



**Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations**

**WG03 MEETING IN GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR. NOVEMBER 20<sup>TH</sup> 2010**

Coordinators of the Labour Issues Working Group (WG03)

World Banana Forum – WBF

Agenda:

- 1.0 Presentation and organization of the session
- 2.0 An update on the working group progress and activities so far
- 3.0 Key areas of work for the Labour Issues Group, as outlined in the commissions of the WBF in Rome.
- 4.0 Expectations of work by the participants (what we want to do in the short and medium term in the Labour Issues Group, what issues are of interest to us)
- 4.1 Summary and points for discussion in the afternoon
- 5.0 Key themes (and the work and coordination to implement them).
- 6.0 Decisions on the key themes of work
- 7.0 Communication tools- WBF/FAO.
- 8.0 Coordination and communication
- 9.0 Next meeting and agreed designated tasks
- 10.0 Any other business

Opening / Introductions: 09.30

1.0 Presentation and organization of the session.

Ángel Rivero, Secretary General of FENACLE, welcomed the participants. Chair (Victor Quesada) opens the meeting with a welcome address and a presentation of how the session will be organized. He called for the minutes to be written in both Spanish and English languages and married thereafter. This was followed by Self introduction of participants by order of sitting arrangement (see also participants list);

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- Alex Yeboah-Afari: Fairtrade Coordinator / Human Resource Head of Volta River Estates Ltd Banana Plantation Ghana in West Africa.
- Prospero Mendoza: FENACLE General Secretary and President of Machala regional FENACLE.
- Martin Cooke: Ethical Trading Initiative ETI based in London with an alliance of 15 NGO's as members who subscribe to ETI base code.
- Juan Jacome: National executive member - FENACLE
- Edison Espinoza: National executive member - FENACLE Machala
- Carmen Banegas: National leader of FENACLE . Played a key role in the struggle for labour rights 42 years ago. Scorns out sourcing as an undesirable tool which must not be encouraged. Called for weaknesses in the FENACLE organization to be strengthened and that FENACLE should play the principal role of the change process.
- Elias Arias Santana: National executive member of FENACLE apologies for FENACLE women not presented because of special assignment.
- Gilbert Bermudez: Expecting a follow up on the issues identified in Rome last December.
- Alistair Smith: International Coordinator of BANANA Link. In contact with several stakeholders in the drive towards improving the working and living conditions of Workers globally.

## 2.0 An update on the working group progress and activities so far

2.1 Working group coordinators : Alex Yeboah-Afari of VREL , Victor Quesada of ASEPROLA, Martin Cooke of ETI, Adela Torres Valoy of COSILBA , Iris Munguia Figueroa of COSILBA , Anna Cooper of Banana Link.

Víctor Quesada summarised the actions of ASEPROLA and Banana Link to reactivate the Working Group. This also involved the WBF Project Secretary for the FAO, Mr. Víctor López. A conference call took place between several organisations in July during which it was decided to hold this meeting to take advantage of the fact that Civil Society Organisations, trade unions and banana companies would all have various activities planned in Ecuador this week. During the call, it was agreed that Víctor Quesada would promote the meeting in Latin America, whilst Anna Cooper of Banana Link would do so in Europe and Africa. Those who took part in the Labour Issues Commission in Rome in 2009 were invited to attend. Some sent apologies for their absence but expressed an interest in the Working Group. Others, however, did not reply at all, despite being sent more than one invitation.

This meeting of the Labour Issues Working Group was considered to be very important in order to keep Labour matters relevant within the WBF. Having meetings, communicating frequently, and defining working guidelines mean that others may take an active interest in the group in the future.

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### 3.0 Key areas of work for the Labour Issues Group, as outlined in the commissions of the WBF in Rome.

- Activation of WG after first teleconference in July 2010.
- Anna and Victor endorsed as key coordinators.
- Progressive contacts with other Organizations
- Extended meeting invitation to Del Monte and the Banana exporters of Ecuador (no response).
- Dole's active participation in WG from November 2010 meeting
- Invitation to FYFFES yet to be responded to. Martin to use ETI office to contact FYFFES again.
- COBANA in Costa Rica invited to participate but too late to organize trip.
- Media contact with the FAO office - Victor Lopez and Pascal Liu willing to help with communication and Media to enable management and effective flow of all aspects of WG communications.
- Use of cyber networking amongst members under serious consideration.
- 43 participants participated in WG 03 in Rome last December therefore the need reinforce activation of members.

