



**BUILDING RESPONSIBLE  
GLOBAL VALUE CHAINS  
FOR SUSTAINABLE  
TROPICAL FRUITS**

**Technical webinar series on avocado and pineapple value chains**

**Webinar #14: Opportunities of multistakeholder platforms for global avocado and pineapple value chains**

**Summary report**

**Thursday, 13 July 2023, 16.30-18.00 Rome (UTC+2), on Zoom**

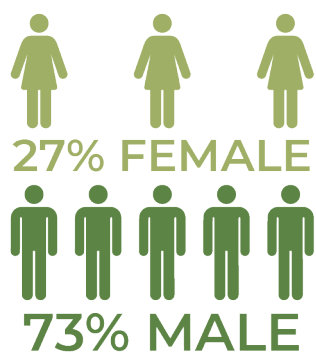
Background

This webinar is part of a series of technical webinars organized by FAO's **Responsible Fruits Project** in response to the priorities and interests of participants from the private sector. The webinars provide an opportunity for peer learning on precompetitive issues and the identification and sharing of good practices. To facilitate open discussion, there is no webinar recording and the event's report follows the Chatham House Rule of not identifying individual speakers, except for the speakers identified in the agenda who have consented to share information in advance.

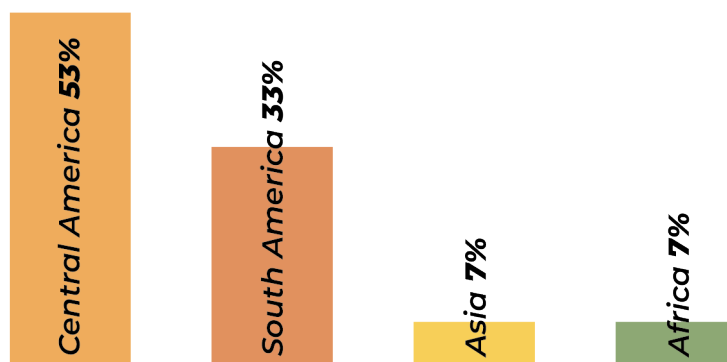
Participation

15 participants based in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean joined the webinar, representing producers and their organizations, packers, processors, exporters/importers, and distributors.

Gender



Geographic origins



## Industry groupings

**Producer associations 33%**

**Production and midstream\* 13%**

**Midstream\* and importers 13%**

**Vertically integrated 0%**

**Other 40%**

*\*Companies active in the "middle" part of the value chain, including packers, processors, exporters, and transporters.*

Organizing this event online avoided the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that would normally be associated with travel for a face-to-face event. A preliminary estimate using the [ICAO Carbon Emissions Calculator](#) indicates that this event saved over 15 434 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

### Session objectives

The purpose of the webinar was to:

- Discuss how multistakeholder platforms can address sustainability challenges in ways that single stakeholder groups cannot.
- Discuss the potential benefits of a multistakeholder platform in enhancing sustainability and resilience within global avocado and pineapple value chains.
- Share the experiences of the World Banana Forum and other platforms and discuss how experiences and practices of these can be applicable to the avocado and pineapple sectors.
- Share the Responsible Fruits Project's intention to develop a concept note for a possible multistakeholder platform for the tropical fruit sector.

### Summary

The event was opened by the FAO Responsible Fruits Project team introducing the speakers, panellists, and agenda of the webinar. The event agenda is presented in Annex 1. All presentation slides are available upon email request to [Responsible-Fruits@fao.org](mailto:Responsible-Fruits@fao.org).

Multistakeholder platforms have emerged to address sustainability issues that cannot be effectively resolved by a single stakeholder group. These platforms bring together multiple stakeholders, such as companies, governments, trade unions, civil society and research institutions, to foster cooperation and find solutions to common challenges.

By working together and sharing knowledge from different perspectives, these platforms can optimize processes, streamline operations, and find cost-saving solutions to sustainability challenges. This can drive innovation and address technical issues like carbon and water footprint measurement, plant pest and disease prevention, and traceability. This can also strengthen public trust in companies and increase the sector's economic value and resilience.

