Sustainability standards and the SDGs: sustainable agriculture

A snapshot of ISEAL members' contribution

Research shows that **sustainability standards** help build productive, resilient and sustainable food systems that **directly contribute** towards achieving **Sustainable Development Goal** (SDG) 2.

SDG 2:
End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Agricultural productivity

The adoption of **sustainability standards** can boost farm productivity in **many sectors** that are **vital** to smallholder livelihoods.

UTZ, Indonesia

Average **cocoa** yield in **kg**[1]

Certified	Non-certified
687 per **ha**	**322** per **ha**

RSPO, Indonesia

Average yield **increase** for certified **palm oil** smallholders in **tn**[2]

From	To
179 per **ha**	**197** per **ha**

BCI

Cotton yields for BCI farmers **compared** to non-BCI farmers[3]

Pakistan	Mozambique
9% ▲ higher	**57%** ▲ higher

How?

Standards provide farmers with **access to training** and knowledge about **better agricultural practices** and access to inputs that help **boost productivity**.

Farmer incomes and profitability

Certified farmers who **adopt sustainability standards** can receive **higher incomes and profits** than non-certified farmers in the same region and sector.

RA/SAN, Nicaragua

Annual coffee income for farmers in **USD**[4]

Certified	Non-certified
4,256 per **ha**	**2,025** per **ha**

Fairtrade, Colombia

Average income increase for banana farming households since joining Fairtrade[5]

▲ **34%**

The **profitability** of certified farms is **significantly higher** than non-certified.[6]

13% ▲ higher profitability
Certified coffee from Vietnam

49% ▲ higher profitability
Certified cocoa from Côte d'Ivoire

52% ▲ higher profitability
Certified cotton from India

How?

Certified farmers often have **higher** farm productivity, **better** quality yields, **lower** production costs, **access** to niche markets and receive a **higher price** for their products.

Ecological conservation

The **adoption of standards** can **reduce** the ecological footprint of farming by **preserving** soil quality, water and conservation areas around **certified farms**.

LEAF, Global

Certified crop with **Soil Management Plan**[7]

190,516 ha

Bonsucro, Global

Certification has led to

364 **million litres** of water saved between **2011** and **2014**[8]

Global Coffee Platform

Coffee farms treating water used in production[9]

Certified **40%**

Non-certified **3%**

How?

Sustainability standards **support** farmers to **preserve** local habitats and **conserve** species, **reduce or prohibit** the use of harmful chemicals, **promote** organic farming and **implement** tangible soil and water management techniques.

Partnering to address key challenges

Research also indicates that **some challenges remain** in the field of sustainable agriculture:

Yield and **quality** improvements **not always** translating into **income improvements** for farmers

Some commodity prices **remain low**, which can **dis-incentivise** farmers

Improved measurement and **evidence** needed of the conservation **impacts** of standards

More sales of certified agricultural products **needed** to **scale up** farmer revenues and profits

More efforts to address issues facing **women farmer**s and agricultural labourers

Standards are working with **governments, businesses and NGOs** to address these challenges and **drive improvements**. For example, ISEAL members and many businesses that rely on their standards are seeking to understand whether **smallholder farmers** are actually earning a '**living income**' and, if not, what it would take to get them there. ISEAL is working with **The Sustainable Food Lab** and **GIZ** to **develop living income benchmarks** and **explore** what a decent standard of living could be for **farming households**.

http://www.isealalliance.org/LivingIncome

ISEAL represents the global movement of sustainability standards.

To find out more about our members visit **www.ISEALalliance.org**
For more evidence on the impacts of standards visit **www.standardsimpacts.org**

Data sources: Evidence in this summary is based on publicly available data and research produced by ISEAL members and others with specific references available in the endnotes. All evidence is specific to the standard, product and country/region stated with limited generalisability. The nature of evidence varies according to research design and methodology used and not all evidence presented here has a counterfactual. Where a comparison is made the 'certified' refers to the standard in the sub-title.

List of acronyms used: RSPO: Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil; BCI: Better Cotton Initiative; RA: Rainforest Alliance; SAN: Sustainable Agriculture Network; LEAF: Linking Environment And Farming; GCP: Global Coffee Platform

1.Source: Aidenvironment (2016). Evaluation of UTZ in the Indonesian cocoa sector.. **2**. Source: Rietberg, P. et al. (2016). Costs and benefits of RSPO certification for independent smallholders. SeNSOR Project. **3**. Source: Better Cotton Initiative. (2015). 2014 Harvest Report. Geneva. From http://bit.ly/2ehcK0w. Respective differences in yield between BCI farmers and conventional farmers across seven countries: China (+11%); India (+11%), Turkey (+7%), Tajikistan (+53%), Pakistan (+9%), Mali (+15%) and Mozambique (+57%). **4**. Milder, J. C., & Newsom, D. (2015). 2015 Impacts Report: Evaluating the Effects of the SAN/Rainforest Alliance Certification System on Farms, People, and the Environment. Rainforest Alliance, New York and Mexico.From http://bit.ly/2fxTvW2. Refers to gross income. 11 Rainforest Alliance certified coffee farms vs nine non-certified farms **5**. CODER (2014). An evaluation of Fairtrade impact on smallholders and workers in the banana sector in Northern Colombia. CODER, Colombia, Calculation of the annual smallholder household income and then asking respondents what they thought their annual household income would be if they were not affiliated to Fairtrade. **6**. True Price and IDH (2016). Data from three individual reports in the series: The True Price of Cocoa from Ivory Coast; The True Price of Coffee from Vietnam; The True Price of Cotton from India, (2016). **7**. LEAF. (2016). Delivering More Sustainable Food and Farming: LEAF's Global Impacts Report 2016. LEAF, UK. **8**. Bonsucro. (2016). Outcome Report 2016. Bonsucro, London, UK. **9**. García, C; Celis , M.; Ochoa, G.; Mora, J. C. 2015 Impact Evaluation of 4C Association Coffee Program in Colombia. (2008-2011). CRECE. Manizales, Colombia. The statistic refers to measures taken by coffee farms to conserve water and adequately treat wastewater generated during on-farm coffee processing activities.

November 2016