

Innovative Finance Inclusion

Fair Trade Campus

How to engage students in sustainable transformation?

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Abstract

The global spread of the notion of “fair trade” in recent decades has fueled the emergence of a plethora of international, national, and local initiatives, considered together as a transnational social movement. Since the early 1990s, the fair-trade movement has led to high growth rates in fair-trade market share and to rising consumer awareness, mainly in the US and European markets. Correlated to the UN 2030 Agenda in major aspects, fair-trade is considered an innovative tool for achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The development of a fair-trade market and movement in Israel, however, is lagging far behind. Founded only in 2019, “Fair Trade Israel” (FTI) aims to create a local fair-trade market by raising awareness among Israeli consumers and corporations. In 2020 FTI launched the “Fair Trade Campus” program (FTC) - an accreditation program for higher-education institutions. Based on the experience of implementing FTC in Tel Hai college, this case study seeks to ignite a discussion on the challenges and opportunities in engaging students in on-campus processes of innovative finance and sustainable transformation.



Leadership team of Fair Trade Campus at Tel Hai College. Left to right: Nitsa Henschke,
Rotem Sippori, Maya Ben Avinoam and Gili Avni¹

Keywords

Fair-Trade; Fair Trade Campus; Sustainable transformation; Ethical Consumption;
Fair Trade Procurement; Student Mobilization

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1 Background

The notion of “fair trade”, viewed as an antonym of “Free Trade”, refers to a range of critical ideas, civic initiatives, certification entities, and production and consumption practices seeking to tackle inequalities, exploitative employment arrangements, human rights infringements, and poverty inherent in contemporary global trade (Hussie 2012). Based on the belief that trade can and should be made more equitable and socially just, fair-trade activism seeks to ensure the wellbeing of marginalized producers and workers, mainly in the global south, by creating more egalitarian transnational commodity networks (Raynolds & Bennett 2015). Calls for just trade and social protests against abusive working conditions have been voiced throughout history. Still, only in the 1960s, in tandem with decolonization processes and attempts to restructure the global market by governments in Asia, Africa and South-America, fair trade began to develop into a social movement. Since then, fair trade has flourished globally as both a movement and a market (Moore 2004; van Dam 2019; Bennett 2020).

1.1 The Fair-Trade transnational social movement

The contemporary world of fair-trade is highly diverse, encompassing actors from different levels and sectors, including certification agencies; national initiatives; advocacy networks; civil society, student and consumer groups; corporate entities; and international and national bodies. While fair-trade actors vary considerably in their understandings of what constitutes fairness in trade and in their strategies for pursuing it, they are commonly seen as forming together a transnational single social movement (Sliwinska 2020).

The origins of the Fair-Trade movement are traced back to the post-war decades during which small-scale and occasional direct-purchase initiatives in the US and Europe founded “Alternative Trade Organizations” for importing and selling fair-trade handicraft products that have led to the establishment of fair-trade shops and retail stores. From the early 1970s to the 1990s, following a gradual expansion of the range and volume of fair-trade goods sold, the fair-trade industry has experienced a substantial growth in the number of fair-trade importing organizations and shops in the global north and in retail turnover (Fridell 2004). This growth was facilitated by the emergence of national fair-trade labeling initiatives in the late 1980s, and the formation in 1997 of Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International - a non-profit membership organization that sets fair-trade standards and auditing procedures, now called Fairtrade International, commonly referred to by the acronym FLO (Raynolds & Bennett 2015; Wilson 2015). In 1998, FLO together with International World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), Network of European Worldshops (NEWS!), and European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) formed FINE - an informal alliance for awareness raising and running fair-trade campaigns (Sadekin et al. 2021). In the years to come the fair-trade movement has attracted many more civil society organizations, producer groups, public agencies, as well as corporate actors.