In addition, multistakeholder platforms can help companies navigate complex regulatory landscapes. By facilitating knowledge sharing and collaboration, these platforms enable participants to stay ahead of evolving regulations and

proactively address compliance challenges. This can improve supply chain transparency, strengthen due diligence systems, and maintain or strengthen access to high-value markets.

Successful examples of multistakeholder platforms in agriculture include the [Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#) and the [World Banana Forum \(WBF\)](#), both hosted by FAO. FAO supports these platforms as a neutral party, ensuring transparency and balanced representation of stakeholder interests. During the webinar, the WBF Secretariat showcased practical examples of how multistakeholder collaboration effectively addresses complex challenges in the banana sector. The WBF Secretariat highlighted factors contributing to the success of the WBF including building trust, leadership and shared goals.

To implement a successful multistakeholder platform, it is important to understand that building trust and collaboration among stakeholders takes time and effort. As emphasised by the speakers, change leaders within each stakeholder group can help drive the platform's growth. Identifying shared goals and focusing on achievable and concrete results can help motivate stakeholders to invest in the platform. Additionally, a neutral facilitator with expertise in the subject area of the multistakeholder platform is necessary to ensure fairness as well as technical support. Financial support from is essential for the platform's economic sustainability and fosters a sense of ownership. Funding can come from various sources including resource partners or members of the multistakeholder platform.

Project participants raised questions and shared experiences of working on sustainability issues with different stakeholders. The webinar concluded with a summary of the main points of the presentations, and feedback shared in the discussion session. Finally, an update was provided on the Responsible Fruits Project's upcoming work and publications.

- **Part 1: The opportunities of value chain specific multi-stakeholder platforms with the World Banana Forum as a model**  
**Pascal Liu, Team Leader, Responsible Global Value Chains, FAO**  
**Matheus Lima, Sustainable Development Specialist, WBF Secretariat**  
**Victor Prada, Project officer, WBF Secretariat**

The WBF aims to address sector-wide sustainability challenges in the banana value chain, including the use of agrochemicals, labour rights issues, challenges for small growers, conflicts between stakeholders, and downward price pressures from the retail industry. The WBF serves as a collaborative platform that brings together producers, companies, trade unions, civil society organizations, research institutions and international organizations to find sustainable solutions.

Drawing on the experience of the WBF, several factors contributing to the success of multistakeholder platforms were presented. These include building trust and collaboration among stakeholders, having change leaders within each stakeholder group, identifying shared goals, and focusing on achievable short-term results. A neutral facilitator with expertise ensures fairness and technical support, while financial support from donors and members, for example through membership fees, ensures the initiative's sustainability and a sense of ownership.

The WBF organizes itself into three working groups:

- 1) Sustainable Production Systems and Environmental Impact. This group addresses issues related to climate change through measuring carbon and water footprints, increasing transparency and traceability of emissions, and promoting climate change adaptation, impact mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and reduction of plastic use.
- 2) Distribution of Value. This group facilitates discussions among the main supply chain actors for a fairer distribution of value along the whole banana chain.

3) Labour Rights. This group focuses on trade union freedom and collective bargaining, health and safety and gender.

