

Appendix 4. Comparative Analysis

(Appendix 4 of the report of the Expert Meeting on Socially and Environmentally Responsible Banana Production And Trade, San José, Costa Rica, 10-11th December 2001)

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAMMES IN THE BANANA SECTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background Document for discussion at the Second Expert Meeting on Socially and Environmentally Responsible Banana Production and Trade

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Report prepared for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Written by Sasha Courville
Reviewed by Emanuele Piano, FAO, November 2001

Executive Summary

A number of voluntary initiatives have been developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions and companies to promote banana production, trade and consumption based on social and ecological principles and which involve monitoring, certification, labelling and codes of conduct. These initiatives include:

- The Fair Trade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) programme to promote fair trade for disadvantaged producers in developing countries,
- The Rainforest Alliance's Better Banana Project (BBP) supports ecologically and socially preferable banana production,
- Organic production and certification systems through the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), to ensure that bananas are grown without the use of agrochemical and in what is considered a holistic manner.
- The UK based Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is exploring how companies can test and monitor labour and social conditions in the workplaces of their suppliers. One of its pilot projects is focusing on bananas in Costa Rica.
- Social Accountability International (SAI), formerly Council on Economic Priorities Accreditation Agency (CEEPA), and their Social Accountability Standard SA 8000, which has been used to promote ILO conventions of social justice and labour conditions.

While these various initiatives do address unique issues and target different actors in banana production and trade worldwide, there is substantial possible overlap that needs to be considered. Potential problems resulting from this overlap include consumer confusion, the additional costs to producers generated by multiple inspections and certifications, different and incompatible demands from supply chain clients as well as the duplication of efforts and the fact that there are limited resources available to set up and run these various initiatives.

This study examines the main certification programmes in the banana sector mentioned above. As the report is divided into three sections, the executive summary will follow this structure, including General Principles and Objectives, Monitoring and Control, and Standards. The Standards section, comprising the bulk of the report, is sub-divided into environmental, social and economic-institutional criteria. Finally, the prospects for further convergence between the certification programmes will be examined.

General Principles and Objectives:

One of the fundamental similarities in the **basic principles, values and philosophies** of all the initiatives is the perception of a need for change in current economic practices. Even though this is achieved from different points of view, i.e. environmental, commercial, and social, this is a commonality that links all initiatives.

Both social and ecological principles are included in FLO and BBP standards. FLO tends to put more emphasis on the social aspects, while instead BBP focuses more on the ecological aspects. On the other hand, both SA8000 and ETI concentrate solely on the social aspects of production and on working conditions. IFOAM aims to promote organic agriculture and as a consequence its objectives are primarily environmental.

It should be underlined that ETI is established as a learning initiative to explore how to monitor compliance with a code of conduct in companies.

In terms of the **beneficiaries** a main distinction is that FLO has specific content criteria for small-producer organizations primarily dependent upon family labour as well as different criteria specially tailored for plantations dependent upon hired labour, both being in a disadvantaged and marginal position with respect to local and international markets. For all other initiatives the standards are the same regardless of scale of operation and type of company. However, the inspection and certification processes take these characteristics into account to some extent.

One further distinction is the **geographic scope** of the different initiatives. Both SAI SA 8000 and IFOAM standards are applicable worldwide, while the BBP and FLO's banana standards apply in tropical or developing countries. The ETI is an initiative based in the UK, although suppliers can be located anywhere in the world.

Monitoring and Control

A main objective of all the initiatives, but ETI, is the development and refinement of standards enforced by a verification system, whose duty is to carry out inspections and certifications or inscription.

As for ETI, all these aspects are mainly possibilities that need to be tested and will be assessed through the above-mentioned pilot projects. ETI does not certify; the projects are aimed at learning about monitoring and progressive improvement of the skills and knowledge required for the development of a certification programme. This does not necessarily imply that ETI will develop into a certification programme.

SA 8000 and IFOAM play the role of **accreditation agencies** with criteria for accrediting certification agencies that will evaluate applicants against certain standards. In the case of SAI, this standard is the SA 8000 that verifies management systems for better workplace conditions. IFOAM's standards are standards for standards; in other words, they are not to be directly inspectable but are to be incorporated into the standards of each accredited certification body and expanded upon.

The BBP is managed by a coalition of independent, non-profit, local conservation groups – The Sustainable Agriculture Network, or SAN. The SAN is co-ordinated by the Rainforest Alliance, which ensures that all member groups use the same certification standards and protocols and reporting procedures. The RA manages a centralized certification administration system and a training programme that auditors must complete in order to be accredited by the programme.

