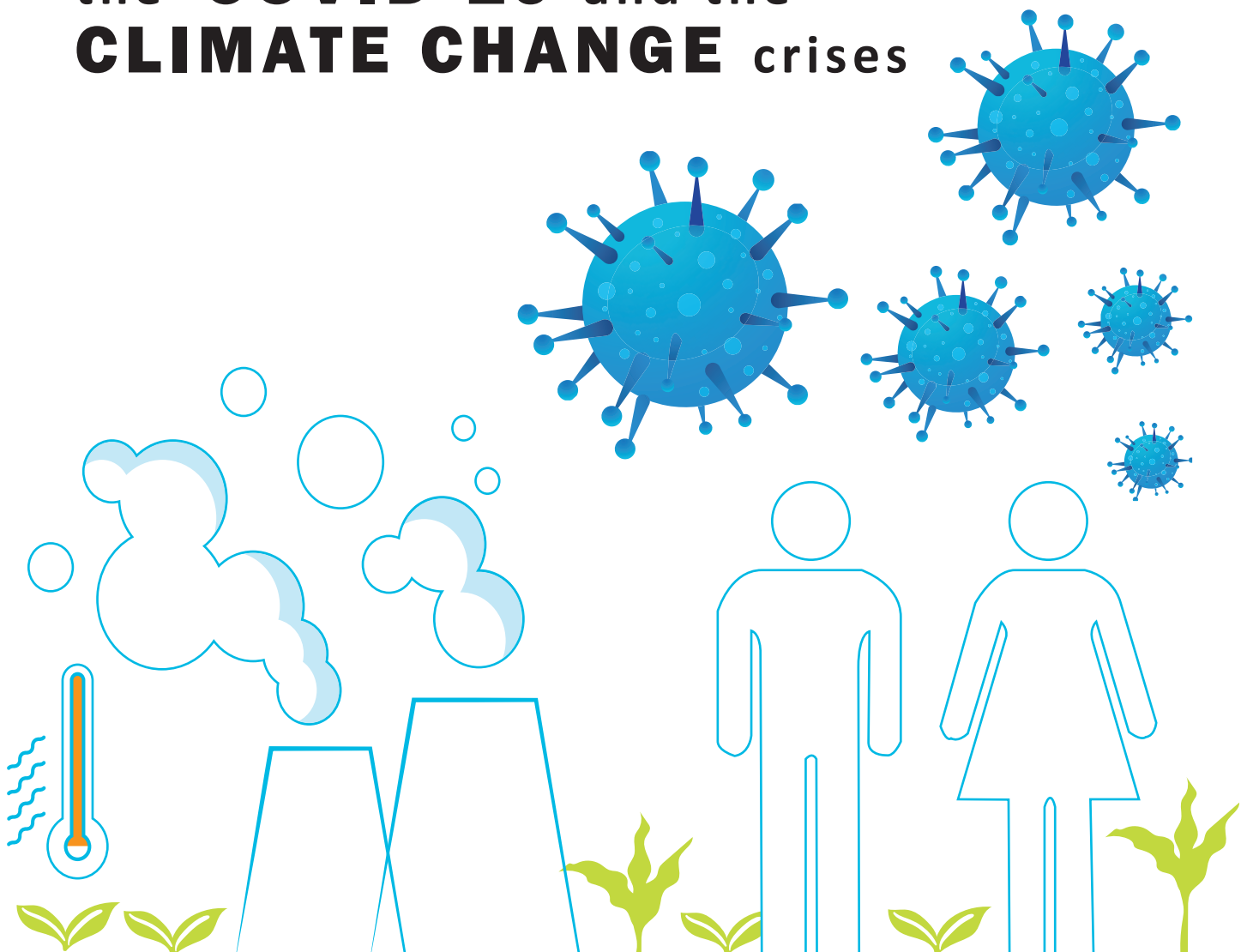


# FAIR TRADE

small-scale producers  
and workers facing both  
the **COVID-19** and the  
**CLIMATE CHANGE** crises



