

## **The World Banana Forum (WBF)**

*Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

### **Report of the Twentieth Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC20)**

*Attended by the Steering Committee members and Working Group coordinators*

**9-10 June 2021**

Online sessions

**Wednesday, 9 June 2021**

#### **1. Welcome by the WBF Secretariat**

Mr Pascal Liu, Team Leader on Responsible Global Value Chains and Coordinator of the WBF (FAO), began the session by welcoming all participants to the Twentieth Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC20) and informing attendees that due to the continued evolution of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, it was not possible to hold the SC20 in person.

He congratulated members on the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WBF, and mentioned the opportunities presented by this meeting for discussing the recent activities of the working groups (WGs), as well as defining the next steps under the WG and SC priority areas. He then highlighted recent global developments that are creating challenges for the banana sector, including the TR4 outbreak in Peru and the rising production and trade costs derived from increased oil prices. He concluded his intervention by presenting the housekeeping rules for the session and passing the floor to Mr Andrew Biles, co-chair of the WBF SC and Advisory Board (AB).

#### **2. Welcome by the SC/AB co-chair and presentation of expected outputs and objectives**

Mr Andrew Biles (Chiquita) began his intervention by stressing that, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions throughout global banana supply chains, the industry continues to be operative without a shortage of products. However, he highlighted the recent pressure suffered by the industry due to increased costs as a result of the trucking shortage in Europe, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and United States of America, and remembered the loss of colleagues and persons worldwide due to COVID-19. He then commended the efforts of Chiquita and other banana companies in ensuring social distancing and security measures.

Mr Biles further highlighted the ongoing struggles faced by the Pilipino banana industry with regards to Sigatoka and TR4. He informed about the increased participation of the Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodian banana industries in the Chinese market, as well as the opening of the Japanese market and the closed-border operations in Australia. He provided an overview of the situation in Mozambique, Canary Islands and Guatemala, stating that the sector should not be discouraged, since the industry has been resilient throughout its more than 100 years of operation.

Ultimately, Mr Biles stressed the importance of containing the spread of TR4 and other important diseases in the sector. The industry outlook is good, but it is important to have an operative WBF where open dialogue, consensus and commitments can be materialized among all the actors. He then outlined the expected outputs and objectives of the session, and concluded by inviting members to participate actively in the session.

#### **3. Overview of recent activities of the WBF's Working Groups and Overview of Thematic Sessions**

Before giving the floor to members of the WBF Secretariat to provide a summary of the WG activities and next steps defined during the WG thematic sessions that took place prior to the SC20 general sessions, Mr Liu also highlighted the resilience of the banana industry to the challenges presented by the pandemic, stating that, despite of the restrictions and labour shortages during last year, the global banana exports have increased, reaching a record value superior to 21 million tons. He thus commended the ability of the sector to manage the crisis.

WBF Secretariat members then presented a short summary of the discussions held during the WG thematic sessions in May and June 2021. For a detailed summary of the activities and next steps defined, refer to Annexes 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3.

#### ***Working Group 03 (WG03) on Labour Rights and Other Workplace Issues***

- **Occupational health and safety (OHS)**  
IUF Revision of BOHESI Cameroon manual



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

Ms Camila Reinhardt Hurtado (FAO) presented an overview of recent developments regarding the BOHESI manual for Cameroon. Since the discussions held and information presented during the SC19, the manual has passed through two rounds of revision, which have been led by Mr Peter Hurst (ex ILO occupational health and safety specialist), together with IUF. Inputs and suggestions have been provided by Banana Link, national coordinators of the BOHESI activities in Cameroon, and the WBF Secretariat. Following these revisions and a subsequent letter received on behalf of the IUF and Banana Link, the WBF Secretariat has stressed that, in line with the objectives of the BOHESI initiative, it is important to identify and engage key national industry stakeholders that are experts on the matter in the revision process, as they are ultimately the ones that should approve the manual and its contents. The WBF Secretariat offered its support to facilitate the multi-stakeholder dialogues in the country.

Mr Medi MOUNGUI asked about the impact of COVID-19 in the implementation of BOHESI activities in Cameroon, especially during the lockdown. Mr Alistair Smith (EUROBAN) stated that the trainings conducted by Banana Link in March 2020 had to be put on hold half way through due to the pandemic, and that the IUF colleague supporting the trainings was stuck in Cameroon for nearly three months due to the lockdown.

#### BOHESI activities in Ghana

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado presented a short summary of the BOHESI activities carried out in Ghana to-date, as per information previously shared by Mr George Kporye (Golden Exotics Ltd.) during the WG03 Thematic Session. Key next steps for BOHESI activities in the country include a workshop to be organized by the Banana Producers' Association in July 2021 and supported by FAO, which will focus on reviewing the implementation of the manual and guidelines for the healthy and safe employment of women workers in the three banana-producing companies, sharing experiences and best practices, and developing an action plan for forthcoming activities related to the implementation of the manual.

#### Update on WBF Secretariat activities on OHS

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado provided an overview of the OHS-related activities carried out by the WBF Secretariat following the proposals that were made during the SC19. The Secretariat worked on a project proposal to replicate BOHESI in eight banana exporting countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. The proposed activities would entail the adaptation of the BOHESI manual to country specific contexts, followed by trainings and advocacy work with governments for the potential ratifications of Convention 184 and Convention 190. During the proposal development stage, the Secretariat held a series of bilateral meetings with various governmental entities and private sector representatives in potential beneficiary countries to explore their interest in replicating these activities, with very positive responses from various actors. The proposal was submitted to a donor in March.

