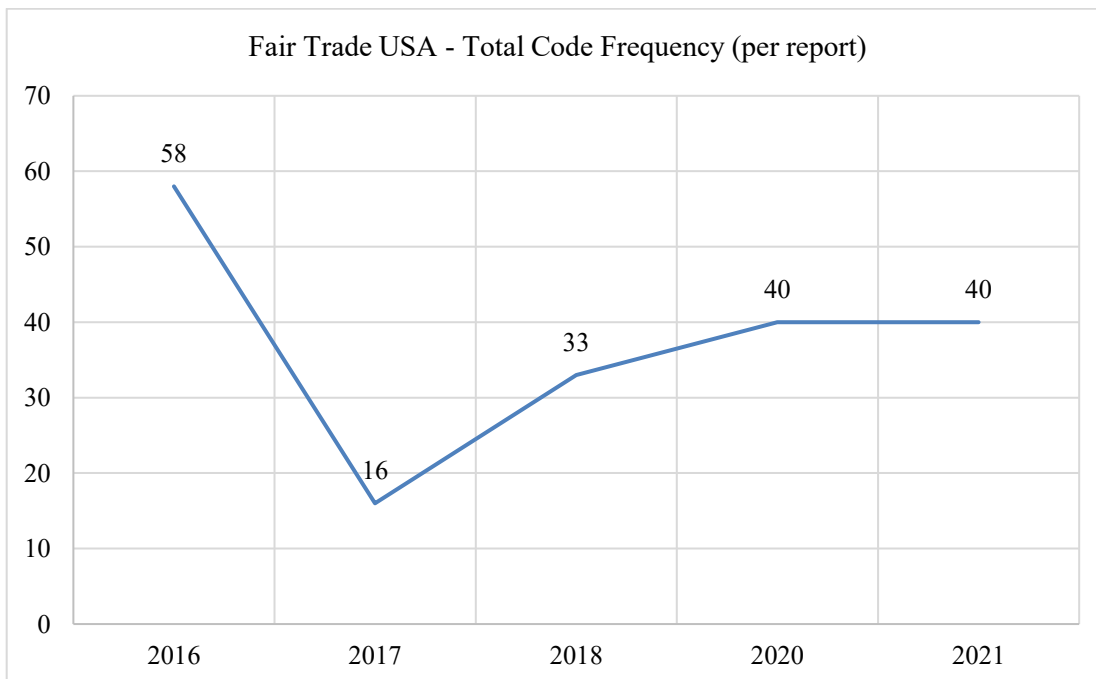
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Annex 5 – Fair Trade USA 2021 Annual Report - Code Frequency (not including 0)



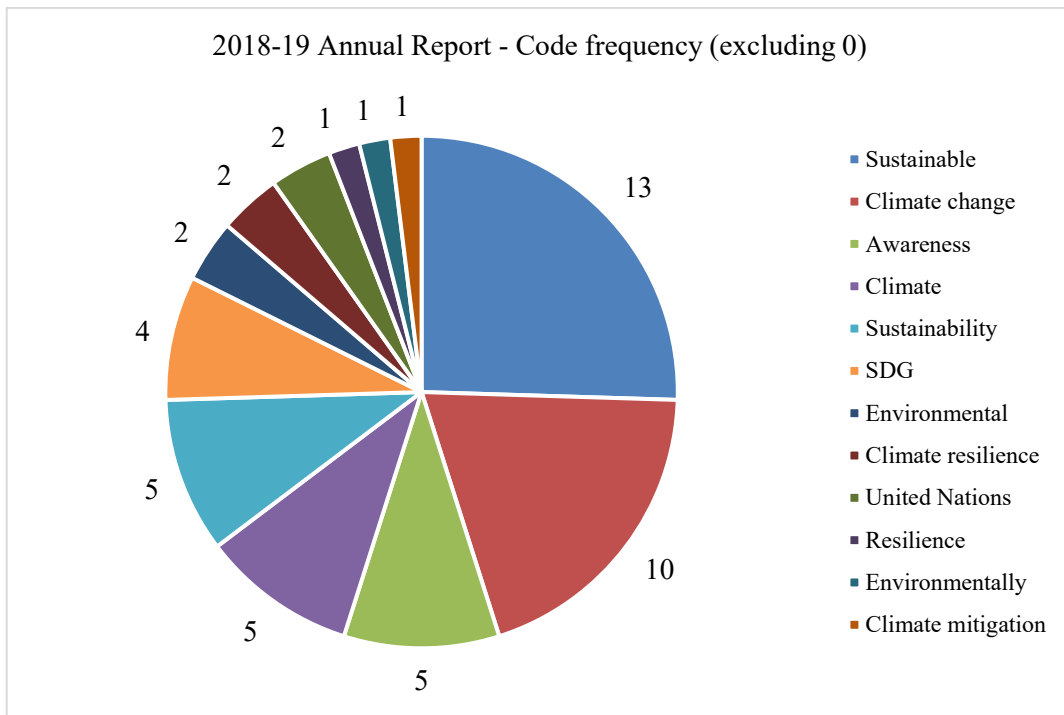
Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 6 – Fair Trade USA Total Code Frequency (per report)