This global spread has led in 2009 the two leading organizations - FLO and the WFTO - to formulate the “Charter of Fair Trade Principles” that defines fair trade and outlines ten core principles of trading in fairness. The charter defines fair trade as “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. Fair Trade Organizations, backed by consumers, are engaged actively in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practice of conventional international trade” (WFTO 2018: 11).² Following the introduction of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the UN, FLO has aligned its principles and indicators to some key SDGs, thereby framing fair trade as an important pathway to sustainable transformation (FLO 2015; Cichos 2019).

The rise and mainstreaming of the fair-trade movement in the last decades have positioned it as one of the most successful social movements to come out of the 1960s (Hutchens 2009; van Dam 2019). Indeed, in tandem with the expansion of the fair-trade movement, the fair-trade market has also seen a significant growth. For example, in 2019 there were over 1,880 Fairtrade certified producer organizations in 72 countries, and approximately 2 million farmers and workers who were employed by Fairtrade certified producer groups (FLO 2021); and in 2020 fair-trade sales reached over US\$11 billion of more than 3,000 products (Raynolds 2022).

This success is commonly associated with the willingness of leading fair-trade actors to adopt market-oriented strategies including partnering with corporations. While many in the movement adhere to these strategies, critics argue that the movement’s collaboration with brands such as Starbucks, Walmart and Nestle’ - known for their labor and human rights infringements has eroded its potential to deliver substantial change (Hutchens 2009; Doherty & Huybrechts 2013; Hudson et al. 2013; Jaffee 2018). United Students for Fair Trade (USFT) is a case in point. Perceiving the movement’s partnerships with corporations as risking USFT’s working relationship with other student activist groups and after the efforts it made to take an active role in crafting these partnerships failed, in 2011 USFT disengaged from the movement and pulled its support for the Fairtrade label (Wilson & Curnow 2013). Notwithstanding, student activism has had a key role in the growth of both the fair-trade movement and the fair-trade products markets during the movement’s forming years (Lyon 2006; Wilkinson 2007; Linton 2012).

² Revised and a relaunched under the title “International Fair Trade Charter”, in 2018 the charter was recognized by over 400 organizations around the world (Sliwinska 2020).



1.2 Fair Trade Israel³

In contrast to the global expansion of the fair-trade movement in the last decades, in Israel during this period and up until 2018 only a few sporadic fair-trade initiatives have sprung up (Raz-Chaimovitz, 2009; Gutkowski et al. 2013). A change has begun to take place with the foundation of “Fair Trade Israel” (FTI) and the ongoing efforts of its leaders to create a national fair-trade market and movement. Interestingly, unlike the transnational movement which developed out of numerous grassroots networks and activist groups, FTI was envisaged and initiated by an 18-year-old entrepreneur named Raz Frogel. After reading about child labor in the cocoa industry and learning about the notion of fair trade, Frogel start searching for fair-trade products in Israel. Once he realized that not only fair-trade products were limited or nonexistent in Israel, but also no significant effort was being made to promote a national fair-trade market, Frogel approached FLO requesting to establish a branch in Israel. FLO declined his request on the grounds that it did not want to expand to new markets, suggesting instead that Frogel become a campaigner for “Fair Trade Town”.⁴ Following this suggestion, Frogel started initiating awareness-raising events and school programs and engaging in advocacy work with the local government and business community in the city of Haifa. However, while he managed to form a committed leadership team and had relative success in introducing fair-trade products to some local stores and in gaining the support of the local government, he soon realized that for such a campaign to be truly feasible, there needs to be a national infrastructure. Hence, Frogel and his team joined forces with an umbrella civil society organization called ANU-Making Change, and the academic Institute for Corporate Social Responsibility, to establish a national coalition to promote fair trade. After operating under the umbrella of ANU-Making Change for a couple of years, on February 28th, 2022, FTI was registered as an independent association. FTI’s main objectives are to build a solid social base that would lead to an on-the-ground fair-trade movement, and to establish an Israeli Fair-Trade certification.