Víctor Quesada (Chair) spoke to the participants about the guidelines established at the World Banana Forum held in 2009 in Rome, which many of those present at this meeting did not attend. He explained that, although the working guidelines have been defined, it is up to the members of each Working Group to define the priorities or to suggest other areas on which to work. Indeed, this was one of the reasons for this meeting in Ecuador; What are we going to do in 2011 and how are we going to carry out our projects?

### 4.0 Expectations of work by the participants (what we want to do in the short and medium term in the Labour Issues Group, what issues are of interest to us)

Presentation by Alex - Key points and interventions:

- The Freedom of association and Collective bargaining.

Government, Civil Society, Trade Union organizations or Coordinating bodies such as COSILBA , Banana Link, US/LEAP could develop strategic alternatives of engagement with Companies to deliver programs such the TESCO's Labour Standards initiative or develop Collective bargaining agreements that could show indices related to productivity to challenge Companies.

- Occupational Health and Safety.

Companies and industries could be persuaded to establish proper monitoring and evaluation systems that show impact on their investment into OHS / PPE's, and issues of OHS would be improved considerably.

- Living Wages

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Top retailers and multinational stakeholders must be encouraged to advocate for the setting up a pilot scheme in a producer continent to serve as a model for emulation.

- Good Agricultural practices

Persuasion of Companies, producer organizations to subscribe to voluntary Good Agricultural practices is key. Credible Certification bodies like FLO, GLOBAL –GAP, Rainforest alliance, COFTA , etc needs to form a kind of political coalition like the FINE initiative to lobby EU policy makers for main stream recognition and financial support they need to strengthen their Standards work.

- Compliance with Standards.

Certification bodies could consider;

- Compliance support systems for producer organizations.
- Increasing market access programs.
- Benchmarking some certification schemes.
- De-mystifying audit inspection processes.

- Increasing Women's employment

At the enterprise level, Women could be trained in skills learning or capacity building programs to suit the labour market.

The informal sector can also engage women groups in specialized income generation activities through training workshops.

Coffee Break.

Session resumed with a call from the Chair for Comments, Questions discussion points on Alex's presentation.

Gilbert Bermudez – Alex 's briefing reinforces our mission here today. ITUC (Tobias of US) can not ignore our labour problems of persecution, Union bursting, News paper report exposure. We must remind ourselves about ILO Tripartite. Absence of COBANA and others must be persuaded to be active to reinforce the mission of the commission.

Martin Cooke -Involvement of Supermarkets is key to the commission. Fairtrade is very significant economic empowerment module.

Labour abuses around the World.

Moment of epiphany is being realized by Supermarkets epitomising collaboration.

Labour tensions with organization not necessary taking West Africa situation as an example.

USD 60 Billion is spent on auditing – Naming the name of a disease is not enough but a solution to the disease.

Session paused: Chair Introduces to the house Himan Rasim, Javier Eduardo Villacis (Human Resources and Social Security officer for Dole plantations).

Session continues:

Morales - Political will, participation and trust needed elements. Objectives set by WG should be a process required to achieve our mission.

Chair – Contributions from Alex are very right for the build up to Rome Global Steering Committee.

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Invoke to strategies to involve all stakeholders. 3 points worth noting;

- Effort to include Super markets / Traders must be sustained. Supermarkets must realise what happens at banana trading companies; their participation in this type of event is important and we must tell them that we would like them to attend.
- Effort to include big companies must be pursued. How can we get important parties such as CORBANA in Costa Rica, Augura in Colombia and supermarkets to participate?
- Working with Consumer associations

As we manifest, the WG commission has to visible.

Carmen – Workers are not involved in Certification processes. The concept of labour rights needs fundamental definition.

Most Workers are victimized for claiming labour rights leading to Black listing.

There are problems with certifications; The \$61,000 million spent on audits would have been better spent on social programs.

Gilbert – Criminalization of trade union activities is disturbing. Supermarkets like Dole must be committed to certification schemes. Blacklisting is a disgrace to the World of work.

Martin – Value of Certification is circumstantial what is needed is fundamental to labour standards.

Norman – The phenomenon of blacklisting could be circulated to neighboring plantations or multinational plantations. Blacklisting could be difficult to deal with because of its secrecy.

Element of trust to break down walls that are separating employers / employees. Approach to be win/win situation. In Latin America some men fear getting married because of losing their freedom.

Within the distribution chain, shippers could be included because of their crucial importance within the change. Positive labour relations for sustainability legal framework could be created Break for lunch

Session commences : Chair – Appreciates FENACLE for providing lunch.

Martin's presentation - Key points:

Mr. Martin Cooke, Deputy Director of Ethical Trading Initiatives (ETI), addressed the Labour Issues Working Group and presented his organisation's priorities for the period 2010-2012. He considered that some of ETI's strategic priorities coincide with those identified for the Labour Issues Working Group in Rome. He also believed that, through the WBF, there is a good opportunity to bring about positive changes for workers.