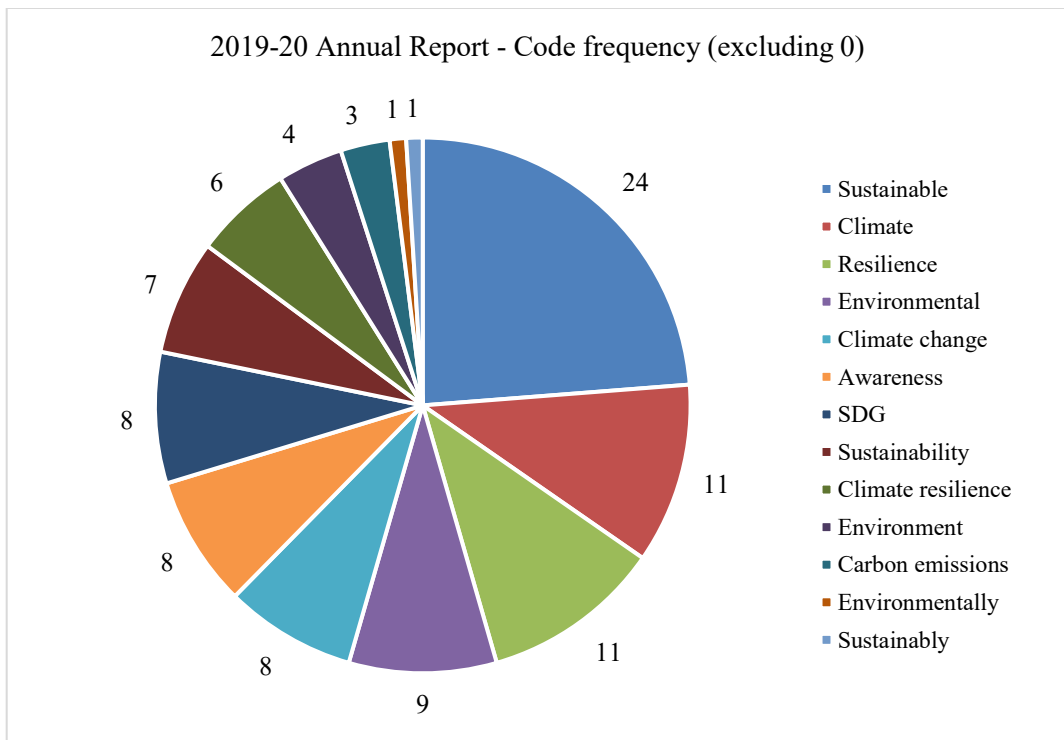
Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 7 - 2018-19 Annual Report - Code frequency (excluding 0)



