



## AN INTRODUCTION TO FAIRMILES

Climate Change is real and demands an urgent and radical response if we are to adapt to the significant threat it poses to our planet. However, with increasing pressure on organisations to act, there is a growing risk that Net Zero strategies that seek to reduce emissions by restricting imported or air freighted food, end up alienating and negatively impacting low income countries, to the detriment of livelihoods in rural communities.

Fairmiles has been formed by an alliance of organisations representing fresh produce businesses, academia and the international development sector. Our aim is to establish a just and equitable strategy, consistent with the principles of Climate Justice to ensure we achieve Net Zero without stopping vital market access for producers in low income countries. Our founding partners include ODI, University of Northampton, University of Exeter, COLEAD, Beanstalk.Global and Blue Skies.

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## OUR RESEARCH

Fairmiles has worked with COLEAD, the University of Exeter and the University of Northampton to conduct research on the impact of airfreighted fresh-produce in Africa. Below are our key findings:

**Air freight supports at least 18 million livelihoods in Africa.** This includes 1.25 million agricultural jobs and 2.4 million indirect jobs. Air freight enables communities to thrive in global supply chains, enabling inward investment and inclusive economic development. Economic multipliers are very high, helping communities to prosper.

**Africa imports far more than it exports.** Africa has been a net importer of food for the last three decades. UK and European exports dominate trade.

**Fresh produce is often transported in commercial belly holds.** The majority of air freighted fresh produce on UK and European retailers' shelves is enabled by UK and European travelers in commercial airlines. This provides capacity for air freight. Africa's passenger traffic is expected to double by 2035. Increasing air freight can therefore help Africa to reduce the trade deficit.

**Digital transformation of domestic and international trade.** Highly sophisticated production and trading software in export has spillovers into domestic markets, reducing waste and increasing quality. Air freight therefore has indirect environmental benefits that are often not captured in conventional Life Cycle Assessments.

**Food production in Sub Saharan Africa is efficient and high quality.** Food production in Sub Saharan Africa, grown naturally, is often more energy efficient than production in intensive conditions in the UK/EU. Exported produce is assured, adhering to high standards of EU Food Law, and private voluntary standards.

**Global trade advantages, spillovers.** Air freight enables increased opportunities for technology transfer, foreign currency exchange, employment generation, reduced migration (urban, international), local value-added manufacturing, inward investment and professionalization of the sector and public investments in leading practice (e.g. testing labs, agronomy courses).



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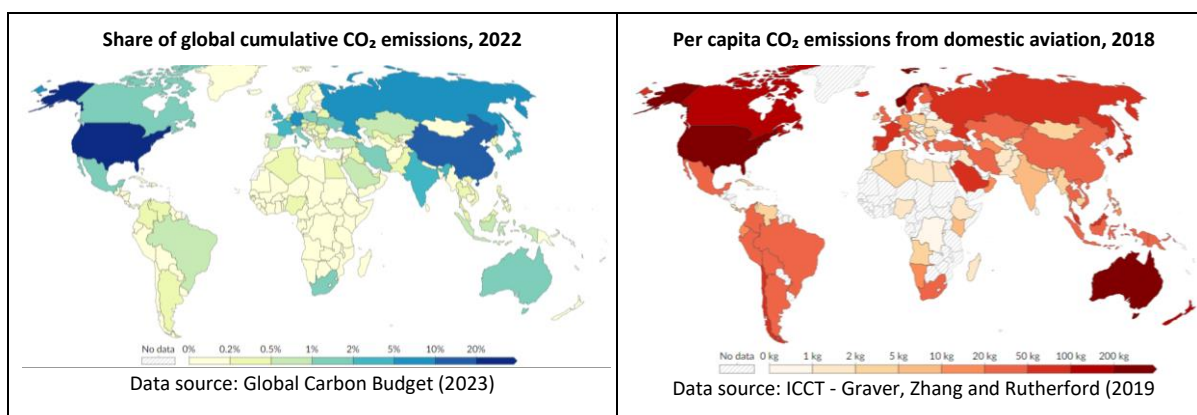
## FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

**Reducing airfreight won't reduce flights.** If we stop importing fresh fruit and vegetables from Africa it will have limited impact on flights because they are primarily driven by passenger numbers.

**Salmon, gold, minerals, pharmaceuticals.** Across all sectors of the UK economy, £87.3 billion (5%) of Gross Value Added (GVA) is currently dependent on air-freight exports. Fish make up 11% of all UK exports via air with Scottish salmon exports valued at £600m. Focusing on air freight in reducing carbon emissions would, if applied fairly, apply to exporting salmon as well as importing strawberries

**Climate equality = increasing exports from Global South.** Climate inequality: the poorest are hardest hit by climate change. Africa's carbon emissions are globally low compared to the UK and Europe who benefit from higher climate finance and nutrition. Exports equalise opportunity.

**Very few emissions come from Africa, or air freighting food.** Africa comprises of 18% of the world's population but only 3% of emissions. Transport of food is 1.56% of total global emissions. Of this, just 0.16% of food travels by air.



**Quality, integrity, highest standards, assurances.** Air freighted fresh produce represents the highest quality growing conditions, agronomy, supply chains, worker conditions and financing structures. All to exacting global standards such as ISO 22000, BRCGS, SMETA, GRASP, Fairtrade, GlobalGAP.

**COP29 demands a 'just transition'.** Emissions from African air freighted produce retailed in the UK and Europe is lower than if produced domestically.

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## WHAT NEXT?

Fairmiles plans to engage retailers, NGOs and government to conduct further research and increase awareness of the impact of airfreighted fresh produce from developing countries. We will also seek to develop Climate Justice Net Zero guidelines to help companies decarbonise without having unintended consequences. By adopting a comprehensive approach that evaluates the potential risks of adverse climate justice implications for vulnerable communities in the supply chain, commercial actors are better able to respond to the need to secure the rights and meet the responsibilities owed them.

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## GET IN TOUCH AND GET INVOLVED

Get in touch to find out more about Fairmiles, join the consortium or support us in our work. For more information, please visit [www.fairmiles.org](http://www.fairmiles.org) or contact [simon.derrick@blueskies.com](mailto:simon.derrick@blueskies.com)

