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Alternative trade organisations: A feasible solution for Africa

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Abstract

This paper provides a study of Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs) as a medium for incorporating "fair trade" values into the lives of rural African farmers. In ascertaining the contributions that ATOs have made towards the socio-economic development of these communities, an analysis of Fairtrade, in particular, is undertaken and where appropriate, references to other prominent ATOs such as Rainforest Alliance and UTZ Certified is made. In comparison to its competitors, Fairtrade has a documented history as a system dedicated to providing fairer trading terms for small-holding farmers.

Despite widespread belief that these ATO's uplift farmers in developing countries from impoverishment, an analysis of Fairtrade's activities leave serious questions regarding the effectiveness of its practices in making a comprehensive contribution to improving the lives of rural farmers in Africa. By undertaking an analysis of the modes of production as well as the challenges faced by small, rural African farmers in accessing the world markets, this thesis analyses Fairtrade's contribution, through the use of trade, towards the socio-economic development of African farmers.