FLO is currently re-organizing the certification process. They plan to set up, starting from 2002, a separate Certification Unit with its own manager, a cross-product Standards and Policy Working Group and, more generally, certification functions and procedures will be harmonized and separated from producer support and business facilitation activities.

In all programmes the **certification process**, whether performed by the same body or through accredited certifiers, follows the same basic steps for application: submission of documents, site visit and inspection of facilities, production sites and records, report of inspection and a certification

decision-making process plus provisions for periodic review. This review is normally done once a year except in the case of SAI where a full audit takes place every three years with surveillance audits every six months. During the inspection, certain initiatives require input from external stakeholder groups. In the case of BBP, the main external stakeholders are local communities. For SAI they are NGOs and trade unions, while ETI also adds workers and business.

Of note, IFOAM's accreditation criteria for certification are the most comprehensive as they deal with the need for clear recording and communication between parties and for clearly stated reasons in the event that certification is denied. SAI has a two-tiered system of participation: SA 8000 Signatory Member programme aimed at retailers and at companies that do a substantial amount of sourcing from suppliers and SA 8000 certification by accredited bodies for manufacturers and suppliers (facility based). SA 8000 members must define the scope of application and commit to goals for having production units (whether their own or independently operated) achieve SA 8000 certification within a specified time period.

In terms of **flexibility in the certification** (and accreditation) process, this is shown in different ways. For BBP, SA 8000 and FLO flexibility means committing to continual improvement. In BBP, certification takes place once the majority of standards have been met and the farm manager has an approved work plan for continued improvements. In FLO, criteria are divided into minimum criteria, to be met before inscription, and process criteria that should be met over a defined time scale. With SA 8000, the process of preparing for certification is extremely flexible. However, once certification has been reached, there is less flexibility in the implementation of standards. Although some flexibility is implied in the minor and major corrective action warning system, failing to meet the basic criteria of the standard will jeopardize certification. In IFOAM, there is flexibility of a different sort. The Basic Standards are necessarily vague as they will be adopted by accredited certification bodies and fleshed out to apply to the particular conditions appropriate for that body and region and to the particular crop considered.

With regard to **arbitration**, both accreditation agencies (SAI and IFOAM) have set out clear channels for arbitration. This could be due to the need for accredited certifiers of IFOAM and SAI to have clear rules to follow. SAI's complaint and appeal procedure is open to all interested parties that object to a certification or to the accreditation of a certification body. The processes of arbitration for FLO and BBP are not as clearly articulated in public documents, although FLO appeals can be addressed to the newly formed Appeals Committee if they feel they have been sanctioned unfairly.

Beyond arbitration, all initiatives have a **process for de-certification** when major violations of the standards/criteria are found during inspection and monitoring. All systems distinguish major breaches from minor ones. Furthermore, in systems based on continual improvement such as FLO, BBP and SA 8000 minor breaches are corrected through time while major breaches, if not dealt with, may mean that certification is withdrawn.

Some of the procedures for the **use of labels** monitor the physical **chain of custody** of the products. In the Better Banana Project and organic systems under IFOAM, the integrity of the chain of custody is essential given the actual labelling and/or promotional claims made regarding the product. In both cases, chains of custody audits/inspections are carried out so that a clear separation between certified and conventional products can be made at all times from production to the retail level. In the FLO system, the trading chain of custody is controlled by the national initiatives, which are responsible for the control of fair trade labels and registering of importers/retailers. In order to grant the use of the fair trade label, the national initiative must ensure that importers/retailers have complied with fair trade purchasing conditions. In the SAI system, certification is done on a plant-by-plant basis rather than on the entire chain of custody. The focus is on workplace conditions, not on the product itself. However, there is an element of supply chain focus within SAI as members (retailers) are encouraged to find and assist suppliers (facilities) to meet SA8000.

In terms of **funding the monitoring system**, in all cases, except FLO, the producer pays for the costs of inspection and certification and may include this in the farm-gate price. In the BBP, however, there is a provision for producers who cannot afford these costs where alternative sources of funding are sought. Also in ETI, the principles of implementation state that the company must ensure those human and financial resources necessary to comply with the code are made available. In the FLO initiative producer groups/plantations do not pay for the costs of monitoring and inscription. Instead, importers

and/or retailers are charged a licence fee for the use of the fair trade label of the consumer country. This cost is passed on to consumers through higher retail prices for fair trade bananas. The sustainability of Fair Trade is also based on the decreasing profit margins paid to importers and, more rarely, to retailers.

