

Action Plan – supplier Nature Growers from Morocco

INTRODUCTION

In 2022 Albert Heijn commissioned ImpactBuying to conduct a human rights impact research at several fruit and vegetables suppliers in Morocco. We decided to select suppliers in Morocco based on our risk analyses in 2021, which highlighted that social certification does not sufficiently cover some human rights topics like gender equality. Since all these Moroccan suppliers have social certification in place, we should be able to identify what additional measures are needed on top of certification.

One of these Moroccan suppliers is Nature Growers, who has supplies Albert Heijn with fresh green beans and runner beans since ten years. The [research](#) did not find any negative impacts on human rights at Nature Growers. However, it did address some topics such as workers representation and job security, also found at other Moroccan suppliers where research was conducted, that are more deeply rooted in societal structures. In this action plan we recognize these issues and consider the leverage we and our suppliers have in addressing these issues and further improving the conditions for workers.

CONSULTATION OF RIGHTSHOLDERS

Nature Growers has shared the research report including the recommendations with the worker's committee. To make sure that actions following from this report are meaningful and effective, engagement with rightsholders is necessary during and after the implementation of the measures. The measures are and will continue to be executed in consultation with the worker's committee. For example, worker's committee meetings have been used to identify training needs of seasonal workers, to discuss the option of saving up bonuses, or to investigate effective channels for collecting feedback and raising grievances.

Though the worker's committee is expected to function in the interests of workers, it is important that exchange meetings with workers are organized, and that the worker's committee training is realized for optimal rightsholder representation. Discovering the options for such training is relevant for all Moroccan suppliers and thus high on the agenda for us to provide support in during the coming months.

ACTION PLAN

Even though there was no negative impact from the research, the results have identified some points needing attention where Nature Growers can create an even more positive impact for its workers. These are translated into measures in the below action plan:

- A. Job security of seasonal workers
- B. Functioning of the workers council
- C. Effectiveness of grievance mechanism

POINT OF ATTENTION (A): Job security of seasonal workers

Employment opportunities in the area largely coincide with seasonal production cycles. Even though Nature Growers offers employment for a relatively large part of the year, which forms a dependent base for a decent livelihood to many families, there is a group of seasonal workers that must find another job for the remaining months or face a period of unemployment.

OBJECTIVE: Enable seasonal workers to create a higher level of job security

ROOT CAUSES	RECOMMENDATIONS	MEASURES	TIMELINE
<p>Seasonality of production cycle</p> <p>Economic vulnerability of migrant workers</p> <p>Short-term employment</p>	<p>Provide training for seasonal workers to enable a higher level of job security. (e.g. longer working period or for return next season)</p>	<p>Extend the season by introducing programs covering year-round activity, creating longer employment period for part of the workforce.</p> <p>Discuss training needs with workers during worker's committee meeting.</p> <p>Outcome of the worker's committee meeting: Most workers indicate that they prefer taking their holidays during time that main season ends, instead of receiving training to perform other jobs.</p> <p>If wanted, Nature Growers offers skills training to perform other tasks within the company (e.g. packing, technical tasks, spraying).</p>	<p>July 2023</p> <p>October 2023</p>
	<p>Investigate together with the works council whether there is a need for paying out bonuses at the end of season (voluntary option)</p>	<p>Discuss with workers during worker's committee meeting whether workers would like to have a voluntary option where Nature Growers save their bonuses and pay them out at the end of the season.</p> <p>Outcome of the worker's committee meeting: Workers indicated that they want to receive keep their bonuses straight away because of their financial responsibilities.</p>	<p>October 2023</p>

	Investigate the opportunity for a day care/nursery	Set up a proposal for establishing a nursery for packhouse and farm workers together with AH Foundation.	Q4 2023
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POINT OF ATTENTION (B): Functioning of the works council

Nature growers has elected workers representatives. In line with the Moroccan labor law, these representatives mainly look into individual cases at the workplace. They do not regularly meet amongst themselves to discuss collective issues and workers are often not used to think about collective needs or interests. This opportunity is left unused and therefore the workers representatives do not fully work as a proper works council yet.

OBJECTIVE: Enable works council to ensure worker's dialogue and collective discussions

ROOT CAUSES	RECOMMENDATIONS	MEASURES	TIMELINE
Weak workers representation	Training for worker representatives and selected managers on functioning of workers council	Discuss training needs for worker representatives during worker's committee meeting	October 2023
	Provide training to the independent association of packhouse workers on how to run the association more effectively.	<p>Outcome of the worker's committee meeting: Representatives indicated that they are unaware of their role in discussing collective issues and needs. Training should focus on what is required from them and how can they best respond to what workers are expecting.</p> <p>Investigate options for worker's committee training (both by Nature Growers and AH/Bakker). Preferably engaging with an already existing training provider.</p> <p>Execute first trainings at the start of the new season for worker's committees and independent association.</p>	<p>Q2 2024</p> <p>Q3 2024</p>
	Develop new way of working at farms and packhouse based on the training, incl. relationship with independent packhouse association	New way of working at farms and packhouse worker's committees based on training outcomes. (after worker's committee trainings)	Q4 2024

POINT OF ATTENTION (C): Effectiveness of grievance mechanism

The complaint boxes at farms and packhouse have been a simple tool to put in place, but are not effective as workers do not (know how to) use them. Especially farm workers, since they often do not read and write well. Workers prefer to talk to their team leader or address their individual complaints at the works council. However, for grievances involving the team leader or other sensitive issues, like sexual harassment, cannot be reported openly and directly. An anonymous channel is more suitable.

OBJECTIVE: Establish effective and anonymous channel for raising grievances

ROOT CAUSES	RECOMMENDATIONS	MEASURES	TIMELINE
Illiteracy due to lack of education	Collaborate with the works councils to establish an effective and anonymous grievance mechanism.	<p>Nature Growers introduced a phone number where illiterate workers can anonymously report grievances. This is communicated to them through posters.</p> <p>A pilot project for job evaluation by an independent party (&Wider). Anonymous participating workers are asked questions by phone for feedback on topics such as working conditions, living conditions, or job satisfaction.</p>	<p>November 2023</p> <p>Q2 2024</p>

MONITORING & EVALUATION

To make sure that measures are sustainable and continue to achieve their desired effects (and to adjust actions in case of changing circumstances or unforeseen outcomes), Nature Growers facilitates the continuous dialogue with rightsholders through monthly worker’s committee meetings and introduces exchange meetings between worker’s committee and workers. The status and follow-up of the action points will remain on the agenda of the worker’s committee meetings to ensure effective monitoring and continuous evaluation of measures. Our long-standing business relation enables us to stay in close contact with the supplier and monitor whether the actions are indeed achieving the desired results. Our strategic partner Bakker Barendrecht is formally following this up via half-yearly meetings, where outcomes of worker’s committee meetings and any issues or grievances raised, are discussed. In this way, we have full transparency about the progress on implementation.