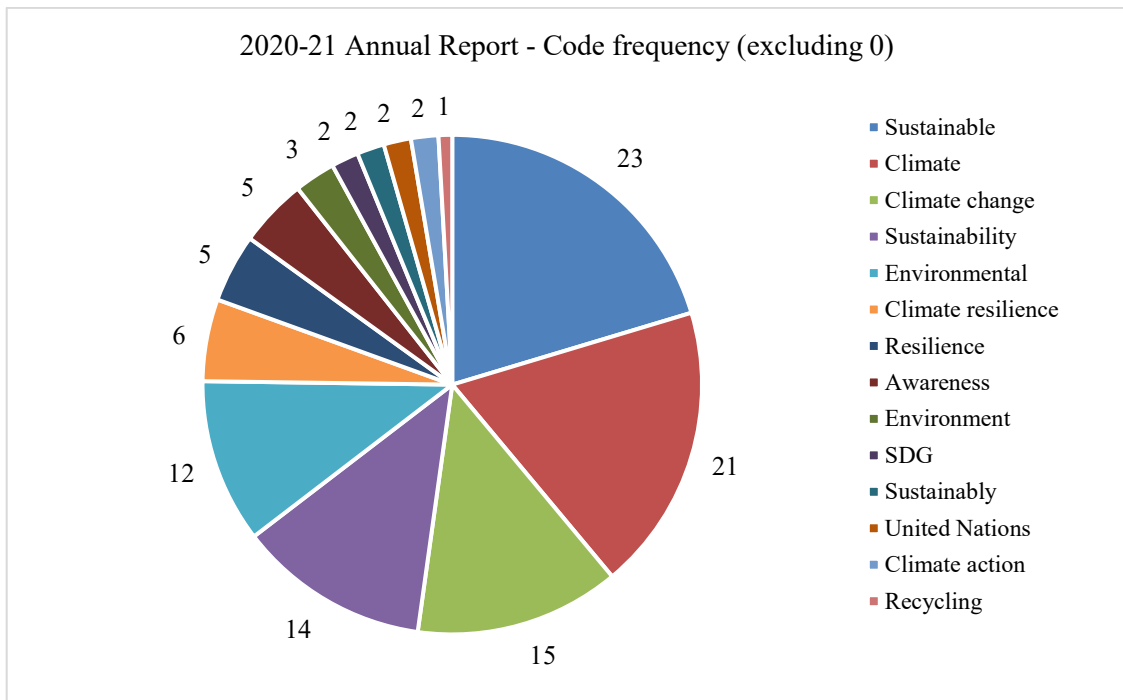
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Annex 8 - 2019-20 Annual Report - Code frequency (excluding 0)



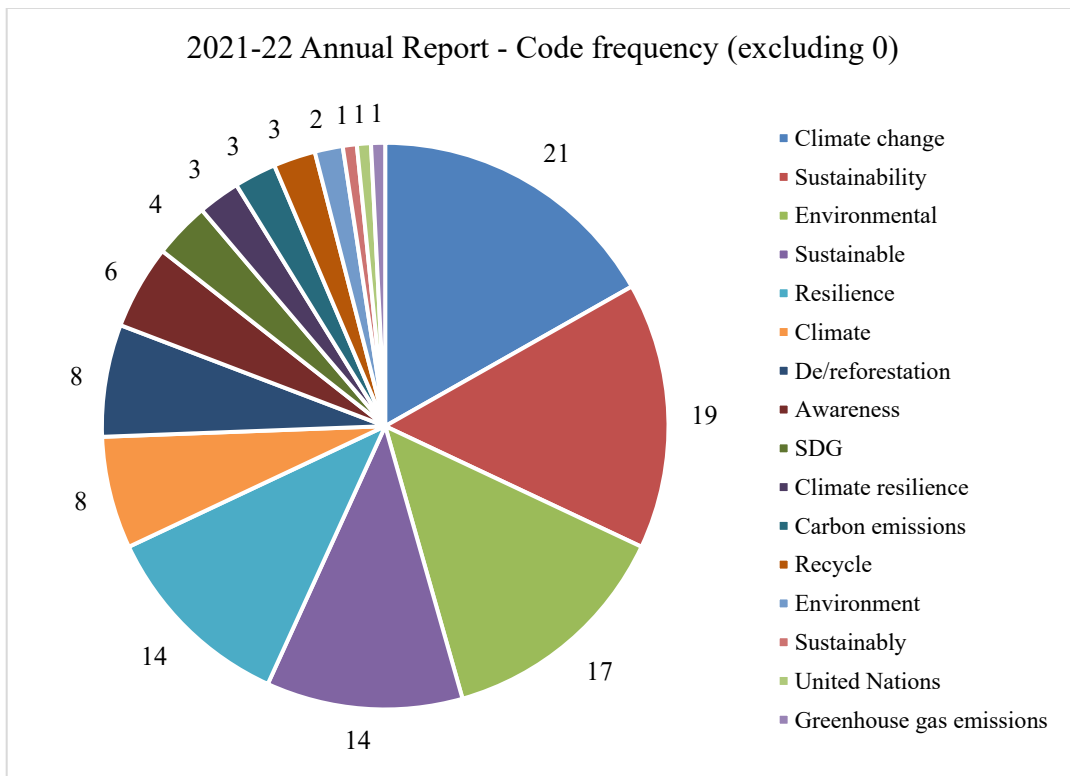
Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 9 - 2020-21 Annual Report - Code frequency (excluding 0)