- **GE-TF activities and priority areas**

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado informed SC members on the dedicated presentation of the *Guidelines for the healthy and safe employment of women workers in the Latin American banana industry* carried out in March and highlighted the high participation of the WBF members in the session. She underlined the importance of the experiences shared in this regards from the implementation of the guidelines in the Ghanaian context in 2020. The event touched on these experiences, as well as on the process that has taken place to adapt them to the Latin American context. The document is expected to be published in mid- to late July.

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado then provided an overview of the GE-TF webinar series, which has been coordinated together with Fairtrade Germany. She presented the topics and panellists of the first webinar on "*Fostering Women's employment opportunities through empowerment*" carried out on 12 April – for which the report is already available – and announced the second webinar of the GE-TF series on "*Violence and Harassment in the World of Work – Tools and Approaches for Addressing Key Challenges in the Banana Industry*," which is to be held on 22 June and will count on the participation of IUF, AEBE and the Vice Minister of Labour and Employment of the Ecuadorian Ministry of Labour. Ms Reinhardt Hurtado concluded by presenting the outcomes and proposals for the next steps of the GE-TF.

- **Labour rights and other workplace issues**

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado summarized the latest activities with respect to the WG's priority on labour right, mainly on social dialogue, collective bargaining and freedom of association. She reminded members of the concerns raised during SC19 regarding the limited attention that has been given to this area of work and reiterated that the active role of WBF members is essential to enable advancements in this respect. She then presented some key points on the discussions held and proposals made during the thematic session of the WG03 and concluded by highlighting members' suggestions to focus on



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

the impacts of COVID-19 on the workplace and how the sector can build back a better, ensuring that decent work can be guaranteed for industry workers.

Mr Prada informed members on the recent development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between FAO and the ILO, on which cooperation opportunities are foreseen in several fronts such as on labour rights, OHS and C190.

For a complete summary and overview of the decisions of the WG03 and its GE-TF, refer to the Summary of the WG03 Thematic Session (Annex 2.3).

#### **Working Group 02 (WG02) on Distribution of Value**

- **Observatory on Costs of Sustainable Production and Distribution of Value**

Mr Prada briefly presented the objectives and methodology of the *Observatory on Costs of Sustainable Production and Distribution of Value in the Export Banana Industry* and highlighted its potential to provide transparency across the banana sector. The project aims to enable the different stakeholders of the banana sector to understand, compare and analyze modelled estimates for the distribution of value, costs, taxes and margins at different stages of the banana export value chains in order to foster greater transparency and enable dialogue and cooperation amongst diverse stakeholders and ultimately achieve a fair distribution of value to improve the sustainability of the global banana industry. Mr Prada briefly presented the phases of the project, its financial scheme, and the composition and role of the Observatory Committee (OC), which includes the provision of feedback and validation on the accuracy of the model estimates. He then commended all members of the OC for their efforts in materializing and establishing the Observatory and announced the pilot countries for the first phase of the project, which include Ecuador and Colombia on the production side, and Germany and France on the consumption end.

Mr Prada pointed out the confidential nature of the project, which will be based on publically available data and will not entail the disclosure of any confidential information from companies, governments or other actors of the value chain.

- **Living wages in the banana industry - update**

As decided during the SC19, Mr Prada presented the summarized version of the document “*World Banana Forum Commitment to Living Wages for Men and Women Working in the Banana Industry*” produced by WG02 coordinators and reported on the main discussions that took place during its revision in the WG02 Thematic Session. He highlighted the issues raised by retailers around the different terminologies that could create potential conflicts in terms of abiding anti competition laws. This was addressed amongst other changes by removing the sentence on *fair margins*.

Mr Prada informed participants on the other discussions held during the Thematic Session of the WG02, particularly with regards to how to use the WBF as a leading neutral platform that creates a level playing field for collaboration on distribution of value and living wages in the industry. He further mentioned the suggestion made to create another subgroup within the WG02 to develop an action plan on WBF living wages activities.

For a complete overview of the decisions taken for WG02 and its SG-CCSP in 2021, refer to the Summary of the WG02 Thematic Session (Annex 2.2).

#### **Working Group 01 (WG01) on Sustainable Production Systems and Environmental Impact**

- **Brief update – TR4**

Mr Victor Prada provided a brief overview regarding the TR4 outbreak in Peru and the potential threat to Ecuador due to the proximity and intense movement across the border. He then informed SC members on the activities carried out by the WBF Secretariat to support a regional response to the recent outbreak. He mentioned the hiring of two consultants last December to support in the development of a global proposal on TR4 and announced the re-hiring of Mr Nelson Laville to support the activities of the Task Force on TR4 (TR4TF), together with Mr Matheus Lima. He also informed participants on important meetings conducted with ministers of agriculture of the member countries of the Andean Community of Nations (CAN) and FAO to coordinate a regional response to the recent outbreak, building on the experience acquired during the implementation of the Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) in Colombia (2019-2021).

Mr Nelson Laville (FAO) introduced himself to WBF and SC members. He has served as the head of plant protection and quarantine for the Ministry of Blue & Green Economy, Agriculture and National Food Security of Dominica for the last six years, chair of the regional technical working group on Musa species in the Caribbean, and co-chair of the Caribbean Plant Health Directors (CPHD) Forum. Mr Laville presented an overview of the development process for the global proposal on TR4,

## **The World Banana Forum (WBF)**

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

highlighting the discussions held with different stakeholders during its formulation and the identification of four thematic areas, namely: *Prevention, Food Security and Livelihoods, TR4 Management – Integrated Crop management, and Network and Communication.*

Ms Morag Webb (COLEACP) then provided a clarification regarding the absence of TR4 in Cameroon and the concerns raised in previous meeting on a possible TR4 outbreak. She highlighted the importance of avoiding noise on unconfirmed cases of the disease. This is a lesson for all of the members on what to do and what not to do when a suspect outbreak occurs. She concluded by highlighting the importance of being careful when sharing information regarding non-confirmed cases due to the economic and political potential harm that can be incurred due to misleading information.

