



IFAT Membership Policy and Procedures Vers. 8, May 2007

1. Policy

- 1.1 The IFAT Constitution states that IFAT consists of (registered) members - Fair Trade Organizations-, provisional members and associates who:
- *Co-operate with marginalized producers and farmers, especially in the South, on the basis of justice and solidarity, aimed at improving living conditions in the South, mainly by means of promoting trade in products and services from, within and between countries in the South.*
 - *Provide information when selling products, thus making people more aware of unfair trading structures;*
 - *Campaign for more just trading conditions;*
 - *Reflect in their own structures a commitment to justice, fair employment, public accountability, progressive working practices, equal gender balance and abolition of child labour.*

IFAT consists of members and associates who are regularly active in at least one of the above areas and by majority agreement of the IFAT Board qualify as members or associates.

Members are:

- (i) Fair Trade Organizations (FTOs)
All companies, partnerships, co-partnerships and other legal bodies as determined by the legal provisions of the country of the member concerned that are directly engaged in Fair Trade whether this be producers or northern or southern based FTOs and whether that trade be south-north, south-south or north-south, for whom Fair Trade is the main activity.
- (ii) Fair Trade Networks:
Legal entities whose primary function is to serve as national or international associations of Fair Trade producers and/or Fair Trade Organisations.
- (iii) Fair Trade Support Organizations
Legal entities whose primary mission is to promote Fair Trade through provision of technical, financial, business advisory or other services to Fair Trade producers and/or Fair Trade Organizations.
This includes organisations whose income from the sale of Fair Trade products does not exceed 50% of its total income.

In order to become a (registered) member, organizations have to pass a registration audit as specified in the monitoring policy and become a registered Fair Trade Organization.

Provisional members are:

Organizations who have been approved for provisional membership, but who are not yet registered as Fair Trade Organizations.

Associates are:

- (i) Donor organizations and national or international agencies that support or campaign for more just trading conditions.
- (ii) Individual Associates: Scholars, writers, reporters and individuals who are interested in learning about and in promoting Fair Trade as well as being able to bring specific skills and experience to the network to the benefit of its other members.
- (iii) Honorary Members
Individuals who have special skills in trade, social science, culture or human rights, or who have contributed to the growth of Fair Trade and have gained international recognition.

- 1.2 The Annual General Meeting determines the annual fee to be paid by members and associates. The membership fee is based on total gross sales/income of the member. Export and local sales should both be used for the assessment of trading members' fees.

The determination of the fee will take place at least two months before the start of the IFAT year to which the fee applies.

Members who have not submitted their audited accounts will, for purposes of calculation of membership fee, be assumed to have increased their sales/income by 20% compared to the previous year.

Honorary members are exempted from paying a membership fee.

Individual associates who are serving on committees are exempted from paying a fee. These associates already contribute considerably to the movement and are exempted from paying a fee.

- 1.3 It is IFAT policy to build the Fair Trade movement represented by IFAT through the recruitment of as many Fair Trade Organizations as possible into membership based on IFAT's constitution, policy and guidelines. This strengthens IFAT politically, economically, socially, culturally and financially.
- 1.4 The status or legal structure of an organisation does not by itself determine its eligibility for IFAT membership provided that it meets Fair Trade criteria.
- 1.5 Fair Trade Networks have the same status as Fair Trade Support Organizations. Individual members of networks in membership of IFAT do not themselves have individual membership of IFAT through the network concerned.

Individual members of regional networks, however (i.e. the members of the networks that are not members of IFAT in their own right) should be encouraged to join IFAT individually, as and when appropriate.

- 1.6 Persons who have a significant involvement with a non-member organization practising Fair Trade or any other organization that might be eligible for IFAT membership can become an associate member only by paying the membership fee of a member organization. The status of associate membership should not be misused to avoid paying the membership fee of an organization eligible to be an ordinary member of IFAT.
- 1.7 Individuals belonging to organizations too young to be eligible for IFAT membership may be awarded associate status in the years before the organization becomes eligible.
- 1.8 It is the responsibility of the IFAT Board to decide provisional membership applications in accordance with the principles of fairness and transparency. Existing members (networks or individual organizations) in an applicant's country have the right to voice an opinion on the application but do not have the right of veto.
- 1.9 In order to remain in membership of IFAT, organizations are obliged to submit copies of their official annual accounts within twelve months of the close of their fiscal year, and self-assessment reports every two years. Failure to submit annual accounts within twelve months of the end of the fiscal year, and self-assessments within twelve months of the end of the calendar year in which they were due, will result in termination of IFAT membership unless there are strong mitigating factors to be taken into account.

2. Procedures for admission as provisional member and associate organisation

- 2.1 A candidate for provisional membership of IFAT must have been trading, or been active and legally constituted as an organization, for at least two years prior to making the application.
A candidate for associate membership must have been active in supporting or campaigning for Fair Trade for at least two years prior to making the application
- 2.2 The candidate submits a completed application form to the secretariat, together with a detailed description of their organization's activities, a copy of its current (marketing) materials, a set of the most recent financial reports - audited if available-, a copy of the most recent annual report, a published statement of the organization purpose and mission, a copy of the constitution or bylaws with the most important points translated in English/Spanish and a signed copy of the IFAT Code of Practice.

The application form asks for the names of three referees at least one of whom must be an existing member of IFAT, ideally in the candidate's own country. In the event that an IFAT Board member gives a reference for an application he or she will not subsequently take part in the voting process for that application. Candidates for provisional/associate membership without (trading) links with IFAT members and from countries currently without an IFAT presence may provide references from non-IFAT member organizations.