#### *Questions and discussion*

- Participants asked about the benefits of focusing on commodity-specific sectors (like WBF) compared to broader agricultural and food sectors (like the CFS). The WBF covers a wide range of environmental, social, and economic sustainability issues of relevance to the banana sector as described above. It was noted by the speakers that, to achieve concrete results quickly, it is important to stay focused on one industry. Broader multi-stakeholder platforms such as the CFS have an important role focusing on normative issues and developing global frameworks.
  - Participants asked how the WBF is incorporating sustainability aspects into their traceability system, and which sustainability aspects are being integrated. They also asked about how transparency can be promoted in this system. The WBF secretariat mentioned that the traceability initiative is a new and improved version of the carbon and water footprint measurement tool used in banana production. Originally, the initiative was developed to address the lack of a specialized guide in the banana industry, resulting in the creation of a measurement tool. The next step is to expand this tool to measure carbon and water footprints at various stages of the supply chain, including transportation, ripening, and supermarkets. The aim is to promote understanding, transparency and traceability in these climate change and water indicators. This initiative strives to support companies in addressing sustainability issues, informing consumers and buyers about climate change, and ensuring alignment of business activities with sustainability guidelines.
  - During the discussion, a project in Mexico aiming to promote sustainable avocado production and protect the environment, was mentioned by participants. A green agenda for the avocado sector has been developed and studies on various elements such as water, soil, forests, bees and agrochemical use have been conducted. The objective of this initiative is to adapt to the effects of climate change by protecting ecosystems and remain competitive globally with sustainably produced avocados. This initiative works towards integrating the efforts of all producers and packers in an association, benefiting the environment, increasing long-term profitability, and ensuring thriving avocado trees for future generations.
- **Part 2: How can multistakeholder platforms help to manage sustainability issues that are difficult for any single stakeholder to solve?**

Panel session

**José Antonio Hidalgo, Executive Director, Association of Banana Exporters of Ecuador**

The Association of Banana Exporters of Ecuador (AEBE) is a member of the WBF. The panellist stressed the importance of listening to WBF colleagues' experiences with different products in Latin America. He indicated the advantages of being part of a platform focused on a single product as each fruit has its own challenges. The speaker elaborated on local sustainability goals and discussed the example of the banana sector in Ecuador, which provides many jobs and contributes billions of dollars to the economy. Efforts have been made in Ecuador to create a multistakeholder platform and work towards sustainable certification. The WBF allows for valuable discussions and collaboration among international authorities, producers, exporters, and other stakeholders in support of AEBE's own goals.

The panellist also presented different activities of regional coordination among Latin American banana associations, with a focus on fair pricing and shared responsibility for sustainability. The WBF has a crucial role in facilitating these discussions

and promoting harmonization of initiatives. Despite the presence of various challenges which negatively impact the banana sector, such as tropical fusarium race four (TR4) and external factors like transportation costs and disruptions, international platforms like the WBF allow for better communication and decision-making. The speaker noted that while consensus may not always be reached, the goal is to keep analysing and working towards sector sustainability.

**Lizette Diaz, The Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)**

The panellist presented how the use of multi-stakeholder platforms has generated benefits and positive impacts in some of the value chains in which the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT have worked; specifically, the Hass avocado, blackberry and pineapple chains in the department of Valle del Cauca (in the south-west of Colombia).

Thanks to a project of the Sistema General de Regalías, executed between 2017 and 2022, and with the participation of the National University of Colombia (Palmira headquarters), the Universidad del Valle and other actors of the aforementioned value chains, it was possible:

- a) Promoting interaction between small, medium and large producers with businessmen, marketers, researchers and other actors, to activate or form departmental committees for the value chains.
- b) Identifying, in a participatory way, technological and non-technological gaps that were later prioritized based on agreed criteria that go beyond competitiveness. The aim was to frame the gaps within a sustainability lens throughout all the value chain segments.
- c) Making visible, before the institutions and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the interest of value chain actors in advancing towards compliance with Law 811 of 2003 (which governs chain organizations in the agricultural sector), and, with this, design plans and strategies to improve the sectors.

**Camila Reinhardt, Sustainable Development Specialist, WBF Secretariat**

The panellist explained that new and stricter sustainability legislation in Europe and other regions are underway, and that multistakeholder cooperation will help the banana industry to comply with such legislation. The speaker then presented the WBF's work on labour rights. She specifically discussed the decent work agenda, which includes themes such as occupational health and safety, prevention of child labour, youth employment, and gender equality.

