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“Solidarity in a competing world —  
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## Effects of Certification Schemes and Related Trainings on Sustainability on Small-Scale Tea Farms in Othaya, Kenya

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### Abstract

This report investigates how certification schemes and related Farmer Field School trainings are affecting the practices of small scale farmers in Othaya, Kenya. Mainstream sustainable development and the critique posed by political ecologists is used as a framework for analysing and discussing whether the local conditions of the tea farmers can be deemed sustainable.

The study identifies four main actors being the certifications schemes (Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance), the Iriaini Tea Factory, Farmer Field Schools and the tea farmers, who all are especially influential when assessing the local sustainability. These actors represent differentiating structural positions and perceptions of sustainability, subsequently leading to a mismatch in how they see goals, strategies, challenges and outcomes in relation to sustainability.

Methods from the social sciences as well as the natural sciences have been adopted to investigate the processes, perceptions, experiences with and social, economic and environmental outcomes of sustainability. By understanding sustainability as more than an outcome and by including multiple actors that are affecting that process, a holistic picture has been created.

The report concludes, that especially economic sustainability in the area can be problematized, as most of the farmers included in the research did not consider the income from tea production satisfying in terms of sustaining themselves and their families. This is especially problematic since farmers' perception of sustainability is mostly voiced in economical terms. This contradicts the overall vision of Fairtrade and Rainforest Alliance and on this basis a critique of the overall visions behind mainstream sustainable development is posed.

**Keywords:** Certification, farmer field schools, sustainability, tea