

## Article

# Appropriate Strategies for the Use of Fairtrade Certification to Improve the Organizational Climate in a Fairtrade Banana-Producing Company

María Camila Franco Ceballos and Fausto Orlando Maussa Pérez \* 

Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Universidad de Medellín, Medellín 050026, Colombia

\* Correspondence: fmaussa@udemedellin.edu.co; Tel.: +57-4-5904500

**Abstract:** This article studies an international banana and plantain trading company in Colombia and its relationship with the largest Fairtrade producer in the world, whose importance lies in the global trade certification that allows consumers to buy products that were produced under fair labor standards, regulated by the Fairtrade International organization. This ignores some administrative principles that put this type of organization at risk, resulting in a series of inconsistencies in business operations. We aim to design strategies that can be implemented in this type of company, improve the organizational climate, and adapt it to certification. For the design of this model, the deductive research method with a qualitative approach will be used. The obtained results seek to improve the organizational climate and the operational and administrative efficiency of certified companies.

**Keywords:** organization and management theory; strategic management; organizational culture; Fairtrade



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## 1. Introduction

Global consumer trends are changing, primarily influenced by the search to reduce our negative impact on the environment, causing consumers to seek sustainable and friendly forms of consumption [1]. In this search, Fairtrade International was born as a movement to bring together European inhabitants to promote changes and start a more dignified livelihood for farmers and workers, especially in the south of the continent [2]. A Fairtrade-branded product means that producers and companies have met internationally agreed standards. This product is produced, grown, and marketed under fair conditions and is sustainable and environmentally friendly [3]. The concept of organizational culture influences productivity and a new strategy cannot be developed without the concept [4], which is why it has acquired great importance within organizations and has become the subject of studies by various authors. Organizational culture is an important element in boosting the competitiveness and productivity of the company, since it recognizes the intellectual capacities, work, and the interchange of ideas between groups. By allowing an exchange of ideas, it facilitates the realization of the company's activities, creating a climate of companionship, and at the same time, of dedication to work favorable to its level of production [5]. However, to establish norms giving priority to farmers or plantation workers, fundamental administrative aspects are ignored that, without being taken into account, cause imbalances in operations and generate internal conflicts that hit the organizational culture of these certified companies. Therefore, it becomes essential to find intermediate points that allow these organizations to continue with certification, mitigating the negative impacts of the standard, and continue to offer sustainable and profitable products. The organizational climate has a significant influence on an organization's culture. This comprises the general pattern of behaviors, beliefs, and values shared by the members of an organization. The members of the organization largely determine its culture, and, in this sense, the organizational climate exerts a direct influence, because the perceptions of individuals substantially determine the

beliefs, myths, behaviors, and values that make up the culture of the organization [6]. The company under study has Fairtrade certification for 100% of its plantations, which can help develop strategies to improve the organizational climate.

Business management focuses on the measures and strategies carried out for an organization to be economically viable, considering financial, economic, material, and even logistical factors, including human resources. Business management is the organizational activity through which the members of the company seek to improve the productivity and competitiveness of the business. From a financial point of view, management reflects the functions of financial management, through the planning, organization, direction, and control of economic activities that make up the cash flow due to current investment and financing, based on decision making, to stabilize the relationship between risk and profitability. In addition, it should be mentioned that business management covers the general management of the company, aimed at optimizing the results obtained by such an entity [7]. For this reason, it must be evident in the mission and vision of the company, and the numerals of the norm that go against the allowed and accepted administrative parameters, to establish strategies that allow the generation of organizational culture, free of vices, that can become the engine to promote the organization to business success and sustainability in the long term.

These strategies then become its main guide, under the chains and links that have been woven from it, to define the company as an organic structure capable of recording the strategy as an internal fact and not as a designation or task [8], which leads to competitive advantages in the realization of new activities [9]. Appropriate management parameters that can be replicated in certified companies are established with the design and implementation of the aforementioned strategies that managers adopt for the company to seek operational and financial efficiency and profit [10].

## 2. Materials and Methods

Based on the objectives of the research, this type of descriptive study aims to make an exhaustive exposition of the reality that the company is currently experiencing and, in this sense, propose, develop, and design strategies to achieve their set of objectives. With the deductive method, it starts from the general method covered by the Fairtrade standard, which governs certified companies internationally, to reach what is the basis of this research, finding organizational strategies to improve the organizational climate of the company, without departing from regulations, so that with the knowledge acquired, the importance of achieving the strategies that the company must implement can be recognized.

The tools and instruments for collecting information, both primary and secondary, are derived from the specific objectives of the research. They are developed in the following stages:

Stage 1: Recognize the administrative model of a Fairtrade-certified banana producer and marketer; it is the “first moment of exploration, it allows to approach the research problem by making use of qualitative research, documentary review, conversations with experts and reflective work become basic activities of research work” [11]. Considering this concept, the primary sources and techniques for collecting information include direct observation of employees, the formal and informal relationships between them and with the company’s middle managers.

This qualitative tool tries to observe social processes objectively as significant articulations. It is about accumulating data with descriptive information and understanding the groups; it is essential to know “the symbolic meanings that the subjects produce from the near experience and, simultaneously, understand it as a distant experience, from the researcher’s perspective. Therefore, it analyzes their means of symbolic communication and their meanings” [12].

The following points determine the procedural methodology:

1. Develop a social interaction with the informants.
2. Register the data in a controlled manner.

### 3. Interpret the information.

As secondary sources of information, the Fairtrade normative documents, the administrative processes, and procedures documented in the company were analyzed.