Given that the selection of fair-trade products was (and still is) very limited in Israel, since the establishment of the coalition, the leadership team sought to extend their public outreach through awareness-raising events, training programs and social media, to lobby for policy changes, and to create partnerships with business actors to increase fair-trade product availability. Concretely, in a year time since the foundation of the coalition, 150



³ The review of FTI’s formation and development is based on undated internal documents handed to the first author, who was appointed in February 2022 as a member of FTI’s board of directors.

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/5c3nyd24>



schoolteachers participated in fair-trade training, a fair-trade conference for higher-education students was held, and “fair trade school” and “fair trade campus” (FTC) programs were launched into operation. The latter runs in 11 higher-education institutions in Israel, including Tel Hai College – the focus of this case study, and is operated in coordination with the international campaign of Fair Trade Colleges & Universities.⁵ However, given the availability of thousands of Fair Trade products, in American and European higher-education institutions the promotion of fair-trade consumption among students is a key strategy, whereas, Israeli campaigners’ mission is first and foremost to contribute to the creation of national fair-trade movement and market - both still in their infancy – through awareness-raising events and educational activities.

2 Tel Hai Fair Trade Campus: towards sustainable transformation

Considered as key drivers of social and economic development, academic institutions are expected to both contribute to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda through research and education of sustainable development and aim for sustainable transformation by engaging with the SDGs (United Nations 2015). Put differently, the academic community is seen instrumental in bringing about the social and economic transformations required for meeting the UN agenda, while the internal implementation of the SDGs is perceived as enhancing the impact and attractiveness of academic institutions, as well as their capacities to recruit funding and foster inter- and intra-sector collaborative partnerships (SDSN 2017; Mori Junior 2019; Discetti et al. 2020). In this vein, aimed at raising awareness of fair-trade issues among students, staff and faculty are shifting institutional procurement to fair trade, since the launch of the UN 2030 Agenda, the Fair Trade Colleges & Universities campaign is promoted as an innovative tool for sustainable transformation (Nealis 2018; Nicholson 2019; Sinigaglia & Corbalán 2019). Concretely, academic institutions are encouraged to ensure fair trade and ethical supply chains and to induce change in attitudes towards socioeconomic justice (Kalsoom 2018). It is against this backdrop, that we present here the case study of the implementation of the FTC program in Tel Hai College.

With 5,000 students and dozens of academic undergraduate and graduate degrees, Tel Hai College is a leading higher-education institution situated in the Northern part of Israel. Still, much like the emergence and formation of FTI at the national level, in Tel Hai college too implementation of the FTC program did not start as an organic bottom-up process. Rather it was initiated by the first author – a member of the college’s faculty - who introduced FTI to Tel Hai’s student association. The program was then led by a team of student volunteers recruited by the college’s social involvement unit (hereafter the unit).⁶ The unit also assigned

⁵ <https://fairtradecampaigns.org/campaign-type/universities/>

⁶ Guided by a national scheme, the college’s Social Involvement Unit runs a student volunteering program that accredits one-year social and communal volunteering as equivalent to a two-points academic module (out of a minim of 120 points that are required for a bachelor’s degree).



the first author as the program's academic advisor. It is worth noting that in 2015, following negotiations between the college's union and management, Tel Hai has moved to direct employment of its workers. While this move was not related to any fair-trade organization, it did serve as an indication of Tel Hai's willingness to adhere to the values of the fair-trade movement, particularly regarding employment security and status, as well as labor rights.

The rest of this section presents the program's goals and scope, the program's implementation process in its first academic year, interim achievements towards sustainable transformation, and future objectives.

2.1 Goals and scope

Considering the significant role of students and higher-education institutions in mainstreaming fair trade and creating sustainable society and the embryonic stage of fair trade in Israel and given the COVID-19 lockdowns and mobility restrictions, the leadership team of the FTC program at Tel Hai college has worked towards short- and long-term scope and goals. Concretely, it set forth the following two complementary main goals, of which the latter is a long-term goal:

- to raise the awareness of fair-trade issues among the college's students.
- to obtain a Fair Trade Campus accreditation.