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ETI's strategic priorities are:

1. Promoting good workplaces: Supporting employers and empowering workers.
2. Payment of living wages.
3. Incorporating ethics into fundamental business practices.
4. Tackling discrimination in the workplace.
5. Focussing improvements on the most vulnerable workers.
6. Improving audit practice

Key issues to be tackled within the banana industry:

- Lack of grievance procedures and systems for effectively engaging the Unions.
- Review of distribution value within the supply chain.
- How change of produce could affect producers i.e. switch from Smooth Cayene variety to MD2.
- Sexual harassment at the Workplace.
- ETI initiatives of garment production in India example
- Protecting supply chains to avert strikes. China yet to have subscribe to the concept Trade Unionism.
- Mistrust of trade unionism, which makes it difficult for companies to accept or respect this right. Other parties, such as consumers, should also be included when dealing with this problem.

#### Comments / Questions from participants

Edison : FENACLE is working towards reducing issues of sexual harassment although dicey because they can fall victims to termination Of appointment.

Gilbert: Sexual harassment must have natural reporting schemes.

Martin: Switch from Smooth Cayene to MD2 pineapples drastically affected out growers (Farmappine in Ghana eg)

Iain – Culture of non acceptance of trade Unions must be discarded as an affront to Labour rights. Sexual harassment at the workplace reporting scheme. Definition of sexual harassment

Case of consenting adults in sexual harassment / amorous relationships

Alex : Cases of Sexual Harassment is gross misconduct by individual workers.

Edison – Extreme forms of sexual harassment could lead to Impregnation and consequently dismissal.

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Mendoza – Labour officers often hide the truth and do not act responsibly.

Yavier (Dole) – Employees and Employers to work together to achieve common goals. Positive relationship with the Union a vital ingredient for Labour rights. Living wages concept training of workers must be considered in projected work plan.

Martin - The purpose of my presentation is allow topical discussions to find solutions and a common front. Eg Global International textile garment and leather association MOU signed in Cambodia.

Cultural barriers in certain regions / Fundamental disrespect for Workers, ie India.

Scalable models of ETI Projects could be copied to other places in replica. Eg Supervisors training in Dominican Republic by ETI.

Supermarkets are like Elephants which has to persuaded to move so strategically you need to find the right place to pinch to make them move in the direction intended.

It (the ETI strategic priorities) is an interesting document which helps to complement the Group's work. In COLSIBA we always ask the same question; how to implement the proposals. That is where the problems start.

The most reasonable approaches do not always solve the problem. We must be creative; how can we demonstrate that unions do work well with companies?

Consumers are important. However, producers can cause consumers to change from one product to another and what can we do about this? In one member's country a very popular pineapple variety was produced, but then another pineapple type was heavily promoted. This had repercussions on small and medium producers and it caused many jobs losses as consumers now preferred the second pineapple variety. So, consumers do have influence but they are also influenced by the producers.

Short Break

#### 4.1 Summary and points for discussion in the afternoon

WG03 Commission report in Rome: Chair - WG03 report will be presented by Alex in Rome. The draft can be enriched with the outlines and perspectives of the key themes.

Certification schemes: Chair – Rainforest alliance is said to be considering setting new standards comparable with FLO Standards. Trade Union freedom and certifying bodies was mentioned in Rome and nothing has happened yet.

Iain- Process of Certification and sustainable systems could be stalled to enable advancement of other themes like Agro chemical working group on Pesticide Action Network (PAN ) Dirty dozen Alistair- Expert knowledge in Agro Chemicals needed in WG.

Martin- GSCP driven by code of ethics.

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Victor- Trade Unions should not be set up for the sake of certification.

Victor/Chair- Close discussions calls for the Machala field visit report.

Machala report by Alistair - key points

2 Days of discussions was held at Machala meeting.

- Consideration for pilot project on concept of living wage in Southern America or West Africa was paramount.
- Dole funded research in the methodology to understand the minimum wage and the basic food basket.
- Gap between Minimum wage and basic food basket to be well analyzed. Link with pilot programs could provide a Country matrix that could compare with FLO systems.

#### Comments / Questions from participants

Chair- Next meeting should consider inviting other stakeholder groups especially trade Unions in Africa. Activity plan for 2011 needed.

Iain-Trade Union freedom survey of Banana plantations to bring out what is happening in other regions can be useful.

Gilbert –National laws could influence company policies.

Carmen- Ecuador pilot program idea was moved by small growers and other stakeholders eg Ministry of political coordination.