The panellist provided an overview of the Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative that was launched in 2014 in Ecuador through collaboration between the government, private sector, civil society and unions. This initiative aimed to improve working conditions for banana industry workers. After four years of development, the manual was launched in 2018 with support from the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Agriculture. Through this collaboration, national policy was strengthened and the manual became mandatory to use in banana plantations. As a result of sharing the good practices from Ecuador through WBF, there has been replication of the initiative in Ghana. Now Costa Rica and Colombia are also considering replicating this initiative. This demonstrates the potential impact of multistakeholder collaboration on both national and international levels.

The WBF promotes alignment with methodologies to measure, define and achieve living wages. Through collaboration between producers and retailers, actors can agree on common definitions and ways to achieve living wages. The speaker also updated participants on current activities of the WBF, where efforts are being made to coordinate and share knowledge on work on labour rights between Europe and producers in Latin America and Africa. This highlights the potential for multi-stakeholder platforms to facilitate sharing, adaptation, and replication of good practices on an international scale.

- **Part 3: Panellist discussion on lessons learned and key takeaways for the avocado and pineapple sectors**

During the questions and discussion session, panellists were asked about their perspective on multistakeholder platforms, and on whether they consider these more efficient than other initiatives.

**José Antonio Hidalgo, Executive Director, Association of Banana Exporters of Ecuador**

The panellist from AEBE mentioned concrete examples of results from participation in the WBF including the occupational health and safety manual, which was developed through collaboration described above. According to the panellist, Ecuador has taken the lead in the effort to increase occupational health and safety and hopes that other countries will adopt good practices in this area. The panellist also emphasized the importance of global multistakeholder cooperation to address TR4, with Ecuador taking an active role in maintaining a preventive policy and sharing its experiences with other nations.

The WBF is currently discussing various support mechanisms that governments or other stakeholders could provide including financial compensation, technical assistance, incentives and rewards, research funding, market access support, capacity development, and policy advocacy.

While positive changes have been achieved in the negotiation of policies, the speaker stressed the importance for more stakeholders to join the WBF. Regarding living wages, efforts have been made to verify and measure them, but divisions and the emergence of alternative benchmarks have been observed. Consequently, the panellist called for unification of methodologies for measuring living wages within the WBF to prevent the exploitation divisions and to ensure equal treatment for all. Lastly, the panellist argued that sustainability is ultimately a collective responsibility. It should be seen as a responsibility rather than a business opportunity.

**Lizette Diaz, Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT**

The project in Colombia increased awareness and implementation of Colombia's Law 811 of 2003, which regulates agricultural sector chain organizations and incorporates environmental, social and economic sustainability standards. The law stipulates that these standards can only be implemented through participatory methods. Therefore, a multistakeholder approach is essential for its implementation.

Another positive result of the multi-stakeholder project, in addition to the identification and prioritization of technological gaps, was the definition of research and development plans. These were taken up by the universities engaged, in order to guide master's and doctorate projects in aspects required by the value chains. Additionally, the multi-stakeholder platform facilitated the development of training activities, seminars, technical visits and field guides, to involve producers in the research processes.

Likewise, through the multi-stakeholder project, it was possible to carry out mapping/zoning work for the cultivation of Hass avocado, blackberry and pineapple under possible climate change scenarios (by 2030 and 2050). This tool is useful for planning and decision-making regarding land use.

Finally, stakeholder collaboration connected producers with processors and traders, fostering sustainable business models and long-term partnerships.

To learn more about this initiative, please refer to the following links (available in Spanish only):



## Avocado

1. Technological gaps in the Hass avocado production chain in Valle del Cauca and description of the state of the art: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80835>
2. Research and development plan for the Hass avocado production chain in Valle del Cauca based on its main technological gaps: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80858>
3. Identification of hillside areas suitable for the cultivation of Hass avocado in the territory of Valle del Cauca: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80866>

## Pineapple

4. Research and development plan for the pineapple production chain in Valle del Cauca based on its main technological gaps: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80897>
5. Identification of hillside areas suitable for md2 pineapple cultivation in the territory of Valle del Cauca: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80911>