For obtaining FTC accreditation, a college or university is required to⁷:

- establish a college fair-trade committee
- make fair-trade products available on campus
- initiate and operate awareness-raising activities around fair-trade issues and values.

Aiming at creating a solid infrastructure that will allow Tel Hai College the accreditation of FTC, while starting the activity around fair-trade from scratch, the team has translated the above goals and criteria into feasible practices:

- awareness-raising events for students.
- use of social media.
- group-sales of fair-trade products.
- alignment with relevant student bodies.
- establishing a fair-trade committee.

⁷ The Fair Trade Campus Criteria are specified in FTI's unpublished and undated "Fair-Trade Campus Action Guide".



2.2 First year of implementation – Key events

The dynamic of the implementation process of the FTC program at Tel Hai college in the first year (depicted schematically in Figure 1 on p. 12) can be viewed as a three-phase process as follows.

Inception phase

In July 2020, following the introduction of FTI to Tel Hai's student association by the first author, FTI applied to Tel Hai's social involvement unit at the Dean of Students Office for approval of the FTC program as a student volunteering project.⁸

Having been approved and assigned with an academic advisor (the first author) in August, the FTC program was published, along with a range of other social involvement projects, in the unit's call for students to volunteer.

Planning phase

At the beginning of October, soon after the unit published the volunteering call, four first-year undergraduates - named Gili Avni, Maya Ben Avinoam, Nitsa Henske and Rotem Sippori (the third to sixth authors of this case-study) – volunteered to lead the implementation of the FTC program at Tel Hai.

The student volunteers (hereafter the leadership team/the team) began working together towards the abovementioned goals.

A first meeting with the program's academic advisor was conducted on October 8th. Following a discussion on the criteria for obtaining FTC accreditation and possible routes of activities, the team resolved to pursue three initial steps:



- designing a logo for the program.
- writing an introductory promotional copy.
- forming a WhatsApp group for communicating the program's activities to students at the college.

During the planning phase, members of the team held meetings once a week and communicated frequently to discuss budget issues, how to cooperate with the college's Student Association and "Green Council"⁹, preferred ways to use social media, and ideas to jumpstart the program. Concomitantly, the program's academic advisor

⁸ The college's student volunteering program is run under a national program that allows higher-education institutions to accredit one-year social and communal volunteering as equivalent to a two-point academic module (out of a minimum of 120 points that are required for a bachelor's degree).

⁹ The Green Council is an association of students and academic staff who promote environmental practices on campus.



recruited two members of the academic and administrative staff to serve as members of the college's fair-trade committee.

Development phase

November:

By leveraging the Student Association's "Festival in the Park" event, a month after the first meeting, on November 10th, the team held a discussion circle aimed at promoting the program and raising awareness to fair-trade issues among students. Around 20 students took part in the discussion circle and had subsequently joined the Tel Hai's Fair-Trade WhatsApp group (hereafter the group).

Despite classes still being conducted online at that time due to COVID-19 restrictions, the team managed to arrange short presentations on the issue of Fair Trade and on Tel Hai FTC in several introductory classes.

At this stage, the team had also begun to post a weekly newsletter in the WhatsApp group, concerning fair-trade issues in the world, in Israel and in Tel Hai.

In all, the promotional steps taken by the team during its first couple of months of activity had drawn the attention and interest of scores of students.

At the same time, members of the team had become involved in FTI's activities and took part in meetings of the FTC program at the national level.

December:

The initial activities and the administration of a WhatsApp group with 57 students on the one hand, and the fact that the campus was shut down due to lockdowns on the other, encouraged the team to hold a not-for-profit group-sale of fair-trade products before the exam period and the semester break. Working towards this end, the team took the following steps:

- identifying fair-trade suppliers that will agree to supply a very small-scale order (in wholesale terms).
- mapping products and pricing.
- conducting an online market survey amongst supporting students to assess product purchase preferences (see Appendix II).