- 2.3 The candidate will complete a self-assessment against the Standards for Fair Trade Organizations as part of its application process. However, to qualify for (registered) membership and the use of the FTO mark, it must carry out a full self-assessment within two years after it has entered into provisional membership. An associate organisation - donor organization or national or international agency that support or campaign for more just trading conditions- can not be registered as a Fair Trade Organization/member.
- 2.4 The Membership Officer opens a file for each candidate and follows up the references. A reference must be obtained from each referee, who is given one month to respond. Those IFAT members who have been called upon to provide a reference, but who feel that they do not know the organization well enough to provide a reference are obliged to notify the Secretariat within one month. If the appointed referee does not respond, the applicant is responsible for finding an alternative referee.

Members expressing a desire not to provide a reference for a new applicant for any other reason other than the above will be required in writing to the Secretariat to state their reasons why.

- 2.5 At the same time, the Membership Officer contacts all other members of IFAT in the candidate's country to provide them with the opportunity to share any comments they wish to make regarding the application.

These members will be given one month in which to respond, after which time their silence will be interpreted as that they do not have any comments to make.

- 2.6 In the event of any negative feedback, members will be invited to fill out a 'comments form'.

Such a form will set out to ascertain, using the current IFAT Standards and Guidelines, why it is felt that the applicant organization is not a suitable candidate for provisional/associate membership.

The form will be taken by the Secretariat as the official and definitive means by which an objection, or any other comment, may be made. No other representations will be accepted.

A negative response from a present member in the applicant's country will need to be investigated before that applicant can be accepted as a member. Comments and objections will be shared with the Board.

Individuals and organizations wishing their objection not to be shared with the Board will not be considered.

There is a duty on members who have been specifically asked to offer an opinion on membership applications to declare a conflict of interest

particularly in cases where they have had a trading relationship. Objections to applications should be described using the comments form and official procedures.

- 2.7 On occasions when an applicant organization is unknown to existing members, but about which existing members would like to know more before submitting their comments, the responsibility lies with the member organizations and not the Secretariat to find out more about applicants (through visits, meetings, telephone conversations, etc) within the one month timeframe.
- 2.8 If any existing members in the candidate's country do not approve of the application, the reasons will be discussed with the Regional Board member who will advise the Secretariat whether the application may go forward or needs to be held until the next Board meeting.
- 2.9 Once the file is complete the Membership Officer makes a recommendation and the complete set of papers is copied and sent to each Board member for approval within one month.

The Board formally approves or rejects the application by simple majority vote.

If the Membership Officer has no response within six weeks from the date that the application is mailed, silence will be interpreted as meaning "no objection" but a positive response from a majority of Committee members is required before membership is approved.

- 2.10 The membership application pack and website indicate the following guideline as to the anticipated time for processing a membership application once all relevant documentation has been received by the Membership Officer:
 - Three months if no in-country objections are received;
 - Up to six months if in-country objection(s) are received and require investigation
- 2.11 Applications from candidates that have not submitted all the documentation required after 12 months are considered to have lapsed.
- 2.12 The Board has complete authority to accept or reject applications for membership.

It is the Board's right to decide the membership type of an applicant. Reasons for rejection need to be provided so that an appropriate letter may be written.

The Secretariat informs the applicant of the decision in writing.

An organization which has had its first application rejected may not re-apply for twelve months from the date at which it was rejected. If a membership application is rejected twice by IFAT, the organization must wait for a period

determined by the Board before it applies again, unless the Board has a different opinion in particular circumstances.

- 2.13 Once an application has been accepted by the Board, a request is made for payment of the membership fee. The candidate becomes a provisional/associate member as soon as the fee has been received. This will be published in the next Update.

3. Procedure for admission as an individual associate

- 3.1 IFAT is primarily a network of Fair Trade Organizations. Individual Associate status is open to those who are not in a position to affiliate via their own organisation.
- 3.2 The Board agrees the policy on the admission of associates. The secretariat implements this policy accepting and rejecting applications as appropriate.
- 3.3 Applicants must be active supporters of the Fair Trade movement. Successful applicants will be researchers, writers, consultants and specialists in their field who can actively contribute solid skills, knowledge and expertise to the other members of the network.
- 3.4 For admission as an associate, the applicant must fill in a questionnaire, which can be downloaded from the IFAT website. The questionnaire must be sent back to the Membership Officer, together with a CV and the names of two referees who support the application. Referees can either be Associate Members themselves, or staff persons working for IFAT member Fair Trade Organizations.
- 3.5 The Membership Officer opens a file for each candidate and follows up the references. A reference must be obtained from each referee, who is given one month to respond. Those IFAT members who have been called upon to provide a reference, but who feel that they do not know the person well enough to provide a reference are obliged to notify the Secretariat within one month. If the appointed referee does not respond, the applicant is responsible for finding an alternative referee.
- 3.6 Once the file is complete the Membership Officer makes a recommendation and the file is presented to the Executive Director, who decides on the application.
The Membership Officer informs the applicant of the decision in writing.
- 3.7 A person whose application was rejected can appeal to the Board. The decision of the Board is final and no further appeal is possible.
- 3.8 Once an application has been approved by the Executive Director, a request is made for payment of the membership fee. The candidate becomes an associate as soon as the fee has been received. This will be published in the next Update.
- 3.9 In principle an application as an individual associate is processed within 12 weeks.