For some initiatives the certification cost borne by producers may be offset by higher sales prices. The FLO system functions through a social premium that the importer pays on top of the market price or a fair trade minimum price, whichever is highest at the time. This social premium is to be used for activities that promote social and socio-economic justice as well as ecological protection. It is also normal for organically certified products to fetch a premium above market prices.

In terms of **other sources of funding**, most initiatives rely on external funding from private and public institutions, fund raising and revenues from promotional activities. ETI receives less than half of its funding from the British government and this is decreasing as a proportion as membership grows.

Standards

Environmental Criteria

The first major distinction to be made is that SA 8000 and the ETI do not cover environmental issues; therefore, they do not have environmental criteria to compare.

IFOAM, the Better Banana Project of the Sustainable Agriculture Network and FLO's standards all contain broad statements about the need to **conserve and protect habitats and ecosystems**.

All three initiatives prohibit the clearing of primary **forest** and the BBP prohibits deforestation. BBP requirements are the most comprehensive on the issue of reforestation, requiring that all lands not suitable for cultivation be re-forested. For the BBP, IFOAM and FLO, their standards all contain a list of specific high ecological value ecosystems that should be conserved.

In terms of **soil conservation and management**, BBP, FLO and IFOAM standards all require specific activities for erosion control. Land must be suitable for the proposed crop and soil conservation practices should be undertaken to sustain long-term productivity, fertility and biological activity within an integrated crop/pest management programme. One final point, the standards of FLO link the issues of water conservation to soil conservation much more explicitly than the BBP and IFOAM criteria.

With respect to **Water conservation and Watershed Management**, IFOAM's criteria are very general. Both FLO and BBP cover this issue extensively requiring buffer zones along watercourses and filter/treatment of residual water from mills, washing facilities and packing station as well as requiring a monitoring system for water conservation and treatment. In both cases, water sources should be protected against pollution from agrochemicals.

With respect to pest and disease management, IFOAM totally prohibits **agrochemicals**, while FLO and BBP allow their limited and minimized application. They do not allow products prohibited by national laws, international agreements and conventions including pesticides in the FAO/UNEP Prior Informed Consent Procedure. All standards require adequate training, proper personal equipment and appropriate working areas. Only BBP covers detailed procedures for the transport of agrochemicals and the obligation for workers to undergo regular medical exams. Both FLO and BBP include specific requirements for agrochemical storage, procedures for aerial spraying and special provisions for pesticide-treated bags.

In terms of **other methods of pest and disease management**, all of IFOAM's methods fall under this category. The BBP and FLO also require integrated pest management or integrated crop management systems to be in place. These systems include physical, mechanical and biological practices to control pests. FLO's criteria are more comprehensive and come closer to those of organic farming and they include, only for organizations dependent upon hired labour, the presence of an agronomist in charge of the monitoring system.

In terms of **waste management and recycling** all three initiatives cover this issue. BBP and FLO have comprehensive requirements for waste management. All systems encourage the use of organic waste for compost. Reduction of inputs by using renewable resources in locally organized production systems is an objective for IFOAM. FLO's process criteria cover progress demonstrated on the reduction of resources used.

With respect to **environmental planning and monitoring systems**, IFOAM requires a clear conversion plan in its basic standards and a programme for fertilization and for pest and disease management. BBP and FLO both require environmental planning and monitoring though these are conceived in different forms.

In the case of the BBP, an overall plan on how compliance with the standards will be achieved is required and is reviewed as part of successive audits. For FLO, the premium work plan, incorporated in the annual report, aims to maintain compliance with the minimum requirements and to make progress on the process requirements. The environmental plan included as part of the premium work plan serves the double purpose of meeting compliance with the standards and evaluating the ecological progress of the plantation. A specific person/committee must be responsible for its implementation. More specific plans such as waste management plans (BBP) and integrated crop management plans (FLO, BBP) are to be included in the overall plans.

In terms of monitoring, BBP standards are explicit in stating that a monitoring system, according to scale of operation and intensity of production systems and to on-farm and nearby resources, must be set up so that compliance with the standards can be proven. This is the only mention of scale related standards for BBP.

In the case of FLO, the only explicit mention of a monitoring system is for the integrated crop management system. However, as the standards are based on continual improvement process criteria and the work plan is to be up-dated on an annual basis, this can be understood to be the basis for a monitoring system.