On December 20th, the team launched the first not-for-profit fair-trade group-sale. Information concerning fair trade in general, the FTC program and an online order form was published on social media and was emailed by the Dean of Students Office to the college's academic and administrative staff. In concrete terms:

- the team acted as an intermediary between suppliers and buyers from the college community.



- the suppliers were a few small-scale import companies and one non-profit based in different locations around Israel. The latter sells fair-trade products of local Arab growers and producers.
- The product list consists of eight items including a variety of olive oil, coffee, tea, and chocolate (see Appendix II).
- Buyers were asked to pre-order products via an online form.
- Payment was made in advance and digitally only, through a mobile payment-collection application.
- Most buyers were students who were members of the group.

March-April:

Upon returning from the semester break, the team focused on two objectives: first to facilitate and enhance communication among members of the group; and second to expand the program's leadership. Towards the former objective, the team set up a campfire (held on April 22nd).



For achieving the latter objective, the team made efforts to engage previously more passive affiliates in awareness-raising activities.

By mid-April, the team has begun preparing promotional flyers and activities, including presentations in classes and fair-trade products on campus, for the World Fair Trade Day in May. Other members of the group were recruited to take an active role in these activities, and specifically to talk about the significance of fair trade to their classmates.

May:

Since the Student Association organized a Market Day aimed at encouraging students to return to the campus, to be held on May 4th, the team decided to leverage this event by having the sale it had planned for the World Fair Trade Day on the same day. For this purpose, FTI provided it with fair-trade product stock to be presented at the point of sale without it having to be paid for in advance. On the day of the sale the team had tea and chocolate for sale, while presenting promotional materials and serving fair-trade tea and cookies baked with fair-trade chocolate for free.



Presentations of the issue of fair trade were given by members of the group for their classmates a couple of days later, on the World Fair Trade Day, as was originally planned.



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Also, around the World Fair Trade Day, Rotem Sippori – a member of the team - was interviewed for “Everything is Political” - Ms. Rotem Lev’s and Dr. Kurlander’s radio show on Galil Radio Station.¹⁰



2021 World Fair Trade Events at Tel Hai College

June:

Towards the end of the year another promotional stand was initiated and operated by Nitsa Henschke, a team member, in an event organized by the student movement Tozeret Haaretz - Young Communities. A training seminar for students who were interested in leading the program in its second year was planned but fell through. Lastly, the team organized a second fair-trade group-sale using the scheme of the first one.

¹⁰ “Everything is Political”; May 2021: <https://tinyurl.com/b4chbx8c> [Hebrew].



Figure 1. timeline of key events

Inception	Planning	Development
FTI is introduced to Tel Hai's College	JUL 4 students (authors 3-6) volunteer to lead the program Long- & short-term goals are translated to working plan and initial steps	OCT Promotional and awareness-raising activities are delivered, including a discussion circle, presentations in classes, and a weekly newsletter
The FTC program is approved by the Dean of Student Office	AUG	NOV First group-sale of fair-trade products
		DEC JAN FTI's founder and coordinator delivers a lecture for students in Hai
		MAR-APR Activities towards enhancing communication among interested students Engaging students in awareness-raising activities Preparations for the World Fair Trade Day
		MAY Promotional events around the World Fair Trade Day Coverage by a local radio station
		JUN promotion stand outside the campus Second fair-trade group-sale



2.3 Interim achievements

As mentioned above, the public in Israel is on the whole unfamiliar with the concept of fair trade, neither with the very limited selection of fair-trade products available in the country. Prior to the inception of the FTC program at Tel Hai, students at the college were no exception. Under these circumstances, awareness raising was the most vital element of the program's implementation process. Accordingly, the fact that by the end of the first year of the implementation process a significant number of students have become familiar with the issue of fair trade and had access to fair-trade products is the team's main achievement.

In practical terms, during the one-year process the team has recruited and sustained a group of dozens of students affiliated with the program, hundreds of students have taken part in class presentations and promotional events both inside and outside the campus, members of the team have become involved in FTI's activities and bodies, and three fair-trade sales have been conducted.