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## **small-scale producers and workers facing both the **COVID-19** and the **CLIMATE CHANGE** crises**

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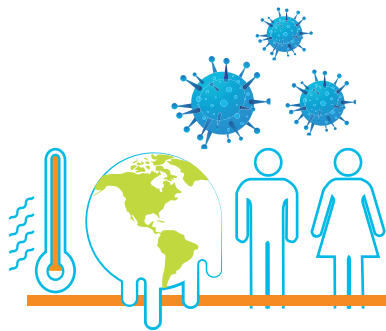


In 2011, The Latin American and Caribbean Network of Fair Trade Small Producers and Workers (CLAC) spoke out about on the Climate Change agenda to raise the voice of small-scale producers prior to the Seventeenth Climate Change Summit (COP17).

In 2018, CLAC updated its position paper by requesting greater collaboration from stakeholders to accompany small-scale producers in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change in the region. Since then, CLAC has been supporting efforts to achieve greater participation and advocacy in the Climate Change agenda, from concrete actions, as well as contributing in discussions at the national and international level to position and promote proposals from and for small-scale producers and workers from Latin America and the Caribbean. Although they contribute little to global warming, are among the most vulnerable to climate change (FAO, 2017).

To guide its actions, CLAC developed a Climate Change Strategy. Its purpose is that CLAC's small-scale producers can adapt and adequately mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. In addition, the Strategy seeks to reduce their vulnerability through the introduction of productive systems adapted to the climate. As a result, producers would be able to improve their production and productivity, naturally regenerate soils, manage natural resources in a sustainable way, and establish different climate-smart business models consistent with Fair Trade.

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# **AGRICULTURE** in a **WORLD** in **CRISIS**



The COVID-19 pandemic continues affecting Latin America and the Caribbean, a region in which more than 4.5 million cases and 180 thousand deaths had been registered as of July 31st. The pandemic and some preventive measures taken by governments will have a severe impact on the region's economy, which could contract by an average of -9.1% of GDP in the coming months, according to a recent report published by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2020).

The economic recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean could mean risks and setbacks in the advancement of environmental protection measures. The potential danger is intending to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, through structural adjustment reforms such as eliminating “excessive environmental regulations, subsidies and licensing regimes”, among others, as recommended by the World Bank. Faced with this situation, we express our concern and encourage the protection, visibility and promotion of environmental sustainability approaches and Fair Trade values, in the actions that will be undertaken by governments, civil society organizations and international cooperation, in the stage of economic recovery.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, climate change has resulted in variations in precipitation patterns, increased temperatures, and in extreme, more severe, and frequent weather events. The impacts, already being experienced, range from the melting of Andean glaciers to devastating floods and droughts. Both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans are warming and acidifying, while sea levels are also rising (WWF, 2017). These changes, added to the economic recession in the region, deepen the risk of populations, especially the most vulnerable, of not being able to guarantee their food security and diminish their opportunities for resilience in the face of the climate crisis and other crises in the future.

The media impact of the COVID-19 crisis has turned the attention away from several topics. One of them is the discussions on Climate Change, which had been prominent on the international agenda since COP25, held in Madrid in December 2019. Paradoxically, its visibility and validity are even more necessary at this time, as we are aware that if drastic measure are not taken, the effects of climate change will deepen the vulnerability and risks of a world and a region in crisis.

The FAO points out that, due to the high dependence of the region on its natural resources and the functioning of its ecosystems for the generation of foreign exchange, the vulnerability of the countries is multidimensional: socio-economic, geographical, and institutional. In this scenario, the impact of climate change on family farming is greater because traditionally this sector has low access to technologies, monetary resources, and information (FAO, 2017). In a report for the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), FAO recommended to countries of the region to consider, if they have not already done so, declaring food and agriculture as essential or strategic activities of public interest, in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic (FAO, 2020).

Facing the global crisis caused by COVID-19, we consider that it is necessary to update our position, including decisions aimed, more than ever, at guaranteeing sustainability and taking care of the environment to overcome the social and economic crisis.

