



IMPACT25

Interview with Mahsa Yeganeh Fairtrade Foundation



Can you tell us more about yourself?

My name is Mahsa Yeganeh and I am the Senior Sustainable Sourcing Manager at the Fairtrade Foundation in England. I have been with Fairtrade for 2.5 years and in this role for about a year. Previously I worked in as CSR manager in clothing and jewelry sector with major UK brands. At Fairtrade, I have worked in both gold and flower supply chains, and as of late last year, I took on the responsibility of Dutch Flower Group Global Account Manager.

What is your current role within Fairtrade as a GAM?

My role as GAM is to harmonize all Fairtrade operations for the Dutch Flower Group and to recognize the contribution of the DFG companies and support their CSR approach. Dutch Flower Group have been sourcing Fairtrade flowers for over 10 years, and it makes sense to have a centralized point of contact. As GAM, I work with my global Fairtrade colleagues to showcase the DFG impact to the Fairtrade flower farms and their communities. I assist with the operational management of the certification process, work on strategy, share relevant information with the companies, and help enhance marketing and communications materials to strengthen DFG impact.

How do you help the DFG companies?

Fairtrade is committed to supporting DFG companies meet their CSR goals in traceability, supporting people and the planet. Fairtrade provides supply chain mapping of all DFG companies Fairtrade flower supply chains, including number of workers, gender split and sourcing origins across years – all together in our yearly infographics and dashboards. We also identify risks within the supply chain, how Fairtrade is supporting the DFG to address these risks, and where targeted investments could be made.

We have a great deal of information about the flower farms, case studies of the effect of the Fairtrade Premium, and published research about the Fairtrade impact, so our teams can work with you to jointly publish stories/messaging, especially during key times of the year. We are eager to help DFG promote Fairtrade with retailers, within the industry and with the general public.

For example, in 2022, data were collected through mixed methods, comparing Fairtrade and non-Fairtrade producer organisations. The report found that flower workers reported Fairtrade's core benefits as better working conditions, no perceived discrimination based on gender or ethnicity, and fairness in recruitment and promotions.

Among other learnings, the study also highlights the fact that Fairtrade has to continue its work to improve wages towards living wages and further flower workers' income improvements in order to ensure that they are able to earn enough for a decent living. We can work with DFG to bring awareness about this impact.

What are the Fairtrade results of 2022?

In 2022, over €8 million of Fairtrade Premium was raised for producers. The majority of the Premium was invested in services for workers and their families, including childcare, bursaries, and transportation. DFG companies generated €3 million in Fairtrade Premium through their Fairtrade sourcing. The companies purchased 359 million Fairtrade stems from certified farms in 2022, which is a huge increase from 2021. This was led by The Floral Connection sourcing volumes, with the majority of stems coming from Ethiopia.



In important thematic work, Aldi UK, working closely with JZ Sourcing, has renewed a 4-year commitment for the Improved Workers' Rights in Ethiopian Flowers programme, a continuation of the Dignity for All Flowers project. This £200,000 commitment will have interventions on awareness raising on gender equality, engagement with trade unions, leadership and governance training for women and youth, advocacy on relevant policy for inclusion at workplace and proving the necessary support to workers with disabilities.

Despite this, we know that times are hard for communities in low-income countries: the cost of living crisis is a global crisis. Farming, transport, logistics, labour and household costs are rising for producers across the world, aggravated by the war in Ukraine. Flower farms in East Africa are already struggling with fewer resources, volatility in markets and

downward pressure on prices. Crucially, they are also having to contend with the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change, which shows no signs of slowing.

Whether we're contending with a climate crisis or an economic crisis, there has never been a greater need for players in the flower supply chains to prioritise sustainability, ethics and fair pay for those in their supply chains.

What opportunities do you see for the future cooperation with DFG?

There are great opportunities for DFG and Fairtrade to continue the strong collaboration we have and to support flower farm communities.

As we unlock the supply chain mapping across the business, there are great opportunities to also work more closely with brands and the general public to help raise awareness of the impact of Fairtrade flowers and why certification is critical in the floral supply chain. Fairtrade and DFG can work to reflect the hopes of Fairtrade flower farm workers – of wider access to opportunities and education, of women fulfilling their potential, and of building communities with strong, deep roots to weather the toughest challenges.

As Fairtrade is advocating for best working condition, living wages and strong environmental standards in flower supply chains, DFG companies can support his work through license fee, participating in consultations and amplify the needs of the flower sector by sharing our work. We at Fairtrade know that there are large gaps in human rights and environmental due diligence – HREDD - identified in the flower sector, and we cannot continue at the current pace to commit to change in unfair trade practices. We also know the Fairtrade Floor Wage is not sufficient to meet the basic needs of the flower communities, so we have our living wage consultation open to all stakeholders this year. Change needs to happen faster.