Stage 2: Examine the administrative model of a Fairtrade-certified banana producer and marketer to determine its shortcomings and the low administrative and operational efficiency, which generates a poor organizational climate, is the “second moment of focus, it focuses on the problem of research and establishes relationships with the context, allows grouping, classifying, accounting for the plot and relationships, specifying aspects, dimensions, differentiating what is relevant and irrelevant, achieve this research objective” [11]. Oral and written interview techniques are used as a primary data collection source.

The qualitative interview is a way of access aspects of human subjectivity. Moreover, the modality assumed by the interviews is a technique aimed at defining problems and elaborating theoretical explanations from the social processes themselves, which gives validity and reliability. The interview can be defined as a constructed or created situation, with the specific purpose that an individual can express a conversation about their past, present, or future [12]. These interviews focus on two people related to the Fairtrade system, the company’s liaison officer, who acts as an intermediary between the company and the certifying body, and the general accountant in charge of all financial matters. These people are directly responsible for maintaining the guidelines of the fairtrade standard within the company. In terms of interview structure, “the interviewer asks each interviewee a series of pre-established questions, the answers are recorded according to a code of the researcher himself.” [12]. These interviews take place at three fundamental moments:

We employ primary and general questions, including descriptive ones, “we find out how the interviewee carries out their daily activities, how they register and describe objects, spaces, events, places, and actions, both in a general and specific way.” [13]. These questions explain the Fairtrade standard, its principles, its vision, and its objectives descriptively, the specific questions of its position within the company, and its functions.

Next, we ask structural questions where “we verify explanations of phenomena defined in previous interviews; thus, we could corroborate if the events described have been properly interpreted and if they have managed to signify the experience of the interviewee.” [13]. These questions are aimed at verifying if we have understood the essence, the objectives, and the principles of the Fairtrade standard, and finally, the contrast questions asked “to extract the differences of the terms used by the informants, with this, we will be able to explore if specific concepts are understood by the way they are related, by how they are used, or by the similarity that exists” [13]. This section questions why the standard ignores some administrative principles that put these types of organizations at risk. How does the Fairtrade standard measure the operational and business performance of certified companies? What are the main findings found in Fairtrade audits, in certified companies? How are these findings related to administrative processes in certified companies? What are the entity’s strategies to mitigate these findings? How is the vision of the company related to the needs of certified companies? How should the command line be structured in a certified company? How do we support the small producer or agricultural worker in the administration of these companies? What action can be taken to mitigate the lack of administrative profile of the worker/farmer?

Stage 3: Design organizational strategies to improve the organizational climate, avoid duplication of command, and promote articulated work to achieve adequate administrative and operational efficiency. “This becomes the third moment that I seek to strengthen the theoretical debate and establish assertive conclusions to create the strategies.” [11].

The different processes used to fulfill the purposes of research and the treatment of the data allow execution of qualitative and descriptive analyzes that are conclusive for the research, and the informative data will be presented in an orderly and tabulated way, that allows for identifying significant changes or trends using averages. The data obtained was analyzed through descriptive statistical techniques, tools used as a business diagnosis

method in strategic planning, which is used to determine the organization's performance in the face of a specific critical situation that is affecting the company.

### 2.1. Instruments and Methodology of the Study

Initially, the study focused on the recognition and analysis of the administrative model of a Fairtrade-certified banana producer and marketer to determine its shortcomings and low administrative and operational efficiency, which generates a poor organizational climate, employing tools and instruments for the collection of preliminary qualitative information, such as direct observation and the realization of a focus group that included the participation of six leaders. It was complemented with a survey of twenty-six people, corresponding to 100% direct employees. "The focus group constitutes a special technique, within the broader category of group interview, whose characteristic hallmark is the explicit use of interaction to produce data that would be less accessible without group interaction" [14]. The focus group had previous preparation based on the formation of groups [15], "Segmentation consists of identifying the subgroups that make up the population and deciding which ones should be included in the study, based on criteria that correspond to those characteristics that may mark differences in the way of living, feeling, and giving opinions about the topic of interest" [14]. In this regard, the leaders within this group of employees were considered by their rank, such as the treasurer, the accountant, the internal control leader, the document control assistant, a farm assistant, and portfolio assistant, since these exert influence on his workgroup.

The development of the meeting was held in an auditorium outside the company and the corporations, trying to generate a relaxed and comfortable environment in which the participants could express themselves comfortably.

Phase 1. Introduction. The moderator was introduced and the participants were welcomed, emphasizing the study's objective and selection reasons. Then, they established the general rules for the meeting, emphasizing confidentiality and open conversation rather than merely answering a few questions. There was a very calm atmosphere of cordiality and cooperation.

Phase 2. Preparation of the group. It began with presenting the participants with their names, position within the company, and the number of people in charge. The objective of this phase was to favor the interaction of individuals in the group that socialize freely so that open exchange is fostered between participants.

Phase 3. Debate. The moderator raises five specific issues related to the organizational climate in the corporations, the identification of the double line of command, communication, and the power struggle that puts employees in difficulties at the same time. Some factors considered were as time to follow guidelines, provide knowledge, commit to processes and even get involved with the objectives of one or another leader.

The focus group was conducted using five open questions aimed at learning about the company's administrative model. The questions were as follows:

- How often do you think the company influences the decisions of the corporations?
- Where do you get the job-related guidelines?
- What are the factors that most influence the work environment in corporations?
- Is it necessary that the people who give the guidelines are well educated, experienced, and knowledgeable?
- Who is given the authority to issue the guidelines, according to the Fairtrade standard?

