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## Voluntary sustainability standards and social sustainability outcomes among Ethiopia’s smallholder coffee farmers? A systematic review

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### Abstract

Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) have been widely used as a tool to improve the living standard of smallholder farmers and create alternative options to protect smallholder farmers from a periodic crisis. Several studies have analysed whether sustainability standards—such as Fairtrade or Organic—deliver on their promise to benefit smallholder farmers in developing countries. The results obtained are mixed (Eva-Marie and Meemken, 2020). Reasonably, the larger share of these studies have been given higher attention to the economic and environmental aspects of sustainability. Nevertheless, the social sustainability aspect is less explored and calls for further investigation. In this study, we synthesize the contributions of previous studies (in terms of methodologies, research gaps, and key findings) focusing on Ethiopian smallholder coffee farmers. Thus, the broader review objective is to summarise previous research works on the topic of “the effect of compliance with VSS on the social sustainability outcomes for smallholder coffee farmers”. We conducted a systematic review to consolidate results from original published articles. The systematic review study used a wide range of sources and followed a systematic literature review step-by-step PRISMA procedure. Accordingly, the systematic review showed limited evidence on the social sustainability effect brought about by compliance with VSS. The findings focused on the quality of life/well-being/social, capital such as schooling of children, child-labor-free production, cooperative effect, and working conditions for farmers and workers. At the same time, we detected a research gap on issues such as gender issues, capacity building, health system, and working conditions of the coffee farmers and workers.

**Keywords:** Coffee, Ethiopia , systematic review, voluntary sustainability standards