Social Criteria

It should be noted that all IFOAM's social criteria are vague, recommending that all ILO conventions with respect to labour welfare be complied with. IFOAM is aware of this deficiency and has initiated work to develop more specific social criteria.

With respect to **the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining**, all initiatives address these issues on the basis of ILO conventions (87 and 98).

One issue covered explicitly by FLO, BBP, SAI and ETI is the right to freedom of association. All four state that workers have rights to organize and/or form unions. SAI, ETI and FLO explicitly state that there will be no discrimination against representatives of organized workers and that these representatives will be allowed to carry out their functions. BBP covers this issue in a slightly different way by stating that companies must respect the right of workers to organize and freely associate, must demonstrate the existence of an acceptable organization which permits workers to negotiate freely with management, must not put pressure on workers regarding union membership and must ensure that workers are informed that they can address their complaints through the SAN.

FLO, by implementing a clear differentiation, moves beyond the other initiatives in terms of the comprehensiveness on the issue of participation in decision making and in collective bargaining. Collective organizations must be democratically organized with organizational structures that guarantee control by members. In organizations dependent upon hired labour a recognized union is expected to represent the workers, although, if there is none, a democratically elected committee is acceptable. Furthermore, FLO standards not only recognize the right to collective bargaining but put this into practice with the requirement that a collective bargaining agreement, or if there is no union a terms of employment document, be drawn up and approved by all parties, including coverage of issues from salary to maternity benefits, from dismissal to vacation. Furthermore, both types of organizations are to undertake permanent education and training activities to enhance the participation of members.

With regard to **wages**, all require that they are equal to or greater than the established minimum legal wage and/or the average regional (industry) salary and all, but IFOAM, include requirements as to the administration of payment. SA 8000 and the ETI impose an added qualifier for the minimum wage, that it shall be sufficient to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income.

For FLO, the fair trade premium, paid by the consumer indirectly to the producer, can also be added to the minimum wage if this is below regional and industry average. If this is not the case the premium work plan, jointly drawn up by workers and management, directs the bulk of the premium towards complying with the standards and fostering the organizations' further development.

Social security is an issue that is addressed by all five initiatives, though in different ways. SAI and ETI approach this issue by prohibiting practices that would avoid national laws and regulations on social security. BBP states that companies must implement a social policy in accordance with national labour standards, international conventions and the SAN criteria. The social policy is decided by the company's management and then communicated to workers. Similar communications are required for any change affecting the social, economic or environmental situation of the farms. For both FLO and BBP, third party contracting is not allowed or only in specific cases and then workers must have the same social security benefits.

The other schemes address social security by discussing content issues. For example, IFOAM's recommendations call for the meeting of social security needs such as maternity, sickness and retirement benefits. For FLO, these issues and others are to be included in the Collective Bargaining Agreement that is to be re-negotiated every year. FLO minimum criteria for organizations structurally dependent on hired labour include social security provisions premium for all workers and a pension fund or scheme within one year from certification for all permanent workers.

In terms of **hours of work limitations**, SAI and ETI state that working hours should comply with applicable national laws and industry standards. In any case, they, together with BBP, state that 48 hours/week is the maximum regular level with 1 out of 7 days off. All three allow overtime work provided it is on a voluntary basis to a maximum of 12 hours per week in exceptional circumstances and paid at a higher rate.

With respect to **equity in wages and non-discrimination**, all initiatives have standards to cover the issue in varying degrees of detail. All standards prohibit any form of discrimination including in wages and opportunities. BBP requires the company to issue a Code of Conduct and to demonstrate the application of a non-discriminatory policy. Similarly FLO requires a system to be in place for the progressive elimination of all forms of discrimination (as in ILO standards). SAI also includes requirements not addressed by other initiatives, including non-interference with the exercises of rights of personnel to observe tenets or practices or to meet needs relating to race, caste, national origin and disability among other categories as well as the prohibition of sexual harassment.

The **specific protection of certain categories of workers** is addressed by all initiatives. The most covered group is children: all standards refer to UN conventions and the UN Charter of Rights for Children. All initiatives explicitly state in their standards that child labour is not allowed; a child is commonly considered below 15 years of age, only BBP sets the limit at 14. All initiatives, except IFOAM, show special consideration for young workers, normally defined as in between 15 and 18 years of age, who must not undertake hazardous work. BBP and SAI define the maximum number of working hours for young workers (42 per week and 8 per day for BBP, 10 per day for SAI education and transport included). A further requirement that FLO, ETI and SA 8000 share is that any work undertaken by young people do not jeopardize schooling.