This phase was complemented by a survey with the same questions from the focus group, but with multiple-choice answers, for the twenty-six people, who correspond to 100% of the company's corporations' direct employees.

Phase 4. Closure of the focus group. The meeting ended when the information that emerged from the group on the five questions posed is exhausted. The moderator summarized with conclusions of the main issues identified, socialized the usefulness to be given to the results, and ended by thanking the participants for their collaboration.

The technique of oral and written interviews was also used with the liaison officer of the company, who acts as an intermediary between the company and the certifying body, is directly responsible for maintaining the guidelines of the Fairtrade standard, and the accountant General of the corporations, as a high-ranking employee, who interacts with both the company and the corporations. The type of interview used was the focused interview, "it focuses on some precise points about which the subject is encouraged to speak freely, and that the interviewer has to raise throughout the situation, trying at all times to identify what you want to know." [16].

In the preparation, the interview was arranged in advance, for which it was necessary to know the disposition time of the people. Ensuring that these were in their free time so as not to disturb them in their work time, and also informed about the objectives, the justification of the study, and the importance of their participation as active subjects, as well as what is related to confidentiality, the absolute availability in terms of time and space to adjust to their agendas, and the commitment to return the information they provided if this is the case.

## 2.2. Data Treatment

Qualitative: Recorded dialogues and annotations of participants' dialogues during focus group and interviews were transcribed, categorized, and analyzed. In addition, the dialogues that best explained the category were selected "literally".

For the interviews, a narration was reconstructed (based on the recorded material and the interview transcript) that reflects the interviewee as closely as possible, identifying the concepts that represent the essential value of the investigated topic, pointing out the component elements of the interview story. The final report was an interpretation of the interviewees' speech, turned into a narration.

In the interviews, the data referring to the objectives of the Fairtrade standard, the history of the corporations, the company, and the functions of the participants within the company were discarded, as they were considered not relevant to the research in question or redundant since this information has already been mentioned during the study.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

After defining the methodology to be used in the investigation and since an exhaustive collection of data has been carried out, the process of analysis took place, giving light to the foundations to generate the conclusions that will be reached at this point.

## 3. Results

In this section, the results obtained from the present investigation are presented and subjected to analysis to allow the triangulation of all variables and, finally, present strategies at the end of the chapter.

### 3.1. Qualitative Findings: Focus Group

The focus group was carried out with six direct employees of the corporations, who have an indefinite-term employment contract with the different corporations and have no employment relationship with the company or its agricultural companies. These people are area managers or process leaders, so they influence groups of people.

In the focus group session, the moderator asked five guiding questions to carry out the discussion. The participants' responses were grouped into categories. Below are the categorized responses, distributed in frequency and percentage.

Table 1, how often do you think the company influences the decisions of the corporations?  $n = 6$ .

**Table 1.** Focus Group: Frequency for the influence of the company in the decisions of the corporations.

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Forever		0%
Usually	4	67%
Sometimes	1	17%
Rarely		0%
Never	1	17%
Total	6	100%

Examples of “verbatim” comments from participants:

“The company cannot lose control of the corporations.”

“The company is the owner of the certification.”

Table 2, where do you get the job-related guidelines?  $n = 6$ .

**Table 2.** Focus Group: Where do you get the work-related guidelines?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
The company	0	0%
Corporations	0	0%
Both	6	100%
Total	6	100%

Examples of “verbatim” comments from participants:

“I think it is clear to everyone that the orders come from both sides.”

Table 3, what are the factors that most influence the work environment in corporations?  
 $n = 6$ .

**Table 3.** Focus Group: Factors that influence the work environment of corporations.

Answers	Frequency
The line of command	1
The standards of the Fairtrade standard	5
Total	6

Examples of “verbatim” comments from participants:

“When the Fairtrade standard empowers workers to give guidelines, and the company continues to command, we enter a power clash that is harmful to everyone, especially employees.”

“When the company and the committees give the same guidelines, it is perfect. The problem comes when they do not think the same and put us in the middle as if measuring power.”

“This hurts the process and does not allow us to advance will significantly as we would like.”

Table 4, shows responses to the question “Is it necessary that the people who give the guidelines are well educated, experienced, and knowledgeable?”

**Table 4.** Focus Group: Importance of the appropriate profile of leaders.

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	6	100%
Not	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Examples of “verbatim” comments from participants:

“Sometimes the premium committees issue administrative, legal and even accounting judgments without having any knowledge, which is very delicate for a company.”

“Power and ignorance are a dangerous mix.”

Table 5 shows responses to “who is given the authority to issue the guidelines according to the Fairtrade standard?”

**Table 5.** Focus Group: Power to issue guidelines.

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
The company, through its representatives	0	0%
The premium committees	6	100%
Workers	0	0%
The company and premium committees	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Examples of “verbatim” comments from participants:

“Undoubtedly, the norm gives power to the premium committees that are like boards of directors that give the guidelines, but the norm does not take into account that they do not have the knowledge to direct.”

### 3.2. Qualitative Findings: Interviews

The first category, problems in the company (PE): Concerning the perception that the participants have in regard to the organizational culture, we can argue that the empowerment that the Fairtrade standard gives workers in the different producer organizations, as co-owners of the Fairtrade system and managers responsible for business decisions in their organizations, guidelines, rooted in the same organizational base. “Fairtrade exists to empower farmers and workers around the world. Some 1700 producer organizations, representing more than 1.7 million farmers and workers, are the foundation of the Fairtrade system . . . ” [3].