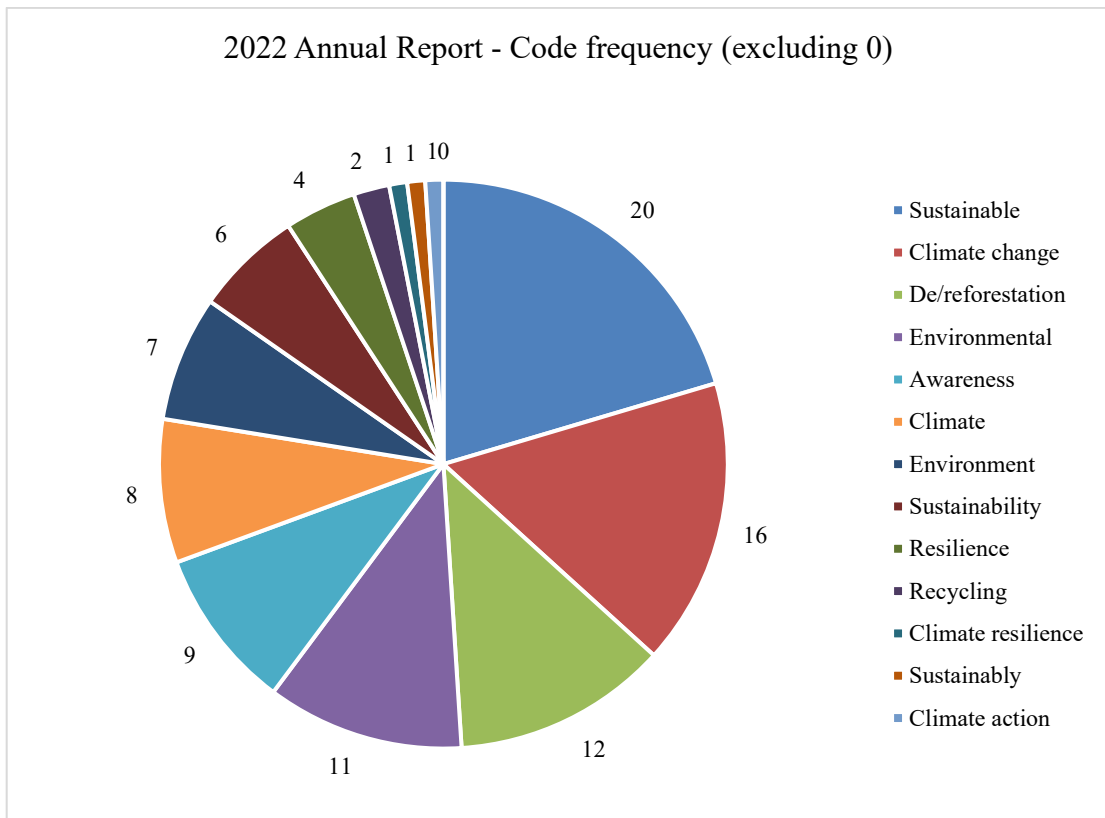
Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 10 - 2021-22 Annual Report - Code frequency (excluding 0)