- **Brief update – Agroecological practices**

Mr Matheus Lima (FAO) introduced himself to the WBF and SC members. He is an Agronomist Engineer with a Double Master Degree in Plant Health in Sustainable Cropping Systems and with working experience in Latin America and Europe. Mr Lima joined the WBF Secretariat in late December and has since been providing overall support to the activities of the Forum, particularly with respect to WG01 activities on TR4, carbon and water footprint, and agroecological practices. He presented a brief update on the WBF's work on agroecological practices, namely the series of bilateral calls and discussions held with the FAO Global Soil Partnership (GSP), with the ultimate objective of identifying common areas of interest and synergies. He then provided an overview of the GSP initiative and highlighted the importance of sustainable soil management for the sustainable production of bananas and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

For a complete overview of the decisions taken under WG01 and its TR4TF in 2021, refer to the Summary of the WG01 Thematic Session n (Annex 2.1).

#### **4. Session on Climate Change Mitigation**

Mr Prada opened the session by sharing information on a vacancy announcement posted by the WBF Secretariat for an Agriculture Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions specialist, who would provide support to a new phase of the Carbon and Water Footprint project, as well as resource mobilization efforts to continue scaling the initiative.

##### Project on Carbon and Water Footprint (CWF) in the Banana Industry

Mr Lima presented the Carbon and Water Footprint project objectives, stressing its importance for the banana sector. He highlighted the achievements of the initiative since its inception in 2017, namely the development of a methodological guide on carbon and water footprint for banana plantations, and subsequently the development and validation of the novel automated tool for the measurement of carbon and water footprints. He underlined the advantages of FAO's automated tool in comparison with traditional methods and briefly described the technical accompaniment process that has been executed by Gestarse in Ecuador, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Dominican Republic.

Mr Vallejo (Gestarse) then presented the results and lessons learned from the implementation of the second phase of the CWF project in Latin America, which included the technical accompaniment process conducted with 20 selected companies/farms of different sizes (from 4 to more than 300 hectares) and production systems (conventional, organic and agroforestry). Mr Vallejo pointed out the importance of data quality and highlighted the work carried out by Gestarse on supporting farmers in acquiring reliable data to be inserted in the tool.

He then presented the main sources of GHG emissions identified during the second phase of the project and the main components used for estimating the water footprint. Mr Vallejo emphasized the importance of establishing measures to reduce the degradative impacts on the water. The tool was tested in a variety of conditions and compared to certified results from carbon-neutral farms. The emission factors used for calculations were updated and several improvements were implemented during the validation process. Mr Vallejo stressed the importance of strengthening the information systems of banana producing organizations in order to have more control over the information required by the tool. He further discussed the importance of focusing the mitigation efforts on larger and expensive inventories and concluded his intervention by summarizing the main findings and recommendations for upcoming phases of the project.

Mr Prada commended the WBF for its success on climate change activities and announced that the Secretariat has received funds from FAO to continue the activities on CWF. He explained that the third phase of the project will be focused on digital innovation and include enhancements on the tool, expansion of its scope, additional training sessions, and the piloting of a distributed ledger (blockchain). He then shared information about the potential forthcoming Human Rights and



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

Environmental Due Diligence legislation to be approved in Europe and highlighted the importance of the CWF tool for producers to be able to abide by the environmental requirements in the legislation.

Mr Pascal Liu informed participants that the funds that will finance the project are not from FAO regular programme, instead the FAO's Regular Programme multidisciplinary fund will launch an activity which will have synergies and will benefit the third phase of the project and both activities will be handled by the same team ensuring close coordination.

#### **Decisions:**

- Hire a consultant to support the launch and operationalization of the third phase of the CWF project.

#### Agroecology

Ms Vinisa Saynes (Global Soil Partnership/FAO) presented an overview of how sustainable soil management can provide support in addressing global challenges such as food insecurity and climate change. She highlighted the ecological services provided by soils and the importance of healthy soils for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) is directly related to soil fertility and provides a series of ecosystem services. With the aims of increasing SOC, the GSP developed the Recarbonization of Global Soils initiative. Its main objective is to support and improve the national and regional GHG mitigation and carbon sequestration initiatives by preventing SOC losses and increasing its stocks in agricultural and degraded soils. She stressed the opportunities and role of agriculture in the recarbonization of soils and on climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Ms Saynes then presented the work of the GSP on developing and applying methodologies to monitor SOC worldwide, such as the Global Stocks of Organic Carbon Map initiative and the Global Soil Organic Carbon Sequestration Potential Map initiative. She briefly presented the series of tools, manuals, codes of conduct and voluntary guidelines developed by GSP. She concluded her intervention by providing an overview of the work on Sustainable Soil Management Practices in banana crops, which was presented during the global symposium on soil biodiversity. This work highlights the importance of the sustainable soil management in increasing biodiversity, fertility, biological activity and suppressing the effects of soil-borne diseases such as Fusarium Wilt.

Mr Paul Lievens (Banana Link) presented an overview of the agroecological activities that Banana Link has participated in, and shared updates on funding applications that have submitted by Banana Link in efforts to mobilize funding for capacity development activities for family farmers in aspects such as youth involvement in agriculture and gender related issues, among other agroecology-related topics. He then by concluded informing participants about a series of papers and webinars on banana-related topics that have been developed in partnership with the University of East Anglia.

Mr Prada further informed WBF and SC members on the discussions held between the Secretariat and UN Global Compact, including on relevant activities conducted by them such as the Science-Based Target Initiative and the Business Ambition for 1.5 °C campaign. He highlighted the synergies of these initiatives with the activities of the Forum on climate change and suggested the possibility to partner with them in the future. He then concluded his intervention, informing participants about FAO and UNEP activities focused on the reducing the use of plastics in agriculture and potential funding opportunities on this topic.