Workers worldwide associated with a network of workers have an active voice in the Fairtrade standard. Fairtrade producers have 50 percent of the votes in our General Assembly, and farmers and workers are also consulted during the process to establish new standards and policies for Fairtrade. The three regional networks of Fairtrade producers play a prominent role on the Fairtrade International Board of Directors, ensuring greater representation for producers [3].

From what was expressed by the participants about this first category, it is recognized that they are aware of the empowerment that the standard provides to workers, and also, that in the light of Fairtrade, they are responsible for the destination of resources and employees. The companies created from the certification, however, emphasize the risk that workers without any academic training take control and give the guidelines in companies with high flows of money.

In general, the following positions are the most concrete in the answers they provide in the interviews.

“ ... the same system is responsible for giving power to people who suddenly do not have the knowledge or experience to manage companies and more companies with so much money ... ”

(Liaison Officer)

“ ... is how the system is really in some way giving power to banana workers ... not all have the academic or technical knowledge to be able to say what to coordinate or manage, these types of entities ”

(General Accountant)

The problem addressed in this research starts from the fact that the owner of the company, the certification (in the search, that the resources are appropriately invested) and the corporations are managed under accepted standards. A person linked to the company to support the administration is designated, as the administration constantly comes into conflict with the premium and worker committees.

This is clearly stated in the interviews with the participants:

“ ... A double line of command, because there are the Corporations, through their premium committees to want to make those decisions and the company with knowledge to try to tell them, see that cannot be done like that. They have the authority under the Fairtrade system, and they are autonomous in making their decisions; so many times, there have been confrontations where they say no, it is that even if the company does not agree, we are going to make that decision ... ”

(Liaison Officer)

“ ... The problem is that decisions are often made based on the workers' own or personal needs ... ”

(General Accountant)

Regarding this concept, the situation faced by these organizations is worrying, according to [17].

The growing increase in competitiveness, the globalization of markets, continuous technological advances, or changes in work organization, among other factors, are putting companies to the test, and with them, their management staff, since it is assumed that the success of a company reflects the effectiveness of its management team, its vision and leadership, and the combination of its knowledge and skills [17].

The second category, solution strategies (ES): The second category emphasizes the strategies that the participants perceive to solve the problems that currently exist within the corporations and that, in general, we can appreciate through the policies of the Fairtrade standard, that can be generalized in all certified organizations, due to the empowerment of workers and the change in innovative thinking for sustainability [18], but without prior training that allows them to administer with structure and bases. “As a result of innovation and the development of technology, companies face very demanding environments ... ”. Highly competitive pressures pose a challenge for managers so that the poorly qualified can hardly cope with them successfully [17].

In general, the following positions were provided by the participants in the interviews.

“ ... there are ways to train them more, to train them more, because ultimately, they are the ones who make the decisions ... ”

(General Accountant)

“ ... then it is the opportunity to implement more training and not only for leaders but also for workers because many things that have happened have been due to ignorance of the same norm and ignorance of technical issues ... ”

(General Accountant)

It is essential to mention that the Liaison Officer confirms that the certifying body recognizes this problem and has been working to counteract its effects.



“ . . . Flovi began to train workers, and all that, then Flovi disappeared, and the network of workers called the Clac was created, and they have been very active in the subject of training to teach people what you can and what you cannot. You can.”

(Liaison Officer)

The training that Fairtrade provides to workers is based on knowledge of the standards of the norm, “Fairtrade International has developed a series of training modules for farmers and workers in Fairtrade certified organizations and their partners, to support compliance with the standards Fairtrade and making an impact on the development of their communities” [3]. It has also created a library to support workers on issues covered by the standard.

The Fairtrade Producer Library contains a wide range of training and guidance tools to help small producer organizations understand and internalize Fairtrade standards. The materials in the library cover the following areas: general requirements, sustainability and biodiversity, organizational development, social compliance, and training support [3].

Despite these efforts from the certifying entity, it is appreciated that workers require a more solid foundation when managing companies.

### 3.3. Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire was answered by twenty-six direct employees of the corporations, which corresponds to 100% of people directly linked. Of these, fifteen were women, corresponding to 58%, and eleven were men. Most of the participants were in the 20–30 age group (62%), while the remaining 38% were in the 30–50 age group. See Table 6.

Table 6. Information on corporate employees.

Corporation	Number of Employees	Me	Women	Number of Fixed Term Contracts	Number of Indefinite Term Contracts	Under 30 Years Old	Between 30 and 50 Years
Corporation A	2	0	2		2		2
Corporation B	2	1	1		2	1	1
Corporation C	2	2	0		2	1	1
Corporation D	1	0	1		1	1	
Corporation E	1	0	1		1	1	
Corporation F	2	1	1		2	2	
Corporation G	2	1	1		2	1	1
Corporation H	2	1	1		2	2	
Corporation I	2	1	1		2	1	1
Corporation J	3	0	3		3	2	1
Corporation K	4	2	2	1	3	4	0
Corporation L	3	2	1		3		3
Corporation M	26	11	15	1	25	16	10

These people received the survey made up of the five questions in the focus group with the following results.