In coordinating the group-sales the team managed to secure special arrangements with fair-trade product wholesalers and with FTI. For example, wholesalers agreed to supply Tel Hai with very small amounts of stock, significantly less than a wholesaler would normally agree to sell. Despite the administrative work required of the wholesalers in setting up a new account and actioning an order with relatively little return in terms of monetary profit, the team identified this as a win-win situation, for both parties: Students in Tel Hai were able to purchase fair-trade products; wholesalers received exposure to a potential new market region, as well as contributed to their presumably stated mission of promoting fair trade in consumer goods industries. Nevertheless, as table 1 shows, the sales' value was more symbolic than material - arguably due to the limited selection of fair-trade products available in Israel and COVID-19-related mobility restrictions.

Table 1: Summary of fair-trade product sales

	Group-sale 1 - Dec. 2021	On-campus sale - May 2021	Group-sale 2 - June 2021
Total sales' value (ILS)	1,560	113	1,600
No. of unique customers	14	9	14
Highest order value by a single customer (ILS)	278	31	479
Product-type most purchased	coffee	Chocolate	chocolate

Finally, while during this year the criteria for obtaining FTC accreditation were not fully met, progress towards this target has been made too (see table 2).



Table 2: Status of FTC accreditation

Criterion	Status
Availability of fair-trade products on campus	The FTC leadership team has joined forces with the Green Council on this issue, as the latter has already been negotiating environmental issues with the College's purchasing department.
College Fair-Trade Committee	Representatives from the academic and administrative management staff were recruited for the College Fair Trade Committee. Nevertheless, the committee has not been active during the first year.
Awareness-raising activities on campus & involvement in FTI's activities	Promotional and awareness-raising events were conducted throughout the development phase of the implementation process. Members of the team took part and represented Tel Hai College in online meetings of the national forum of FTC's leadership teams every fortnight.

2.4 Future objectives

To build upon the achievements it has already attained and assist its successors to make progress in meeting the criteria for obtaining FTC accreditation, by the end of the academic year the team has fine-tuned the program's future objectives.

First, to secure the longevity of the program, given that students receive two credit points for volunteering for the duration of one- academic-year¹¹, the team has prioritized the objective of identifying and training the next cohort of students who will take over leadership of the college's FTC program. Concretely, to this end, the team has begun preparing handover protocol, written explanatory materials, and "on-the-job" training.

Second, based on the relative success of the awareness-raising events it held and despite the small volume of the three product sales it operated, the team had assumed that once students fully return to study on campus both types of activity would attract more attention. Hence, it suggested that their successors' efforts would be geared towards enhancing the promotional and educational activities described above and initiating activities on a larger scale.

Third, the understanding that the lack of budget has significantly limited the program's potential impact, not to mention the burden it put on the team members, (e.g., driving in their private cars to pick up the purchased products to save delivery costs) led the team to suggest that its successors would attempt to raise funding to further develop the program. Concretely, it suggested to establish a Fair-Trade scholarship that would attract more talented and skilled students to join the leadership team.

In all, the team believed that the ambient attitudes at Tel Hai College regarding social justice ideas, together with the initial institutional infrastructure it has laid down in Tel Hai campus, would allow their successors to further develop and strengthen the college's FTC program.

¹¹ See fn. 7.



3 Challenges and lessons

Initiating and leading a sustainable transformation process is by all means a challenging mission. Since the FTC program in Tel Hai college is still in development phase, this section reviews key challenges the team experienced during the early implementation stage that can serve as lessons for others who wish to engage in sustainable transformation projects.

3.1 Starting from scratch:

At the time the FTC program was first introduced in Tel Hai College, not only had there been no previous fair-trade activity in the college, but both the fair-trade movement and market in Israel were still in their very infancy. Furthermore, when they volunteered to lead the program, the members of the team were first-year undergraduates with little knowledge of both the college and fair trade, that may not have been sufficient for creating awareness of the issue among the student community. Under these circumstances, and since the college volunteering program is for one-academic year, the team had to invest time in learning the issue while at the same time to plan how to implement the program and begin activity. To do that, the team had no choice but to adopt a trial-and-error method. Concretely, during the entire year the team documented its meetings, conducted post-evaluation meetings of activities, and aligned with other activists at the college to build upon their experience. To be sure, while progressing via experimentation did not always allow the time required for thorough deliberation, it enabled the implementation process to be dynamic and was instrumental for the team's achievements.