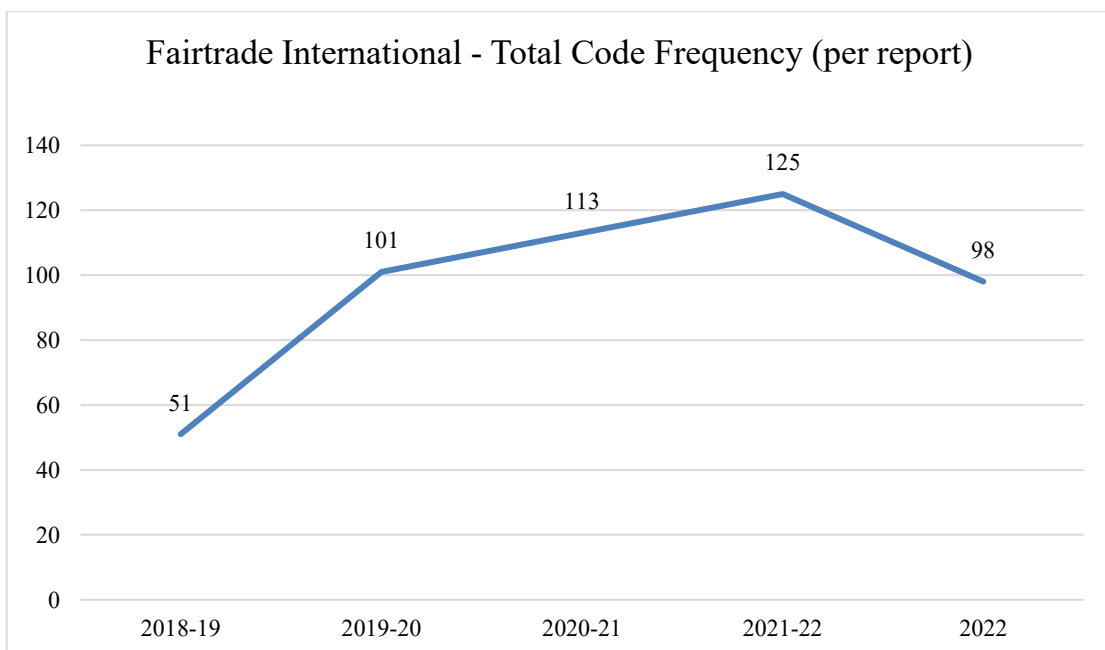
Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 11 - 2022 Annual Report - Code frequency (excluding 0)



Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 12 - Fairtrade International - Total Code Frequency (per report)



Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 13 – Fair Trade USA: Theory of Change



Fair Trade
USA™

Theory of Change

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. Fair Trade USA® standards promote direct and meaningful impact within six SDG areas, as outlined in the model below.

SDG 5: Gender Equality
Standards offer protection from discrimination and sexual harassment and require that women are incorporated into leadership structures.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth
Standards prohibit forced, bonded, and compulsory labor. They uphold fair and anonymous grievance procedures, ethical and transparent hiring, and protection of labor rights, including freedom of association and workplace safety.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production
Fair Trade Certified™ products are certified through a third-party auditing system.



SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
Standards require access to potable water and adequate sanitation in hired labor settings, protection of drinking water sources, and training on water-saving practices.

SDG 1: No Poverty
Standards uphold equal pay for equal work, fundamental labor rights, job security, consistent payments, clear contracts, minimum wage guarantees, and protection from price fluctuation for coffee and cacao.

SDG 14: Life Below Water
Standards require sustainable fishing practices and resource management, the protection of Endangered, Threatened, and Protected species, and full traceability of seafood.

Source: Fair Trade USA website.

Annex 14 – Names excluded from the code list/frequency analysis

Fair Trade USA	California Environmental Associates; The Sustainable Trade Initiative; Fair Trade and Climate Justice; Sustainable Food Lab; Sustainable Food, Agriculture and Environment (SAFE); Sustainable Apparel Coalition.
Fairtrade International	Climate Edge, Nordic Climate; Development Education and Awareness Raising programme; Swiss Platform for Sustainable Cocoa; Sustainable Vanilla Initiative; Fairtrade COVID-19 Relief and Resilience Fund; United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development; Fund for Climate Eventualities and Catastrophic Events; Textile Recycling for Aid and International Development; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Source: Own elaboration.

Annex 15 – Fairtrade labels



Source: Own elaboration.