The employees of the corporations perceive the influence of the company in the decisions of the corporations, giving rise to a double line of command. As such, 38% of the employees state that sometimes the company influences the decisions of the corporations, 31% say that it almost always does, and 23% perceive a constant influence of the company in the decisions of the corporations, while only 4% say that it rarely influences and another 4% say that it never influences (Table 7).

**Table 7.** Survey results: frequency for the influence of the company in the decisions of the corporations.

Answers.	Frequency	Percentage
Forever	6	23%
Usually	8	31%
Sometimes	10	38%
Rarely	1	4%
Never	1	4%
Total	26	100%

Further, 69% of the employees perceive that the work-related guidelines are delivered by both the company and the corporations, and 31%, corresponding to eight employees, state that the corporations receive the guidelines (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Survey results: where do the guidelines come from?

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
The company	0	0%
Corporations	8	31%
Both	18	69%
Total	26	100%

For the employees of the corporations, the main factor that influences the work environment is communication, with a frequency of 20 responses, followed by the command line and the lack of commitment to the processes, with four responses each, and finally, the structure, with a frequency of only two responses (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Survey results: factors that influence the work environment of corporations.

Variables	Frequency
The communication	20
The line of command	4
Lack of commitment to processes	4
The standards of the Fairtrade standard	0
The structure	2
Personnel policies	0
The leadership	0

For 100% of the employees, the person who gives the guidelines must have the right profile regarding academic training, experience, and knowledge (Table 10).

**Table 10.** Survey results: importance of the appropriate profile of leaders.

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	26	100%
Not	0	0%
Total	26	100%

Employees consider that, according to the Fairtrade standard, the guidelines should be given by the company and the premium committees, with 46%, the premium committees,

with 31%, the company through its representatives, 15%, and only 8% consider that workers must provide guidelines (Table 11).

**Table 11.** Survey results: power to issue guidelines.

Answers	Frequency	Percentage
The company, through its representatives	4	15%
Premium committees	8	31%
Workers	2	8%
Company and premium committees	12	46%
Total	26	100%

Taking into account this analysis and to solve the research questions that gave rise to this study, which show the problems in this company and its certified corporations, oriented towards low administrative and operational efficiency, which generates a deficient organizational climate, and based on the results identified above, where plantation workers have high levels of empowerment due to the Fairtrade standard, business decisions in corporations are exposed, without taking into account the latent risk associated with the lack of academic training, experience in the business management and the lack of administrative knowledge of these people. It is also clearly observed how the company, in its eagerness to protect economic resources and control investments, constantly contravenes these workers, putting employees in difficulties by perceiving a double-line command who cannot agree on the direction of the organization, with business objectives that point to different places.

To respond to Objective 3 of the study, which seeks to design organizational strategies to improve the organizational climate, avoid duplication of command, and promote collaborative work to achieve adequate administrative and operational efficiency, five administrative strategies are proposed. These strategies are intended to reduce conflicts between employees and the organization with their command lines, company, and premium committees, establish appropriate relationships between the parties involved and generate synergies in decisions and contributions to the organization, while following the organization's established guidelines, in terms of the Fairtrade standard.

These strategies must be implemented in the short and medium term (Table 12). To see the tangible results in the long term, it is essential to mention that the companies that are going to be certified must start the implementation of the strategies when they become certified, to avoid facing the problems of organizational efficiency later.

**Table 12.** General Schedule.

Strategy	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Strategy 1 Articulate organizational goals					
Strategy 2 Mandatory academic training for Fairtrade Premium Committees.					
Strategy 3 Continuous support to the Fairtrade Premium Committees					
Strategy 4 Favor integration points					
Strategy 5 Continuous monitoring plan for the development of the organizational climate of the Corporations					

Below is a timeline showing how implementation should be done.

It is proposed that these strategies should be implemented at the same time, since they are not exclusive and from the first strategy; where organizational objectives, policies, processes, and procedures are articulated, established, and documented, it is crucial to

implement the other strategies, which support and control the research objectives, to ensure these are fully met.

#### 4. Discussion

Organizational culture contains symbols, ceremonies, and myths that transfer values and beliefs in the company, making them come to life and make sense [19]. Here, we explicitly seek to establish strategies to generate an organizational culture, vice-free culture, and that it be the engine that drives organizations to business success, sustainability, and longevity over time, based on the premise of improving the organizational climate in certified companies, without deviating from the standards of the norm, allowing the exchange of ideas that help to carry out the work and generate a favorable organizational climate, thus, increasing productivity [5].

Management uses strategies and instruments to achieve objectives, such as control and continuous improvement in processes, conservation, and data analysis, to help make better decisions [20]. The strategies that are shown below are far from being a tool to solve the specific problems of this company; rather, they are an initial proposal that can be implemented in certified companies to control resources and work together with workers, minimizing administrative conflicts, and applying the inclusion of these workers in the critical decisions of the organizations, since the use of a preventive strategy will always be useful for this purpose [21]. These proposals seek to implement the accompaniment of the workers, not only in joint decision making, but also to train them, using the resources of the premium investment widely allowed by the norm, and that will allow the workers to feel represented and employed; the company will feel relieved that the top leaders have the profile to manage the companies.