Mr Luud Clerx (Agrofair) mentioned briefly the initiative carried out by Agrofair with other parties in the Dominican Republic and Peru, which aims to implement small-scale recycling structures that recycle bunch bags into corner boards.

#### **Decision:**

- Continue the discussions on sustainable soil management and on the recarbonization potential of soils used for banana production.

## **5. Conclusions of Day 1 and overview of next steps for Day 2**

Mr Liu concluded the session, outlining the main discussions and decisions taken. He then delivered the closing remarks, thanking all of those involved in the session, including the attendees, interpreters and WBF Secretariat staff, and invited participants to attend the session on the following day.

## **The World Banana Forum (WBF)**

*Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

**Thursday, 10 June 2021**

### **6. Welcome by the WBF Secretariat**

Mr Pascal Liu (FAO) began the session by welcoming all participants to the second day of the SC20 and presenting the topics to be discussed. He then passed the floor to Mr George Kporye, alternate SC and AB co-chair.

### **7. Welcome by the SC / AB co-chairs and presentation of expected outputs and objectives**

Mr Kporye welcomed all the participants to the second session of the SC20. He congratulated SC members for the interesting and informative presentations that took place on the first day and invited SC members to engage in more lively discussions during this second session.

Mr Kporye presented the topics to be discussed during the session, highlighting that the objective would be to delve deeper into critical issues affecting the industry. He then expressed his concerns about the information that was released regarding a potential outbreak of TR4 in Cameroon and the commercial implications that the sharing of unconfirmed information could have on national banana industry actors. He invited the members of the WBF to work together in efforts to avoid the spread of the disease, and proposed to issue a robust declaration informing that Cameroon is free of TR4.

### **8. Session on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on activities of the WBF Working Groups**

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado started the session by presenting the objectives, namely to continue the discussions on the impacts of COVID-19 on the banana export industry and discuss potential next steps and activities. She then invited the FAO economist and trade analyst working on the monitoring and evaluation of market developments in global banana and tropical fruits trade, Ms Sabine Altendorf, to present the preliminary results from her latest analysis on the developments of COVID-19 and its impacts on global banana trade.

Ms Altendorf greeted WBF members and reported that the impacts of the disease and the mitigation measures required have affected the global trade of bananas. Among the difficulties reported were labour shortages, closures of ports and other logistical hubs, as well as shortages in containers. According to Ms Altendorf, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions on the precise impact of COVID-19 on the banana exports, but it does appear that the pandemic has affected the production, transport, distribution, marketing and consumption of fresh bananas to varying degrees in 2020, with the exports from Asia and Africa particularly affected.

At the same time, there is ample evidence that the industry in Latin America and the Caribbean managed to avoid large disruptions. Ms Altendorf presented the preliminary estimates on global banana exports for 2020, excluding plantains, and highlighted that the total exports reached a record high of 22.2 million tons, which marks a growth of 1.7% compared to 2019. She stressed that this increase was mainly caused by the strong supply growth in Ecuador, Costa Rica and Colombia, being three of the five leading export countries that have invested in production expansion.

Ms Altendorf then displayed a series of charts showing the world banana exports by region from 2016 to 2020, and concluded her intervention by highlighting the discrepancy between the data regarding imports and exports in 2020, stressing that the difference observed could be a consequence of COVID-19 constraints and disruptions on global value chains.

#### Questionnaire on the impacts of COVID-19 on the banana export industry

Mr Liu informed participants about the ongoing work carried out by FAO to analyse the economic impact of the pandemic on global agricultural supply chains. He presented the main goals of the initiative, which are: to assess the impact of the pandemic on the three pillars of sustainability, and examine the responses taken by governments, companies and industry associations to contain and mitigate the effects of the crisis. Information has been gathered through a questionnaire, and the ultimate objective is to develop guidelines for policy development based on the results of the questionnaire analysis, which would provide support to governments in strengthening their preparedness to external shocks. Mr Liu proposed to develop a similar questionnaire for the global banana industry, mentioning that the questions envisaged by the questionnaire would cover various aspects of the impacts of the pandemic, including impacts on production and trade volumes, costs, and workforce, amongst others. The questionnaire would also aim to identify key areas where technical and financial support would be essential to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and natural disasters on the banana industry. Ultimately, Mr Liu highlighted the importance of having a banana sector prepared for natural and climate disasters, and opened the floor to members to provide feedback on the questionnaire proposal, as well as share their experiences on the impacts of COVID-19 on the industry.



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

#### **Decision:**

- Develop a questionnaire proposal for the analysis of COVID-19 on global banana supply chains, and share with members of the WBF.

#### Updates from members on the impacts of COVID-19 on their activities

Mr Kporye stated that in Ghana, Golden Exotics have invested on protective equipment, sanitation materials and medical supplies to support not only the workers and their families, but also medical facilities and communities close to the plantations. He considered that this initiative was very helpful in reducing infections inside and around the plantations. Mr Kporye also mentioned that the impact of COVID-19 was not as significant in Ghana when compared to other regions, but that an increase in the bus fleet was one of the mitigation measures implemented to ensure social distancing. He then mentioned that he supported the questionnaire proposal, as it would be very important to assess the impacts of the pandemic on banana global value chains.

Mr Stephen Antig (PBGEA) mentioned that the restrictions imposed by local governments affected the volume of bananas exported. According to Mr Antig, there were an increase of wastage, and a significant volume of bananas were diverted as donations to the health sector and other fronts in the fight against COVID-19.