For example, in preparation for the first group-sale the team checked products' prices with fair-trade wholesalers. However, as the team was not aware that it was given prices without VAT (Value Added Tax; in Israel, 17%),¹² in the online form for pre-ordering products it also published the base price (not including VAT). In practice, members of the sale group pre-paid according of the products they ordered, the team made up the VAT to suppliers out of their own pocket, and then explained their mistake and asked each member of the sale-group to make a further payment to cover the VAT. Following this experience, the team has decided not to purchase products directly from wholesalers for the next sales, but to borrow stock from FTI, as it was a simpler arrangement in terms of delivery of goods and the ability to return unsold products.

3.2 Engaging students:

Initially, the team believed that since the climate at Tel Hai is favorable to college students engaging in social justice issues, it would be relatively easy to involve students in social initiatives such as the FTC program. Notwithstanding, they have encountered difficulties in bringing students on board, in convincing them to purchase fair-trade products

¹² It was later explained by suppliers to the student leadership team that not printing the VAT on invoices is so standard in the wholesale industry, that it was automatically assumed they would know to add +17% themselves.



they were not familiar with from unknown companies, and overall, in building a lively fair-trade community within the student population. Indeed, even students who expressed their interest and implied that they were willing to take an active part in meetings and activities, often in practice were not ready to do so. This situation was in part due to the fact that almost all college activities were conducted online as a result of COVID-19-related lockdowns and mobility restrictions. In all, the team made efforts to switch to “virtual format activism” – with which it had no experience. In this regard, practices such as the online market survey that was conducted prior to the first group-sale have proven effective in both drawing attention to activities, as well as ensuring student participation in them. Another way that the team tried to inform students of was the newsletter it posted in the WhatsApp group, and in the last couple of months it also opened its meetings to any interested students.

3.3 Focusing the message:

The wide range of conceptions regarding fair trade and of strategies for pursuing it, alongside the social and financial complexity that goes with fair-trade issues, have posed another challenge as the team had to decide how and on what to focus to make an impact. For example, fair trade is considered part and parcel of the sustainable development agenda and as such is promoted as an innovative tool for sustainable transformation. Still, the fair-trade movement mainly puts emphasis on tackling poverty and labor abuse in global supply chains and is usually less involved in activities around climate change and environmental protection. Hence, several times during the year, the team debated the pros and cons of joining forces with the Green Council, whether ad hoc or consistently. While joining forces may have allowed the team to reach more students and emphasize the link between fair trade and sustainability, it could have also made it harder to convey and differentiate the unique message of fair trade. Since the FTC program (unlike the Green Council) was not yet established at Tel Hai college, any resolution of this dilemma could have had a significant impact.

3.4 Organizational continuity:

Given that each leadership team serves for one academic year and that the FTC program was new and not yet established, it was crucial to find students who would be willing to lead the program before the first leadership team leaves in order to secure its longevity. With this in mind, the team considered registering the program as a unit under the Student Association (as per, for example, the Green Council and the *Gender Equality* programs), for this registration promises protocols for leadership handover and continuity. Still, as this registration also carries with it obligations regarding governance, reporting and financials, the team decided to leave this decision to its successor. Also to this end, towards the end of the year the team planned a training seminar for students who were interested in leading the program in its second year that fell through, as mentioned above. In the end, the college’s Social Involvement unit recruited the second cohort of student volunteers at the beginning of the subsequent academic year. It should be noted though, that the first team continued to



take part in the program's activities and its promotion. For example, in October 2021 Nitza Henschke published an article in Al Hazafon - a local magazine,¹³ in which she presented fair trade as part of modern-day slavery and invited students and residents in the vicinity of the college to take part in the FTC program at Tel Hai College. Nevertheless, the program's stability has remained a pressing challenge. In this regard, the fact that in the summer of 2021 Rotem Sippori was appointed by FTI as the Coordinator of the FTC program at the national level, has been vital for sustaining the program at Tel Hai College in the second year.