True Fairtrade is not that used by certain multinationals to increase their position in the markets [22] but rather the fact that seeking to participate in the company's decision-making process increases employee satisfaction and productivity, giving them a perception of fairness in their work environment and articulating, in a certain way, their life project with the organizational interests [23]. This research was based on recognizing and examining the administrative model of a banana-producing and marketing company and its corporations, identifying the administrative deficiencies in the guidelines, which establish the leadership in terms of the head of the plantation workers, without taking into account their limited or complete lack of academic training, business experience and organizational knowledge. It was also found how the company, in its justified effort to protect the resources of the Fairtrade premium, exercises control through managers, who enter into constant clashes of power with workers, putting employees in difficulties, perceiving a double line of command, different objectives, policies and procedures within the same company.

Organizations seek to achieve effective productivity, integrating the functional areas into a single information system [24] and the use of administrative processes in each of the units that make up the value chain [25] that need to improve operational and business efficiency is the same as in the company under study, since it is a producer and marketer of bananas in Colombia, and its companies certified with the Fairtrade seal, with multiple adverse consequences in its performance.

The Fairtrade standard ignores administrative principles that put certified organizations at risk, finding a series of inconsistencies in the commercial operation and deteriorating the organizational climate by following the guidelines of the standard. This Fairtrade movement proposes to considerably reduce the intermediaries involved in the commercial chain that serves to pay a fair price to primary producers, who almost always obtain less profit [26], while strategic planning relates to the broad lines of development [27]. These premises are analyzed in this article based on the Fairtrade system, through its global certification body Flocert International, where it determines that the workers on the plantations, as well as the small producers, are co-owners of the Fairtrade system and have a unique power in the decisions and directions of the certified companies.

Fairtrade is sometimes related to interests other than social commitment, which has been a fundamental principle since the beginning of Fairtrade, putting it at risk [28]. This and its other principles are translated into standards for a better understanding of certified companies; [29] in contrast to these hypotheses, the analysis was carried out on a banana company in Colombia and its twelve certified companies, finding interesting results, although not conclusive, that in a certain way, validate them, considering that “there are more than 1599 certified companies in 75 countries” [30].

The authors propose the implementation of strategies that seek to be competitive and deliver value [31], recognizing that there is no generic competitive strategy because it must be adapted to the context [32], in addition to considering an adequate internal control that can evaluate management [33]. In short, these are the five proposed strategies:

#### 4.1. Strategy 1. Articulate Organizational Goals

Articulating the organizational objectives of the company with its corporations corresponds to the first strategy, and it consists in the fact that each certified company establishes and documents the objectives that it intends with the corporations and also manages a work agenda with the premium committees, where they can also set their goals and policies. The objective is to establish joint and shared objectives, policies, processes, and procedures that chart the course of decisions.

Compliance with these objectives and policies should be reviewed periodically through meetings with the various departments of the company, such as administrative management, environmental management, and Fairtrade Coordination, to trace actions, results, and strategies. Additionally, it should be a space to review the projects in progress with the sustainability department and get to know the opinions of the members of the premium committees, which will serve to enrich them, so that the leaders who are not involved can learn from other ongoing processes that can contribute to the generation of value.

This strategy will be implemented during year one and corresponds to the planning stage to determine the direction in which the organization is heading. The results are intended to be obtained through the analysis of the environment and the definition of objectives and policies to minimize risks, tending to achieve the organizational mission and vision with a greater probability of success.

#### Activities for the Development of the Strategy

Hold meetings with senior management to establish organizational objectives: It is proposed to hold five periodic meetings for two months, where the board of directors participates in establishing the objectives intended with the corporations (Tables 13 and 14).

Documentation of these objectives is essential to clearly define the course to be followed throughout the execution of the strategies.

Implement and develop a work agenda. It is proposed to hold ten meetings of eight hours each, for a total of eighty hours, where the presidents of each corporation, the Fairtrade Coordination, the Liaison Officer, and the Administrative Manager of the company participate, which will act as guarantor so that the guidelines and objectives defined by the company’s board of directors are followed.

**Table 13.** Execution schedule E1.

Activities	Months												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Hold meetings with senior management													
Implement and develop a work agenda													
Train employees on work guidelines													
Review the traceability of the results													

**Table 14.** Strategy execution and measurement plan 1.

Activity	Term	Indicator	Verification Source	Responsible
Hold meetings with senior management	2 months	The number of meetings held. Percentage of members of the board of directors participating.	List of attendance, minutes of meetings, photographic record, a document containing the organizational objectives for the Corporations	Administrative management
Implement and develop a work agenda	4 months	The number of meetings held The number of documents generated	List of attendance, minutes of meetings, photographic record, a document containing the objectives and policies of the Corporations, a document containing the process map, a document containing the functions manual, a document containing the job profile.	Fairtrade coordination
Train employees on work guidelines	2 months	The number of trainings carried out. The number of people trained. The number of documents delivered.	Attendance list, photographic record, training reports, documents	Fairtrade coordination Liaison Officer
Review the traceability of the results	4 months	The number of psychosocial batteries applied	A document containing the results of the psychosocial batteries applied.	Fairtrade coordination

In these workspaces, policies, processes, and procedures must be clearly defined that aim to develop the objectives defined by the board of directors, the owner of the Fairtrade certification, and maintain the seal in all the plantations. These policies, processes, and procedures must be documented.

Train employees in the work guidelines: Once the results of the work agenda are documented, it is necessary to establish training scenarios for employees to permeate the organization with the content of the documents that show the policies, with comprehensive processes for each area, procedures for each position, function manual and monitoring indicators.

These documents must be within the central file of the corporations as permanent consultation documents for the users; in addition, each employee must receive the manual of functions for his position and keep it with him at work.