Mr Emerson Aguirre (Augura) highlighted that, in Colombia, there was an increase in the costs of transport and the implementation of safety measures, and ultimately stressed the need to share these costs along the value chains.

Mr Biles (Chiquita) also stated that the banana industry faced increased costs due to both, measures implemented to protect workers against COVID-19 and measures to protect plantations and packing houses against TR4. He then concluded by stating that the industry, especially in Latin America and the Philippines, has been dealing with floods and hurricanes for the last 100 years. Despite the fact that it is often possible to predict when these events will occur, it is very unlikely that their impacts can be predicted before-hand.

Mr Xavier Roussel (Dole) mentioned that at the supply chain level, there were many challenges posed by COVID-19 on sea freight. Amongst the challenges faced was that workers could not leave the ships in the destination country. He also mentioned that the 2020 hurricane season was particularly hard on their operations in Honduras, and concluded by highlighting that the three main challenges of the year were COVID-19, hurricanes and TR4.

Mr Patricio Gutierrez (Dole) further stated that the challenges faced for sea freight were different from the ones faced for air freight. While air transportation was working with minor constraints, many sea freight workers were not allowed to leave the ship, even when they hadn't had any contact with individuals testing positive for COVID-19. As a result, there were situations in which crews were bound to the ships for periods as long as six months. He concluded stating that FAO and other UN organizations could study this issue further and provide policy advice in order to overcome these challenges.

Mr Liu thanked Mr Gutierrez for sharing this suggestion and proposed that the WBF Secretariat contact FAO colleagues in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division, who work more closely on issues related to sea freighting. He thanked all the members for sharing their insightful experiences and further welcomed members to share additional suggestions on the questionnaire with the WBF Secretariat via e-mail.

#### **Decision:**

- Contact FAO colleagues in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division to discuss the impacts of freighting issues on global value chains.

## **9. WBF thematic webinars and potential Fourth Global Conference of the WBF**

### **- Technical Webinars of the World Banana Forum**

Mr Prada informed members on a series of technical webinars to be conducted in place of the fourth global conference, as was decided during the SC19. He then presented a list of potential webinar topics and opened the floor to members to provide their inputs on the possible topics and format of the webinars as well as the target audience (i.e. if they should be restricted to WBF members or open to the general public). The proposed webinar topics were: 1) TR4 diagnosis; 2) TR4 Global Network activities; 3) TR4/banana varieties; 4) plastic disposal and alternatives; 5) new molecules in banana production; 6) carbon and water footprint; 7) digital innovation in the banana industry; 8) three webinars on gender equity in the banana industry (already taking place); 9) observatory on costs of sustainable production. As there were no objections



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

from members, it was decided that the webinars will be open for the general public. Mr Prada then informed that the webinar on TR4 diagnosis is expected to take place in July.

Other suggestions from members on potential topics of the technical webinars included: impact of the reduction of Maximum Residues Levels in banana productivity and cost; the journey towards achieving living wages in the banana industry; agroecological production methods; adaptation to climate change; healthy soils in banana production; and, opening markets for other varieties than Cavendish. The suggestions were noted by the WBF Secretariat.

Mr Liu reminded members that the Secretariat currently has a limited staff, and therefore stressed the need for cooperation and support from members and working groups in organizing the proposed webinars.

#### - **WBF4C – Next steps and key milestones for 2022**

Mr Liu mentioned that due to the restrictions posed by COVID-19, the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF, originally planned to be held in Germany in June 2020, was postponed as discussed in the three previous meetings of the SC. A lot of progress has been made on the vaccination front of some countries; however, other countries are still struggling with second and third waves. It would therefore seem appropriate to postpone the in-person conference to next year.

Mr Till Ludwig (GIZ) mentioned that the sustainable agricultural supply chains topic will remain as a focus for the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ) and that having the WBF conference in 2022 in Germany is still a viable option.

Mr Liu complemented this information stating that FAO and the EU have been in high-level strategic dialogue for several weeks, where the topic of sustainable value chains has been highlighted as one of the key priorities. He mentioned the adoption of the Green Deal by the EU last year and the Farm to Fork Strategy. These commitments from the EU show that sustainable agricultural value chains will continue to be high on the European agenda.

Mr Biles stated that the WBF has an ambitious agenda and a set of important ongoing projects. He mentioned that the preparation of the Global Conferences are time consuming and onerous, and that virtual meetings allow for a higher number of participants worldwide. He then suggested to focus efforts on the ongoing projects and to evaluate the best modality for the next global conference. Mr Liu highlighted the trade-offs between the number of participants of an online meeting and the quality of the interaction of an in-person meeting. He discussed the pros and cons of both modalities and underlined the consensus reached for not holding an in-person meeting in 2021. He then concluded proposing to review the situation, based on the evolution of the pandemic, at the next steering committee.

#### **Decisions:**

- Organize and hold virtual sessions on WBF priority issues and activities during 2021, which will be open to WBF members, industry stakeholders, and the wider public.
- Revisit the feasibility of holding an in-person WBF4C in 2022, depending on the evolution of the pandemic.

### **10. Special session on Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4**

Mr Prada opened the session mentioning that TR4 is high on the WBF's agenda and is most likely to continue to be in the next years. He presented the efforts carried out by the WBF, mainly on the development of a global proposal on TR4. He then stated that similarly to what was done in 2019, FAO is mobilizing resources through technical cooperation programmes to support the response to the outbreak in Peru, and potential spread to Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia.

Ms Esther Peralta (FAO) briefly presented the work carried out by FAO in Latin America and the Caribbean in the last year with regards to the emergency situation posed by Fusarium Wilt TR4. She mentioned the five technical cooperation programmes developed by the regional office, including the response to the new outbreak and the formulation of a new joint project for Andean countries. She further presented other activities, including training workshops, drills, high-level awareness meetings, promotion of government alliances with the private sector, and the development of audio-visual training materials for producers and officials. She then highlighted the technical exchanges from theory to action carried out with ICA and SENASICA, as well as the importance of risk reduction and increased resilience against TR4.