Only a healthy environment can help us prevent humanity from being exposed to “recurring” episodes similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, since nature is capable, for example, of curbing desert dust and reducing air pollution, two vehicles that spread viruses and accentuate the respiratory symptoms of COVID-19 patients. But, when climate change appears in the equation, nature has less room to mitigate impacts and protect our health.

Now the challenge for small-scale producers and workers organizations, members of CLAC, is to reconcile market demands and economic growth with the need to manage natural resources sustainably.



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# LET'S WORK TOGETHER for a **RESILIENT WORLD**

Since small-scale producers and agricultural workers will continue facing the challenges derived from climate change, and in face of this new scenario of global and regional crisis, CLAC urges governments, civil society actors and international cooperation to:



**Consider the key role of family farming in mitigating and adapting to climate change.** Fair Trade producers have developed and used technological, productive, and organizational responses in their local and traditional knowledge that have demonstrated to be effective. This contribution deserves to be recognized, supported, and shared in a global crisis context, in which the livelihoods of vulnerable populations must be guaranteed.



**Promote discussions at all levels, as well as alliances between all actors in the value chains, the public sector, and civil society.** At this moment, alliances are key to promote measures that make consumers and decision-makers aware. Therefore, responsibilities are allocated and economic recovery is designed based on values such as justice, solidarity, and equity, which are the pillars for social and environmental sustainability.



**Consider climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the preparation of regional and national plans for post-COVID-19 economic reactivation,** so that it becomes an opportunity for sustainable development, instead of a factor to generate a much larger crisis.



**Promote a great regional and national dialogue that considers the participation of small-scale producers and field workers organizations,** understanding that in the current context, their social and political participation is key to overcome and manage the crisis. Thus, considering the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change are intimately linked. Not recognizing this fact might derivate in larger crisis in the future.



**Maintain and deepen environmental care measures and strengthen the resilience capacities of populations and small-scale producers in the region.** The flexibilization of environmental measures in favor of economic dynamization might derive in crisis of a larger magnitude in the future.



**Promote responsibility being taken by the different actors in the value** both in mitigating climate change, and for the increased costs that it generates in agricultural production.



**Continue joining efforts to generate greater individual and collective awareness to promote responsible consumption** that contributes to reduce the negative effects of climate change, promotes the agroecological production of food, recycling, care and protection of water resources and forests.



**Promote the active participation of the Fair Trade system and movement in the international climate agenda** to represent the interests of our members in the high-level discussions about climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. In that sense, we are in permanent alert about the decisions that impact producers' livelihoods or that put at risk the economies' environmental sustainability.



**Keep discussions on the effects of climate change in the media's agenda.** Concrete actions in that area are essential for the world facing a crisis without precedents. It is time for humanity to choose a true sustainable development, that implies a change in the socio-economic, food, environmental, and political model.

At CLAC we are committed to making the voice of Fair Trade small-scale producers and workers be heard and promoting their interests in national and international decision-making spaces.

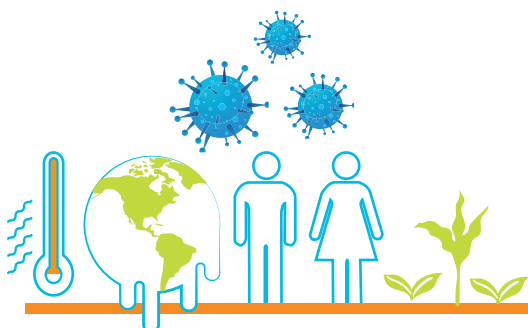


Small-scale producers, citizens, academics, politicians, and government officials have the commitment to accept the challenge of taking the planet's problems into our hands and taking the corrective measures that are due. If we don't proceed now, the catastrophes might be terrible. We call, not only politicians, but also all citizens, men and women that have the will to act, to do so; because this is our house, it belongs to all of us. We must protect it, so that humankind can continue living in it

Miguel Munguía, CLAC's President



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