Martin- Consider geographical locations instead of every country.

Alex - Selection of countries could be based on the criteria that was used for the living wage methodology.

Iain- Framework for freedom of associations could be elusive. Create a web page to incorporate views of other participants.

#### 5.0 Key themes (and the work and coordination to implement them).

Fruit Companies who subscribe to certification must be committed to certification schemes.

Political will, active participation and trust are needed elements for achievements in labour rights

Trust is needed to break down walls that are separating employers / employees.

Contributions from stakeholders are a significant build up to the Rome Global Steering Committee.

Commission must Invoke strategies to involve all stakeholders eg Super markets , Traders , Consumer associations . The concept of win/win must be the relevant approach in matters of Labour rights. The commission has to be visible.

Culture of non acceptance of Trade Unions must be discarded as an affront to labour rights.

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## Recommendations / Ideas:

Autonomy to keep group identity and not to merge perspectives with other Working groups.

Information gathering framework matrix format for Countries and later select relevant Countries.  
list of Countries under reference in descending order of export volumes;  
ECUADOR, PHILIPPINES, COSTA RICA, COLUMBIA, GUATEMALA, HONDURAS, CANARIES PANAMA,  
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, BRAZIL, FRENCH CARREBEAN, BELIZE, PERU, NICARAGUA, SURINAM, GHANA,  
WINDWARD ISLANDS, MOZAMBIQUE, CAMEROON, IVORY COAST, FRENCH CARREBEAN. Labour Rights/  
Derechos Laborales adopted as official name of WG03.

## Activities / Dates

Teleconference of Core group in January 2011

Possibility a physical meeting in Nicaragua in February 2011

Physical meeting in August. 2011.

## 6.0 Decisions on the key themes of work.

Prioritise two areas of work in 2011:

- 1) Exercising the rights to freedom of association/trade union freedom and to free collective bargaining (between “autonomous parties” - ILO)
- 2) Eliminating gender inequality and discrimination in the workplace as well as in employment policies & practices

First activities of the WG:

Targeting strategic stakeholders to engage them at the table, i.e., especially major fruit companies that were not present at the meeting.

- Design and develop an updatable “matrix” on above issues for top 20 banana exporting countries (with help from ILO, ITUC, IUF, Ergon etc); and include a section on opportunities for extending and deepening meaningful social dialogue
- Gather good practice in both areas of work; and identify areas for further research and/or analysis

## 7.0 Communication tools- WBF/FAO.

Anna Cooper from Banana Link presented a document about the lines of communication and information that the World Banana Forum has available through the FAO Project Office. These are not yet active and they will be important for the dissemination and promotion of the group. The possibility of presenting short documents, in two languages if possible, must be considered.

FAO- Victor Lopez and Pascal Liu helping with communication and Media interaction.

## 8.0 Coordination and communication.

Coordinators: Victor Quesada (ASEPROLA), Anna Cooper (BANANA LINK), Martin Cooke (ETI) Adela Torres (COSILBA) Iris Munguia Figueroa (COLSIBA), Alex Yeboah-Afari (VREL).

Anna and Victor will be the main or key coordinators of WG03. Use of cyber networking to be considered seriously.

## 9.0 Next meeting and agreed designated tasks

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Proposed meeting date: March 2011 dependent on outcome of presentation in Rome or may be decided in a teleconference between Jan 10-15.

August 2011 (exact dates to be decided): Meeting in Nicaragua within the framework of the Latin American Banana Union Conference - COLSIBA

Chair – Commission to appoint Alex and Martin to continue the WG draft paper to be presented in Rome.

10.0 Any other business / Close of meeting.

Víctor Quesada reported that the WBF Project Secretary, Mr. Víctor López, sent a general survey to Forum members so that they could give their opinions on the WBF Working Groups. One of the matters referred to was the merging of some groups. Opinions have already been expressed about the possibility that the Labour Issues Working Group be merged with the Certification or the Distribution of Value Working Groups. This is an issue that is going to be discussed by the WBF Coordinating Committee next week in Rome and it was important that we decided upon our position.

The meeting agreed:

That the Group remains as it is (rather than merge with the Distribution of Value Working Group, as suggested by the survey carried out by the WBF Secretary).

That the Labour Issues Working Group be herewith referred to as Labour Rights Working Group 03.

To inform the WBF Coordinating Committee that the Working Group 03 agrees to undertake the issue of Certification.

Chair expresses thanks and appreciation to all, closing the meeting at 18.20 hrs

Minutes: English version recorded by Alex Yeboah-Afari and Spanish version by Victor Quesada (WG03 Coordinators). Translation done by Banana Link volunteers.

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