Five training sections are proposed with a duration of eight hours each, for a total duration of forty hours. The trainers will be the Liaison Officer, the Fairtrade Coordinator, and a president of the corporations, as a representative of the premium committees. The certifying body is invited to participate as an observer at the conference.

Review the traceability of the results: After implementation, it is projected that the periodic measurement of the results will be carried out through the performance of psychosocial batteries, where the objective is to evaluate and intervene in the intra-work and extra-work psychosocial risk factors. Moreover, stress is defined, with the questionnaires and conceptual framework of the evaluation battery of the Ministry of Labor, and, thus, establishes a continuous improvement plan on the characteristics of leadership, social relationships, control, demands and rewards of the work, helping to identify the adverse effects on the health of people or the conditions of the work, within the framework of a Surveillance Program, such as an Epidemiological and Occupational Health and Safety Management System SG-SST.

#### *4.2. Strategy 2. Mandatory Academic Training for Fairtrade Premium Committees*

##### *4.2.1. Leadership Training*

It is clear that the Fairtrade standard implements training for workers and also recognizes that the training of these leaders has an impact on organizational development (Tables 15 and 16), “the development of the Small-Scale Producers organization (SPO) is more effective when the process is driven by their members and is based on a good level of knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the organization” [3], but it is not enough for the management of a large company, since although it is indeed necessary that the leaders of these companies know the Fairtrade standard and its concepts and measurement indicators, academic training is also required as a tool that helps them consolidate the skills they possess. Academic training should not be seen as a brief reception of theoretical foundations and accumulation of degrees. It is part of a process of intellectual development that allows the person to develop their analytical and critical capacity, and at the same time, helps them develop their problem-solving skills.

It is essential to articulate the company’s objectives, which requires adequate control of economic resources and its premium committees as the principal administrators of the Fairtrade premium. This leads to inspiring employees and generating a coherent organizational culture, regarding leadership communication, respect, and commitment. Leaders have an important role and the responsibility to increase organizational productivity: “the activities developed by them and the way they execute them to impact their organization, as well as the way they manage and direct, determines to a great extent the behavior of the followers and impact on the performance of your staff.” [34].

**Table 15.** Execution schedule E2.

Activity	Months Year 1												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Sensitize the Presidents of the Corporations on the importance of academic training													
Vocational guidance workshop													
Professionally train the Presidents of the Corporations.													
Activity	Months Year 2–Year 5												
	2	3	4	5									
Sensitize the Presidents of the Corporations on the importance of academic training													
Vocational guidance workshop													
Professionally train the Presidents of the Corporations.													

**Table 16.** Strategy execution and measurement plan 2.

Activity	Term	Indicator	Verification Source	Responsible
Sensitize the Presidents of the Corporations on the importance of academic training	1 month	Number of presidents of corporations sensitized	List of attendance, photographic record, memories of awareness	Fairtrade coordination
Vocational guidance workshop	2 months	Number of corporate presidents who attended the vocational workshop	List of attendance, photographic record, memories of the vocational guidance workshop, documents containing the results of the vocational workshop for each one.	Fairtrade coordination
Professionally train the Presidents of the Corporations	60 months	Number of professionalized presidents	University registration, transcripts, diploma, degree certificate.	Presidents Corporations

The second strategy consists of sponsoring the leaders of the premium committees to be professionally trained at recognized universities to manage the corporations by the hand of the Fairtrade Coordinator, and managers, seeking an improvement in their capabilities that will have a favorable impact on the entire organization.

This strategy will begin its implementation from year 1, with academic training in administration and related careers for the presidents of corporations; currently, there are many agricultural workers on the farms with academic training. The Fairtrade premium invests 40% in education for workers and their families. Therefore, it must be established as a requirement that the elected president of the corporation has academic training or that he begins to train to incorporate himself into the direction of the corporation successfully.

#### 4.2.2. Activities for the Development of the Strategy

Sensitize the presidents of the corporations on the importance of academic training: It is proposed to hold two awareness workshops with a duration of eight hours each, for a total of sixteen hours. This will help elucidate the importance of academic training as a strategy to improve the capacities of the presidents of the corporations, so that they can make valuable contributions to the organization.



**Vocational orientation workshop:** Vocational orientation is a learning process to identify the life objectives of the presidents of the corporations so that they better understand their goals and discover their vocational interests, intending to recognize fields, careers, and projects that can be aligned with them and their objectives. The group work sessions for the workshop will be experiential and reflective and will have, as a work goal, self-knowledge, decision-making, and the construction of a life project around the direction of the corporations. At the end of the workshop, a report will be delivered summarizing the personality profile, skills, and vocational interests. It is expected that, with this information, participants will have tools when choosing a career or vocational option. A workshop of three sections of four hours each is proposed, for a total of twelve hours.

**Professionally train the presidents of the corporations:** After having built their life project, the presidents of the corporations must begin their professional training, as they join the working world of corporations.

#### 4.3. Strategy 3. Continuous support to the Fairtrade Premium Committees

It is essential that the members of the premium committees, in addition to being academically trained for the management of the company (Tables 17 and 18), also receive permanent support from the Fairtrade Liaison Officer in making decisions to ensure that these are following the guidelines of the standard and, thus, empowering disadvantaged small farmers and including women, to achieve the sustainable development objectives in the region [35]. In the same way, the accompaniment of company managers in specific areas, such as administrative management and Fairtrade Coordination, is essential to make them visible to the company and generate trust as leaders, strengthening relationships within the team and holding them accountable for their decisions and the consequences derived from them.