With regard to **disabled workers**, the only initiative to specifically address the issue is BBP, prohibiting workers who are mentally unfit or who have chronic diseases, respiratory diseases or weaknesses from handling agrochemical. In all other initiatives disabled workers fall under the general category of non-discrimination.

Pregnant women are explicitly referred to in FLO and BBP standards, while they fall in a more general non-discrimination clause for the others. FLO's norms are included in the collective bargaining agreement and in the minimum requirement that maternity leave be at least 12 weeks with basic salary guaranteed for permanent workers. BBP on the other hand prohibits the displacement of

pregnant or nursing women and the performing of tasks, like the handling of agrochemical, that may endanger their health or that of their child.

Another category of worker for whom special protection has been seen as necessary is **migrant or temporary workers**. Only FLO and BBP address this category of workers specifically. BBP states that there should be no discrimination against foreign workers including in wages. FLO seems to consider cases where there might be different treatments for casual, seasonal and permanent workers in plantations, stating that the collective bargaining agreement is applicable for all workers, but that possible differences for these types of workers must be indicated (criterion 3.2). However, it requires that these differences be progressively diminished and that, in any case, social security premiums be paid for all workers.

All initiatives address **occupational health and safety** aiming to minimize and prevent any hazards inherent in the working environment. All except IFOAM have standards that cover the need for adequate training and equipment for workers and provision of information on related issues including: the use, handling and storage of agrochemicals (FLO and BBP) as well as the use of tools, machinery and equipment (FLO and BBP). All, but IFOAM, require that a person be appointed and made accountable of the Health and Safety requirements in the standards. Only BBP requires periodic medical examinations to guarantee capability to fulfil hazardous tasks. IFOAM's basic standards only has a general requirement that 'in all production and processing operations, labour conditions regarding noise, dust, light and exposure to chemicals should be within acceptable limits and workers should have adequate protection'.

Basic Needs is an issue addressed by all initiatives. However, each initiative stresses different aspects. For example, BBP is very comprehensive in detailing housing considerations, while SAI, BBP and IFOAM address the issue of medical care directly. Education is included by all. BBP and FLO both require that environmental education be provided to workers, while the other initiatives issue more general statements. Surprisingly, FLO's requirements on basic needs are not spelled out in a detailed way. The intention might be to leave the choice of criteria for basic needs to the worker representations and producer organizations.

In terms of **relations with local communities and indigenous rights**, only IFOAM and BBP cover these issues. IFOAM recommends that the rights of indigenous peoples be respected while BBP extensively considers the linkages between local communities and the agricultural operations in environmental, socio-economic and employment terms.

The final category under social criteria is **company policies**. All initiatives include general policies on social justice in their standards. Training is a key in all initiatives with the exception of IFOAM. SAI, ETI, BBP and FLO, all cover training for workers related to health and safety issues and also broaden the application to other topics in the standards.

With respect to **planning and monitoring**, all systems, with the exception of IFOAM, require an overall management plan to implement the social criteria. Linked to the management plan, a monitoring system is generally required to be in place to evaluate and update the plans. However, not all initiatives explicitly state the need for such monitoring systems. Finally, all systems have in place a process for corrective action though again, this is not always explicit.

A final point to make here is the unique requirement in the ETI base code for negotiations with suppliers to take into account the costs of observing the code. In this way, the social costs are internalized into the supply chain cost structure.

Economic and Institutional Criteria

Under economic and institutional criteria, the following categories are addressed: economic viability, diversification, access to credit, time horizon, and respect for legislation/principles and accountability.

Economic viability is not an issue addressed directly through the standards, though in most cases it is implied as a basis for being able to address social and ecological issues. However, both the BBP and FLO suggest the need to account for economic viability, somewhat moderating environmental

protection and performance. Hence, for example, the allowance of agrochemicals where necessary, in order to protect farmers from economic failure and to ensure optimal production.

In terms of **time horizon**, a main objective of both FLO and the ETI is to foster long-term relationships between producers and importers/suppliers/retailers. The BBP management plan requires short, medium and long-term goals. For all initiatives there is an implied or explicit assumption that the commitment of the company/producer/organization undertaking the certification or inscription is long-term.

