

World Banana Forum Working Group on Labour Rights (WG03)

Labour Rights Research in 25 priority banana producing countries

Background

The World Banana Forum, the first meeting of which was held in December 2009, is a groundbreaking initiative that brings together producers, their organizations, trade unions, cooperatives, exporter groups, trading companies, retailers, public agencies, governments, research institutions and civil society organizations. The Mission of the World Banana Forum is to inspire collaboration between stakeholders that produces pragmatic outcomes for the betterment of the banana industry; and, to achieve an industry-wide consensus of best practices regarding workplace issues, gender equity, environmental impact, sustainable production and economic issues.

The stakeholders of the World Banana Forum Working Group on Labour Rights (WG03) met in Guayaquil (Ecuador) in November 2010. The participants jointly agreed on the need to prioritise **freedom of association and collective bargaining** amongst its core areas of work. **Gender equality and discrimination** was considered a cross-cutting issue where the WG03 will pay special attention.

To this end, the WGO3 will this year concentrate its efforts on an extensive research project, analysing and evaluating the labour rights situation on the ground in 25 priority banana exporting countries. This research is crucial to enable the working group to design, direct and implement pilot projects towards better labour practices across the industry.

Labour Rights research – outline of activities and methodology

In line with the World Banana Forum priorities, the proposed research will focus on the top banana exporting countries, as opposed to countries that produce bananas mainly for national consumption. The research will prioritise countries that supply the major markets - EU, USA, Russia, Japan.

25 priority research countries: Ecuador, Costa Rica, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Canary Islands, Panama, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Belize, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, French Caribbean, Suriname, Saint Lucia, India, Vietnam, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, Ghana, Mozambique, Jamaica.

A **labour rights research matrix** will be compiled, referring to the three key WG03 priority issues and the relevant ILO conventions.

1. **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining;** C87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948; C98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949; C135 Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971.
2. **Elimination of discrimination in respect to employment and occupation;** C111 Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958; C100 Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951.
3. **Occupational Health and safety;** C184 Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001; C187 Promotional Framework for Occupational Health & Safety, 2010.

The above conventions will also be considered within the context of Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Key information to be compiled within the matrix:

Ratification – the ratification dates of each convention, if at all.

Implementation – to what extent each convention is being implemented on the ground, including information on any reported violations and/or key advances in exercising the rights concerned.

Obstacles – the specific obstacles to implementation of each convention at plantation, national or industry level.

Opportunities – existing and potential opportunities for social dialogue and multi-stakeholder action to promote and strengthen the implementation of each convention at plantation, national or industry level.

The Matrix will be completed by three main stakeholder groups:

1. Direct information from in-country workers/trade unions/labour organisations
2. Indirect information from secondary sources (e.g. ILO documents, FLO reports, Labour Ministries, international trade union organisations, NGOs, research consultants, recommended specific studies etc)
3. Information from the production/business sector (e.g., fruit companies, retailers, grower and trading organisations)

This multi-stakeholder research will then be compiled and analysed to inform the future WG03 work plan, to be agreed and initiated at the next physical meeting in Ecuador, August 2011. The aim is to compliment the research with an evaluation of the effectiveness of social initiatives incorporating information from Certifiers, Fair Trade and Ethical Trading bodies, and NGOs.

The working group also intend to gather examples of good practices within the industry - to be seen as 'potential opportunities' in the context of this research. Examples include an evaluation of COLSIBA Women Banana Workers' List of Demands and The Campaign for Women's Employment in Banana Plantations in Colombia, an initiative of SINTRAINAGRO (for more information see 'WG03 Proposal: Gender Discrimination').

Methodology and timeline:

The Coordinating Committee of the Working Group on Labour Rights has distributed the study's responsibilities and drafting between its members.

The final research results for each country will be compiled within the 'labour rights matrix'. In order to gather the information for this matrix the Working Group has developed two questionnaires, one for use by labour organisations and the other for use by other supply chain actors. Please find both the '**WG03 labour rights questionnaire – labour organisations**' and the '**WG03 labour rights questionnaire – other supply chains actor**' attached, and complete the one most relevant to you organisation or company – a separate questionnaire is to be used for each country in which your organisation/company operates.

Any **further information** that your organisation/company can provide to compliment these questionnaires (or instead of), in line with the research aims and specific themes of the matrix, would be greatly received.

Please do also distribute these documents (available in English, Spanish and French) amongst your industry contacts to encourage participation in the research, or alternatively pass on their contact details to the Working Group on wbf.wg03@gmail.com. We currently have few contacts in Belize, Suriname, Brazil, India and Vietnam so please do pass on any potential contacts you have in these countries in particular.

There are no plans to limit the size of the documents, but in all the cases, these must reflect the position or the politics of the organization or company of which they are members of or represent. Documents or contributions with a personal title must be indicated as such.

Confidentiality: The information provided will be compiled on a country basis and recorded in relation to 'stakeholder groups'. No reference will be made on any public documentation about the specific union, organisation or company that has provided this information.

Deadline: The documents that you contribute can be sent **by June 13th at the latest** to wbf.wg03@gmail.com. Equally, you can write to this email address with any question or query.

Presentation of research report: A meeting for the Working Group on Labour Rights will be held in Guayaquil, Ecuador in the month of August 2011 to present and analyse the report.

Please visit the following web pages for more information:

World Banana Forum: www.fao.org/wbf

WBF's Working Group 03: www.fao.org/economic/worldbananaforum/wbf-working-groups/wg03labour-rights