She provided an overview of the actions taken for the outbreak in Peru, highlighting the technical exchanges that took place between ICA and the NPPOs and RPPOs of the Andean countries in May, the acquisition of biosecurity kits for Peru and Colombia and disinfectants to be used along the border with Ecuador. Ms Peralta mentioned the development of an action plan for Peru and a concept note for a joint project proposal for the region. She then briefly presented the roadmap developed





## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

to support the rapid response in the region and provided a summary of the aspects analysed by FAO in Latin America and the WBF in order to understand the current situation and identify priorities for intervention in the region. She further mentioned the challenges related to the policies, strategies, legal frameworks, human resources, harmonized protocols for safe movement of plant materials, and reference laboratories diagnosis. Ms Peralta concluded by presenting the main scheduled activities focused on TR4 in Latin America for 2021.

Mr Gabriel Rodriguez (IICA) pointed out the efforts carried out by the Global Alliance on TR4 in the affected region, highlighting the donation of safety equipment, the forthcoming aerial mapping initiative and the delivery of awareness raising materials produced by Cenibanano to local producers.

Mr Prada then briefly presented the roadmap taken for the development of the TR4 Global Network (GN) Global Proposal, highlighting the indispensable active involvement of public and private sector actors for the implementation of integrated solutions, alternatives, prevention, and mitigation strategies to contain the spread of the disease. He pointed out that the global proposal was developed based on the FAO experiences during the implementation of the technical cooperation programmes and on more than thirty interviews carried out with relevant entities and governments. Mr Lima then briefly presented the review process of the global proposal, conducted with relevant FAO units (NSP, IPPC and FAO RLC).

Mr Laville presented further details on the global proposal development process, including the interviews conducted, the identification of critical deficiencies, and gaps to the definition of thematic areas and work packages. The four thematic areas of the proposal are: *Prevention, Food Security, TR4 Management and Integrated Crop Management, and Network and Communication*. He then presented the nine working packages under the thematic areas and the specific collaborators identified for their implementation. Mr Laville enumerated the expected impacts of the global proposal under each thematic area and concluded stating that it is possible to create a global partnership to fight the spread of Fusarium Wilt Tropical Race 4.

Mr Maged Elkahky (FAO) provided an overview of the activities of the Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP) on TR4 in Africa, Central Asia and Middle East. As was mentioned during the WGO1 Thematic Session, a regional strategy to fight TR4 is being developed for Africa and is currently being revised by different stakeholder in the continent. In central Asia, FAO has formulated and launched, based on the request from the Turkish Government, a two-year project focusing on awareness raising, TR4 surveillance, assessment of phytosanitary regulations, and development/implementation of a national strategy. Regarding the activities in the Near East, FAO has formulated a technical cooperation project for Lebanon focusing on strengthening national capacities for Foc TR4 surveillance, containment, management and the development of a national strategy.

Ms Sarah Brunel (IPPC) presented the International Plant Protection Convention, which is the global standard for protecting global plant resources and facilitating safe trade. Ms Brunel highlighted the need to act fast to contain the pest and presented the activities carried out by IPPC in this regard. She invited SC members to apply for the Call for Experts on TR4 launched by IPPC, and presented the IPPC Phytosanitary Capacity Evaluation (PCE) tool.

Mr Gutierrez mentioned the difficulty to breed bananas conventionally and stated that the use of biotechnology can support the development of new varieties. He then proposed that the WBF to analyse the status of the use of biotechnology tools in the banana producing countries, which was further endorsed by AEBE.

Mr Emmanuel Wicker (CIRAD) provided an overview of the activities carried out by CIRAD, including the development of triploid hybrids resistant to Foc TR4 and Black Sigatoka, the development of a method for rapid diagnosis on the field using LAMP technique (Diagnofus), and the unravelling of TR4 population genomics. He then highlighted the support given by CIRAD to the French platform for plant health and the work on agroecological practices for mitigating the severity of the disease.

Ms Morag Webb (COLEACP) presented the efforts carried out by the organization under the Global Alliance on TR4. She then mentioned that COLEACP is working on an African contingency plan and a series of actions plans focused on private and public sector for countries considered at high risk for TR4 such as Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. She presented the components of the actions plans and highlighted the role of COLEACP in providing capacity development for public and private sector. She then concluded inviting members of the WBF to share suggestions and contacts to work together with COLEACP on these efforts.



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

Mr Luud Clercx (Agrofair) briefly presented the initiative of Agrofair in providing aerial mapping for the affected areas in Peru in order to support the identification of key areas for the implementation of a territorial biosecurity strategy needed due to the structure, distribution and size of banana farms in Peru.

#### **Decision:**

- Conduct a series of webinars on relevant topics for TR4, including on diagnosis, capacity development, risk reduction and biosecurity (July 2021).

### **11. Activities on cost of sustainable production in the banana industry. Joint Declaration.**

#### Observatory on Cost of Sustainable Production and Distribution of Value in the Banana Industry

Ms Carolina Dawson (CIRAD) briefly presented the *Observatory on Cost of Sustainable Production and Distribution of Value in the Banana Industry*, underlining its objectives, different stages, and decisions take so far. She highlighted the recent work carried out to build the basis of the observatory. Since the start of the project in 2021, a series of activities were conducted, including the kick-off meeting in March and the first meeting of the Observatory Committee, where the main aspects of the project were defined, such as the perimeter and sub-perimeters to be included in the methodology, as well as the countries selected for the pilot study. She then thanked the members of the Observatory Committee for their support and presented the timeline for the expected activities to be carried out in the second half of 2021.