Respect for legislation is covered explicitly by all initiatives. All five state in their standards that local and national laws of the country where production is based must be complied with. In terms of compliance with ILO conventions, all initiatives set them as a base for their social criteria. Finally in terms of compliance with other international agreements, IFOAM, SAI and BBP cover compliance with the UN charter of Rights for Children. SAI and BBP standards are also based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The final issue addressed in this section is **accountability**, covered in various forms by all initiatives. Accountability can be addressed within internal structures of the company/organization or in terms of external relations. In terms of internal accountability, FLO stresses the need for large participation and approval, SAI, BBP and the ETI require that standard procedures be in place. At the level of certification agencies, IFOAM's accreditation criteria cover issues of accountability, responsibility and access to information. In terms of external accountability, all cover this issue explicitly in their standards, though different vehicles are used to ensure this, the most common being access to books and records.

Ongoing developments

Since the first presentation of this comparative study at the Expert Meeting held at FAO in March 2000 all initiatives have continued to refine and improve their criteria, processes and procedures.

In particular, BBP has rewritten its Banana Standards, increasing both environmental and social requirements. Most of the progress has been made in moving towards greater levels of detail in the environmental indicators and in the introduction of social policies on the plantation. Also, FLO has reviewed its banana-specific criteria. As written above, FLO is setting up a new certification unit to separate fully its inspection and certification functions from its producer support functions.

Furthermore, IFOAM is gradually developing a social agenda through a participatory approach and is evaluating the possibility of developing a Code of Conduct addressing social issues for all organic traders.

In the mean time, FLO, IFOAM, SAI and SAN, together with other organizations, have joined into an organization named ISEAL in order to promote their programmes, develop a more professional approach to certification and accreditation, and defend their common interests. In this context they also have investigated areas for further collaboration.

There has been increased momentum for collaboration between programmes working in banana certification since the March 2000 expert meeting. A Working Group on responsible banana production and trade has been formed to facilitate dialogue and co-operation on specific topics. The Group has produced a brochure describing the various banana certification schemes targeted for the use of retailers. Also, it has been designing a joint project to improve the efficiency of certification and train inspectors and farmers on pilot farms. The Group has also established an electronic discussion forum and intends to prepare a manual on responsible banana farming for growers.

Conclusions and scope for further collaboration

Generally speaking we can affirm that each standard has its own specificity, objectives and type of beneficiaries: IFOAM in organic standard setting and accreditation of certification systems through the International Organic Accreditation Service, FLO in issues related to smallholder and disadvantaged producers, BBP with a focus on large plantations, SAI in certifying management systems in a

corporate environment and ETI as a learning initiative investigating social issues involved throughout the supply chain.

From the above discussion, it becomes apparent that SAI's SA 8000 and ETI's social standards are similar with regard to most issues. The order differs but the wording is, in most cases, similar.

IFOAM and FLO share relatively similar holistic approaches in their standards and criteria, even though they are founded on different bases: many of FLO's criteria can be met over a defined time scale, while IFOAM's are a prerequisite for certification. Moreover, organic standards are essentially global standards while FLO's standards are specifically designed for developing countries. Market developments have increased demand for products that are both certified as fair trade and organic. This may require some harmonization of inspection procedures to make dual certification easier. More attention might also be placed on training activities and generally information sharing between these two systems.

FLO's approach whereby minimum requirements to be met immediately are balanced by clearly defined "process requirement" to be met over time could be adopted by other certification programmes. The BBP could probably use this approach to convince the plantation managers to adopt stricter social criteria over time. (The BBP already has a requirement for continued improvement that could facilitate this approach).

Furthermore, one area where all initiatives but ETI have much in common is the actual inspection and certification process. In all cases, the same basic steps are followed even though the organization and the inspection team carrying out the inspection can vary. Of these steps, the inspection and monitoring processes offer perhaps the most useful possibilities for further co-operation.

Clear lines of responsibilities, objectives, beneficiaries and geographic scope are needed so that producers, supply chain actors and consumers are not confused by the various initiatives. Extra efforts to explain the standards and labels to the consumers may be necessary, especially in a period where corporate codes of conduct, environmental or social labels are proliferating and increasing consumers' confusion.

Beyond the points of convergence mentioned above, all of the initiatives have many overall characteristics in common. These characteristics include the desire for improvement in the lives of workers and producers, and the choice of vehicle for action through a set of standards and criteria to be complied with and verified by independent third parties. They all point to the need for closer collaboration so that the beneficial impacts of the initiatives are not lost in cumbersome administrative processes and inertia.