

U.S.-headquartered berry company Driscoll's has expanded its Fair Trade program in Baja California, Mexico, with acreage increasing by near 14% in 2019 amid plans for 100% certification by the end of the year.

This means an additional 1,000 workers can positively benefit from the program, the company said.

This expansion builds on the continued success of its multi-year [Fair Trade USA partnership](#) which has contributed nearly one million dollars in Community Development Funds through the sale of Fair Trade Certified organic berries grown in Baja California.

The program expansion allows Driscoll's to include more of its independent growers, expand retail distribution and increase sales of Fair Trade Certified berries. As a result, more workers in Baja California will benefit from the program and receive additional funds for community development.

"With more than 6,500 workers employed by Fair Trade Certified™ farms, our goal is to amplify the positive impact they can have in their local communities," says Soren Bjorn, president, Driscoll's of the Americas.

"Expanding our Fair Trade program to the entire region means more opportunities for farm workers and their families to participate in and benefit from community-led improvement projects. It also introduces more opportunities for our consumers to make a difference with each purchase."

Fair Trade Certified farms uphold strict environmental and social standards. A portion of the money paid for certified berries goes into a Community Development Fund, which elected community representatives decide how to use.

Driscoll's said that funds generated from the sales of Fair Trade Certified berries have supported a number of projects in local Baja California communities. Each project is selected through a needs assessment and voted on by all the workers included in the scope of the Fair Trade certificate, including a dedicated committee.

The Fair Trade committee has organized three [community health fairs](#) across Baja California since 2017, helping nearly 3,000 farmworkers and their families receive medical care from specialists including gynecologists, dentists and optometrists.

"I'm imagining a very large project, not only one that would impact all the workers here, but that would help all the other companies see what Fair Trade really does," says Saidel

Hernandez, Fair Trade Committee president and Harvest Crew leader. "Something that will leave a mark, a 'plasmado,' that's my hope for the future."

Nathalie Marin-Gest, senior director, produce & floral at Fair Trade USA, said: "We are thrilled to see Driscoll's commitment to expand its Fair Trade program in Baja.

"In addition to increasing the impact that Fair Trade will have on workers in this region, it empowers consumers in the United States to choose berries that align with their values - those that were grown under strict social, economic and environmental standards."