4 Conclusion

This case study follows an early implementation of The Fair Trade Campus program at Tel Hai College - a higher-education institution located in the northern part of Israel. The case is informed by four understandings: First, that as key sites for promoting sustainable development, academic institutions have a significant role in bringing about the social and economic transformations required to eradicate poverty, tackle climate change, and build more inclusive and equitable societies; second, that pursuing sustainable development not only strengthens the impact of academic institutions but also enhances their capacities to raise funding and create fruitful collaborations; third, that fair trade is an innovative tool for achieving sustainable transformation, and forth, that students have the potential to serve as change agents in sustainable development.

These understandings are well reflected in the international Fair Trade Colleges & Universities campaign, from which the FTC program in Israel draws, that encourages academic institutions to ensure fair trade and ethical supply chains and to induce change in attitudes towards socioeconomic justice through the promotion of fair-trade consumption and procurement. However, while the European and American fair-trade movement and market have developed and expanded greatly during the 1990s and the 2000s out of grassroots organizations, a substantial development of activities around fair trade in Israel has only started in the last three years, with the foundation of "Fair Trade Israel" (FTI) by a single social entrepreneur. Put differently, unlike the organic bottom-up development of the transnational fair-trade movement and market, the development of fair trade in Israel is more of a top-down effort to crack what at times seems like a "chicken-and-egg" dynamic of reluctant consumers, hesitant companies, and limited product availability. Hence, launched at 2020, the FTC program in Israel is aimed, first and foremost, at creating a national fair-trade movement that would raise the awareness of fair trade and enhance the demand for fair-trade products. Similarly, the FTC program at Tel Hai College was not initiated by students. Rather, a member of the academic staff had introduced the program to relevant bodies in the college, and only at a later stage did a team of student volunteers take the lead in implementing it.

¹³ <https://magazine.rotemltd.co.il/al-hazafon-248/20/>



As the case-study shows, despite significant challenges - including COVID-19 lockdowns and mobility restrictions, relatively little familiarity with the college and the issue of fair trade, and lack of experience with financial aspects of social activism – encountered by the leadership team, the achievements it attained during early implementation were instrumental for the progression of the program. Notwithstanding, engaging students in the program has remained a major challenge to be handled by subsequent leadership teams.

4.1 Case questions

1. As mentioned in the case study, students played a major role in the development of the fair-trade movement at the transnational level. The case also suggests that it is widely believed that students can serve as change agents in sustainable transformation. Why then, do you think that engaging students has been especially challenging for the leadership team of the FTC program at Tel Hai College?
2. How do you think the dilemma between joining forces with the Green Council and differentiating the unique message of fair trade could be resolved?
3. How do you think Fair Trade Israel should tackle the “chicken-and-egg” dynamic of reluctant consumers, hesitant companies, and limited product availability?
4. Whilst fair trade is promoted as an innovative tool for sustainable transformation, some argue, in criticism of the fair-trade agenda, that mass production industries in the global south are crucial to the lives and wellbeing of the people living there and therefore that fair-trade practices might harm the very people they are aimed at helping. What is your opinion regarding this debate?
5. Proponents of the fair-trade movement believe that the market-oriented strategies it has adopted (e.g., the strategic collaboration with Starbucks, Walmart and Nestle') have been crucial for the expansion of the fair-trade market. At the same time, United Students for Fair Trade argued that the movement's collaboration with brands known for their labor and human rights infringements has eroded its potential to deliver a substantial change. What is your opinion regarding this debate?
6. Are there activities and procurements in your university/college that you think would not meet fair-trade criteria? What are the injustices in these processes, who bears them?



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