## Blackberry

7. Technological gaps in the blackberry production chain in Valle del Cauca and description of the state of the art: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80872>
8. Research and development plan for the blackberry production chain in Valle del Cauca based on its main technological gaps: <https://repositorio.unal.edu.co/handle/unal/80873>

### **Camila Reinhardt, Sustainable Development Specialist, WBF Secretariat**

Involving different actors and promoting collaboration helps to gain approval from various constituents for sensitive initiatives such as decent work and living wages. The panellist emphasized that without collaboration, achieving the changes accomplished in issues like occupational safety would have been extremely challenging, as there would have been no support from key stakeholder groups such as worker's unions and the public sector. Additionally, adopting a multistakeholder approach through collaboration, stakeholder representation and shared responsibility is key to addressing national and regional needs. It allows for the development of strategies to address the complexity and interconnectedness of issues faced at national and regional levels.

Recently national and regional commissions have been established in the WBF. These are coordinated by constituents of each country or region. These commissions aim to focus on the priorities and needs of each area with the assistance of international actors like retailers. The panellist stated that this allows for a better understanding of the needs and priorities of various actors in the banana industry and further facilitates collaboration. In conclusion, the panellist emphasized that multistakeholder platforms are indispensable for achieving institutional change and significant transformation in the banana industry. These platforms enable the addressing of long-term needs and the sharing of best practices across countries.

- **Closing remarks and information about ongoing project activities**

**Valentina Pérez-Mardones, Responsible Fruits Project, FAO**

Participants were reminded that the current project will finish in June 2024. The Responsible Fruits Project team is considering the development of a proposal for a multistakeholder platform for the tropical fruit sector or a single value chain (e.g. avocado or pineapple) as a possible follow up to the Responsible Fruits Project. A technical brief on multistakeholder platforms to support tropical fruit value chains will also be published in the coming months.

Participants were updated on the Responsible Tropical Fruit project's upcoming work and publications. A meeting to discuss ideas for incentives for responsible investment in avocado and pineapple value chains will be held in August. Further details on this event will be shared separately.

The peer learning webinar series will continue in the second half of 2023. Suggestions on topics that are of interest to participants for future technical work and webinars are always welcomed.

The project team welcomes suggestions or questions on the project's activities at any time. Please contact us at: [Responsible-Fruits@fao.org](mailto:Responsible-Fruits@fao.org)



**Annex 1**Working languages

The online session was in English and Spanish with simultaneous interpretation.

Agenda

Section title	Speaker/Facilitator
<b>Welcome and Introduction</b>	Valentina Pérez-Mardones, Responsible Fruits Project, FAO
<b>Part 1: The opportunities of value chain specific multi-stakeholder platforms with the World Banana Forum (WBF) as a model.</b>  Creation, structure and functions of the World Banana Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pascal Liu, Team Leader, Responsible Global Value Chains, FAO</li> <li>• Victor Prada, Project Officer, WBF Secretariat</li> <li>• Matheus Lima, Sustainable Development Specialist, WBF Secretariat</li> </ul>
<b>Questions and Discussion</b>	Jesper Karlsson, Responsible Fruits Project, FAO
<b>Part 2: Panel session - How can multi-stakeholder platforms help to manage sustainability issues that are difficult for a single sector to solve?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• José Antonio Hidalgo, Executive Director, Association of Banana Exporters of Ecuador (AEBE)</li> <li>• Camila Reinhardt, Sustainable Development Specialist, WBF Secretariat</li> <li>• Lizette Diaz, representative of the Alliance of Bioersity and International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)</li> </ul>
<b>Questions and answers, short survey</b>	Jesper Karlsson, Responsible Fruits Project, FAO
<b>Closing remarks</b>	Valentina Perez-Mardones, Responsible Fruits Project, FAO

For more information about the project or the webinar series, please contact: [Responsible-Fruits@fao.org](mailto:Responsible-Fruits@fao.org)