#### Joint Declaration of the WBF on Living Wages

Mr Alistair Smith (EUROBAN) presented the objective of the session, namely to approve the joint declaration. He explained the process undertaken for the production of the final draft shared, and displayed on the screen the summarized version of the declaration, together with the proposal suggested by Mr Pascal Liu. Mr Liu explained the interactive process undertaken, emphasizing the different versions of the declaration that were circulated amongst members. Due to the most recent discussion held, it was decided to remove terms such as *production* and *fair margins*.

Mr Jose Antonio Hidalgo (AEBE) suggested to maintain the sentence on *fair margins* to avoid ambiguity and continue placing the burden on the producer side. His comments were endorsed by Mr Mariano Jiménez (Corbana). Mr Edgar Monge (Tesco) mentioned that his organization is not able to support any mention to prices or margins in a statement. Mr Prada then clarified mentioning that the new proposal does not include *fair margins*. He then mentioned the series of discussion that took place and opened the floor.

Mr Smith mentioned that he understands the concerns from the producers and clarified that the new version aims to attend to their concerns. Mr Jimenez stated that many terms are not well-defined such as *living wages*, *fair wages* and *fair margins*. He stated that is a recurring issue that the burden of increased costs of production fall only on the producer side. He then concluded saying that there is no EU legislation that prevents the use of terms such as *fair margins* and highlighted his concern on the lack of consensus from the part of the retailers on the shared responsibility for a fair distribution of costs. His statement was endorsed by Mr Hidalgo (AEBE).

Mr Liu then clarified that the amended declaration includes the "*fair distribution of value along the chain*" addressing the concerns raised by Mr Jimenez. Mr Smith suggested to include a mention on "*shared responsibility*" in the declaration. Mr Biles then proposed to amend the beginning of the declaration as follows: "*In efforts to promote shared responsibility for an economically sustainable banana industry*". Mr Stephan Jermendy (ALDI) raised his concerns on the use of the word *marketing* and Mr Smith suggested to change it to *trade*. Mr Prada then acknowledged all the suggestions, which will be addressed in the new version.

#### **Decisions:**

- Modify and initiate a final approval process for the summarized declaration on Living Wages.
- Build estimates of distribution costs within the Observatory (September 2021).
- Present the results of the Observatory (November 2021).

### **12. Activities on labour relation and social dialogue in the banana industry**

Ms Reinhardt Hurtado reiterated the interest of WG03 members to place a greater focus on the priority issues of social dialogue, collective bargaining and freedom of association, and reminded participants of the proposal made in the SC19 to explore potential collaboration opportunities with the OECD-ILO Global Deal. She mentioned the efforts undertaken by the

## **The World Banana Forum (WBF)**

### *Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

WBF Secretariat to initiate discussions with Global Deal colleagues at the start of 2021 and highlighted the presentation provided to the WG03 by the Global Deal in February 2021 as a result of these discussions. She then passed the floor to Mr Ronald Janssen (Global Deal) to provide an overview of some of the activities conducted by the Global Deal that could enable potential synergies and opportunities for collaboration in the future.

Mr Janssen presented the recent work of the Global Deal, particularly with regards to social dialogue and living wages. He mentioned the recent report on living wages launched by the UN Global Compact on 9 June, in which the Global Deal contributed their expertise, and stated that working poverty is a reality worldwide and across all supply chains, and living wages are therefore necessary to lift workers out of poverty. Mr Janssen mentioned that social dialogue enhances the capacity of businesses to pay a living wage as it fosters a more stable workforce, builds trust and can enable multi-employer or sector agreements that create a level playing field, taking low wage competition out of the equation. He then further mentioned that social dialogue can drive businesses to pay a living wage when there is a huge gap between current wages and living wages as it can manage expectations and set out a gradual but continuous pathway towards the living wage. He then concluded mentioning that social dialogue is a “guardian” of living wages and decent work and invited SC members to consult the UN Global Compact microsite on Living Wages.

#### **Decisions:**

- Continue exploring collaboration opportunities with the Global Deal on activities related to labour relations and social dialogue.

### **13. Next SC Meeting in 2021**

As was decided by the SC, two meetings of the SC should take place per year with the second one in the third week of November. Mr Liu therefore asked SC members if there was any objection with holding the SC21 during the third week of November and/or if they were aware of any major events that could overlap with this proposal. There were no objections on the proposed dates for the next SC meeting. Mr Giuseppe Bonavita then briefly presented the status of the voluntary contributions from members during the 2021 fee collection campaign.

### **14. Conclusion of Day 1 and Day 2**

Mr Pascal Liu concluded the meeting, providing an overview of the discussions held and thanking all of those involved in the session, including the speakers, participants, interpreters, technicians and WBF Secretariat staff.

## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

*Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

### Annex 1. List of Participants

#### Twentieth Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC20)

9-10 June 2021

#### List of participants and observers of SC20

#	Organization / Organización / Organisation	Name / Nombre / Nom	Surname / Apellido / Nom	Participation/ Participación / Participation
1	AEBE	José Antonio	Hidalgo	SC member
2	AEBE	Augustin	Delgado	SC member
3	AEBE	Raúl	Villacres Vanegas	SC member
4	AFRUIBANA	Albertine	Yange	Observer
5	AFRUIBANA	Jean-François	Billot	Observer
6	Agroamerica	Javier	Aguirre	SC member
7	Agrocalidad	Monica	Gallo	SC member
8	Agrofair	Luud	Clercx	SC member
9	Aldi North	Molla	Meher Nawroz	Observer
10	Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT	Nicolas	Roux	SC member
11	Anflocor	Benny	Corlocon	
12	Asbama	Andrea	Vasquez	SC member
13	Asbama	José Francisco	Cotes	SC member
14	Asbama	Vanessa	Mier-García	SC member
15	Augura	Marco	Calvo	Observer
16	Augura	Emerson	Aguirre	Observer
17	Banana Link	Paul	Lievens	SC member
18	Banana Link	Alistair	Smith	SC member
19	Banana Link	Holly	Woodward-Davey	SC member
20	Banelino	Gustavo	Gandini	SC member
21	BAMA	Magne	Svartbekk	SC member
22	CATAS	Wei	Wang	Observer
23	CATAS	Xue	Zhang	Observer
24	Chiquita Brands International Inc.	Andrew	Biles	SC member
25	CIRAD	Carolina	Dawson	Observer
26	CIRAD	Emmanuel	Wicker	Observer
27	CIRAD	Thierry	Lescot	Observer
28	COLEACP	Morag	Webb	SC member
29	Colombian Ministry of Agriculture	Carlos	Berben	Observer
30	CORBANA	Mariano	Jimenez	SC member
31	CORBANA	Omar	Sanchez	SC member
32	CORBANA	Jorge	Sandoval	SC member



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

*Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

33	<b>CORBANA</b>	Mauricio	Guzmán	SC member
34	<b>CORBANA</b>	Jorge	Sauma	SC member
35	<b>Del Monte Fresh Produce Inc.</b>	Ronald	Romero	Observer
36	<b>Dole</b>	Patricio	Gutierrez	SC member
37	<b>Dole</b>	Xavier	Roussel	SC member
38	<b>Dominican Republic</b>	Maria	Laureano	SC member
39	<b>Dominican Republic</b>	Berioska	Morrison-Gonzalez	SC member
40	<b>Equifruit</b>	Jennie	Coleman	Observer
41	<b>EUROBAN</b>	Alistair	Smith	SC member
42	<b>Fairtrade International</b>	Nicolas	Léger	SC member
43	<b>Fairtrade International</b>	Wilbert	Flinterman	SC member
44	<b>Fyffes</b>	Jon	Tugwell	SC member
45	<b>Fyffes</b>	Stella	Davis	SC member
46	<b>Fyffes</b>	Julie	Cournoyer	SC member
47	<b>Fyffes</b>	Jessica	Linares	SC member
48	<b>Fyffes</b>	Eimear	Lynch	SC member
49	<b>Fyffes</b>	Freddy	Salguero	SC member
50	<b>FHIA</b>	Adolfo	Martinez	SC member
51	<b>Gestarse</b>	Miguel	Vallejo	Observer
52	<b>GIZ / ABNB</b>	Till	Ludwig	SC member
53	<b>Golden Exotics</b>	George	Kporye	SC member
54	<b>Global GAP</b>	Leonardo	Ferrer	SC member
55	<b>Global GAP</b>	Nolan	Quiros	SC member
56	<b>Hofer</b>	Stephan	Jermendy	SC member
57	<b>IICA</b>	Gabriel	Rodriguez	Observer
58	<b>IDH</b>	Peet	Coetzee	Observer
59	<b>IDH</b>	Ronald	Sanabria	Observer
60	<b>ILO</b>	Elvis	Beytulla	
61	<b>IUF</b>	Svetlana	Boincean	SC member
62	<b>Max Havelaar</b>	Alice	Doumengine	Observer
63	<b>Musahamat</b>	Yara	Amenya	Observer
64	<b>OECD/Global Deal</b>	Ronald	Janssen	Observer
65	<b>Permanent Representation of Cameroon to FAO</b>	Médi	Moungui	SC member
66	<b>Platano de Canarias</b>	Esther	Dominguez	Observer
67	<b>Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association, Inc.</b>	Stephen	Antig	Observer
68	<b>Rainforest Alliance</b>	Leonie	Haakshorst	SC member
69	<b>Rainforest Alliance</b>	Anny	Stoikova	SC member



## The World Banana Forum (WBF)

*Working together for sustainable banana production and trade*

70	<b>Rewe Group</b>	Florian	Schaefer	SC member
71	<b>Reybanpanpac</b>	Paulo	Mello	SC member
72	<b>Solidaridad</b>	Jeroen	Kroezen	SC member
73	<b>Solidaridad</b>	Diego	Balarezo	SC member
74	<b>SENASA</b>	José	Díaz Zevallos	Observer
75	<b>SENASA</b>	James	Pazo	Observer
76	<b>SENASA</b>	Julio Ernesto	Marín Horna	Observer
77	<b>SENASA</b>	Marilu	Cordova	Observer
78	<b>Tesco</b>	Tania	Moodley	SC member
79	<b>Tesco</b>	Edgar	Monge	SC member
80	<b>Tropical Fruit Export SA</b>	Oswaldo	Menendez	Observer
81	<b>UNCTAD</b>	Leonela	Santana Boada	SC member
82	<b>FAO/NSLD</b>	Vinisa	Saynes Santillán	FAO
83	<b>FAO/PE</b>	Maria	De la Rosa	FAO
84	<b>FAO/SLM</b>	Esther	Peralta	FAO
85	<b>FAO/NSP</b>	Maged	Elkahky	FAO
86	<b>FAO/IPPC</b>	Sarah	Brunel	FAO
87	<b>FAO/ESP</b>	Ide	Nozomi	FAO
88	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Nelson	Laville	FAO
89	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Giuseppe	Bonavita	FAO
90	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Pascal	Liu	FAO
91	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Sabine	Altendorf	FAO
92	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Victor	Prada	FAO
93	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Matheus	Lima	FAO
94	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Marlo	Rankin	FAO
95	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Camila	Reinhardt	FAO
96	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Michael	Riggs	FAO
97	<b>FAO/EST</b>	Valentina	Perez-Mardones	FAO