**Table 17.** Execution schedule E3.

Activity	Year 1–Year 5											
	Months Year 1–Year 5											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Conduct primary follow-up meetings												
Design and develop employee evaluation surveys												

**Table 18.** Strategy execution and measurement plan 3.

Activity	Term	Indicator	Verification Source	Responsible
Conduct primary follow-up meetings	12 months	The number of preliminary meetings held. The number of presidents accompanied and effectively oriented	List of attendance at meetings, minutes of commitments and conclusions, photographic record.	Administrative management
Design and develop employee evaluation surveys	40 months	The number of surveys carried out per year. % improvement per year in the measurement of organizational climate.	Surveys, a document containing the tabulation of the surveys, a document containing the results of the surveys	Fairtrade coordination

This accompaniment will also generate confidence in all areas of the company and help them in the transition stage from farmworker to manager of the corporations.

An essential part of the proposed support is the verbal social recognition of their positive achievements in the other areas, which will make the collaborators feel comfortable with the work that is being done and the direction of the organizational objectives.

Activities for the Development of the Strategy

Carry out primary follow-up meetings: It is proposed to hold monthly meetings during the first year to provide support and confidence and offer continuous support that will undoubtedly serve to strengthen relationships within the team and provide better value to customers.

Design and develop employee evaluation surveys: One annual survey must be carried out to identify the perception of employees, on topics such as communication, leadership, the degree of motivation and commitment of the employee, and interpersonal relationships and autonomy of the people, aspects that will positively influence the operational and administrative efficiency of the corporations.

4.4. Strategy 4. Favor Integration Points

It is essential that the company, as the owner of the Fairtrade certification, promotes spaces where the members of the Fairtrade premium committees and the leaders of all areas of the company can share spaces and moments other than the workplace (Tables 19 and 20), to break paradigms and prejudices towards workers, so that everyone can get to know one another. This generates relationships of trust and begins to generate value, to the extent that everyone feels calm to speak as area leaders and that they can support this process of professional and labor growth in the premium committees, to carry out their activities successfully.

Table 19. Execution schedule E4.

Activity	Year 1												
	Months Year 1												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Train company managers and corporate presidents in soft skills													

Table 20. Strategy execution and measurement plan.

Activity	Term	Indicator	Verification Source	Responsible
Train company managers and corporate presidents in soft skills	12 months	The number of integration and training spaces generated. The number of people trained.	List of attendance, training reports, photographic record,	Administrative management

These integration spaces can be areas of training focused on improving the soft skills of all participants, such as communication, leadership, respect, or reinforcing group values; it is essential that if these spaces are used for training, they must be very participatory and developed, through group activities and integration.

Activities for the Development of the Strategy

Train company executives and corporate presidents in soft skills: This sort of training aims to strengthen group work, leadership (Tables 19 and 20), communication, respect, and responsibility, through participatory workshops that promote group activities to generate spaces for integration between the group’s area leaders and the presidents of the corporations. Leaders should provide support to the new team members and promote spaces for rapprochement, since it must be remembered that their support is essential to give input on the company direction and that they can begin to generate a valuable analysis for decision-making.

During year 1, it is proposed to carry out bimonthly training sessions of eight hours for a total of forty-eight hours.



**Table 22.** Strategy execution and measurement plan 5.

Activity	Term	Indicator	Verification Source	Responsible								
Establish indicators for measuring results	2 months	The number of defined measurement tools.	A document containing the results measurement indicators	Fairtrade coordination								
Apply performance measurement indicators	24 months	Number of employees intervened The number of tools applied. Number of follow-up meetings	A document containing the results of the intervention and application of the tools, meeting minutes.	Fairtrade coordination								
Year 1												
Activity	Months Year 1											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Establish indicators for measuring results												
Apply performance measurement indicators												

## 5. Conclusions

The findings can support the theoretical approaches to the subject of study, which shows incredible complexity, considering that many buyers and multinational chains have been withdrawing from Fairtrade certification since 2016 to adapt their self-regulation systems or audits, since these are techniques that help consumers, in addition to knowing the organizational objectives, the different managerial roles, and responsibilities, including the use of resources [36], providing better credibility and approval of financial statements [37], since it is vital to consider accounting in any strategy [38]. This is because security and better administrative control are not guaranteed in the use of Fairtrade.

Criticisms of the Fairtrade system are increasing and cover several fronts, since it is not based on entrepreneurship or leadership of strategic planning oriented towards innovation required by the phenomenon of globalization [39], which makes it an unsustainable tool and far from promoting an innovation that increases quality [40], the poor training of farmers to work in the market and run companies is also evident, which decreases success in organizations that include interaction from the external sector that provides knowledge and technology [2].

Despite the criticisms and problems of Fairtrade, it was born with the purpose of improving the working conditions and living standards of small producers around the world [41] and its certification tries to provide companies with a guarantee that complies with the standards proposed in Fairtrade [42]; however, no study can propose its mitigation through viable strategies in companies, and more so when these seek to satisfy the welfare of their employees or at least their basic needs [43], and in parallel to being productive, which is even more difficult, considering that there are more and more actors to take into account [44] that have to be involved, and that as a group, must respond both to the environment and within the company [45], which is participatory and generates trust [46], influencing its cultivation in a direct way [6]. This problem is complex due to the lack of studies on the subject, together with the difficulties involved in its evaluation, which are two of the main reasons that give rise to this situation; however, the study makes a first approximation, leaving the way open for future research on the subject.

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