

The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Report of the Fifteenth Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC15)

Attended by the Steering Committee members and Working Group coordinators

28 - 29 November 2018

Iraq Room (A235), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

Wednesday, 28 November 2018

Chaired by Jeroen Kroezen, Solidaridad

1. Opening Session by FAO, WBF Executive Board and WBF Secretariat

Mr Josef Schmidhuber, Deputy Director of FAO's Trade and Markets Division, welcomed the participants. He underlined the success of the World Banana Forum (WBF) as a model for multi-stakeholder partnerships in agricultural supply chains. He also highlighted the importance of the WBF as an important tool for contributing to FAO's Strategic Objectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Mr Schmidhuber concluded his welcoming statement by highlighting the recent successes of the WBF, and further welcomed a new member of the WBF Secretariat, Ms Martha María Ríos.

Mr Jeroen Kroezen, member of the WBF Executive Board and Chairperson of the meeting, then provided the opening address on behalf of the Board. He highlighted some of the key achievements of the WBF since its inception, particularly its success in bringing together diverse stakeholders in a competitive industry and creating an open space for dialogue and collaboration to address important environmental, economic and social challenges in the industry. He concluded his address by presenting the objectives of the meeting, and encouraging members to participate actively in the discussions.

2. New Governance of the WBF

Mr Pascal Liu, WBF Coordinator, welcomed the new members of the Steering Committee (SC) and stressed its importance as the decision-making body of the WBF. He provided a brief introduction to the functions, duties and responsibilities of its members. The Secretariat further proposed to set fixed dates in advance for future in-person meetings of the SC in order to increase participation. Members agreed to set dates during the third weeks of May and November.

In addition, given that one of the objectives of the meeting was to discuss the formation of the new Executive Board (EB), Mr Liu also informed members of this body's main functions, duties and responsibilities. The EB is the operational body of the SC, which meets regularly to support the implementation of the decisions made by the SC. It is composed of a selection of dedicated SC members who are able to contribute additional time to its activities.

The Secretariat had made several calls for expression of interest in previous months to encourage new SC members to apply for membership in the EB. Mr Liu informed participants that 10 expressions of interest had been received prior to the meeting and reported on the stakeholder, geographical and gender representation of those candidates. He concluded the session by welcoming additional applications from SC members throughout the two-day meeting, particularly from government representatives and members from Asian and African countries.



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Decision(s):

- Establish dates for future in-person SC meetings in the third weeks of May and November.

3. Working Group 01 Breakout Session – Environmental Sustainability

Breakout Session

Ms Martha María Ríos, facilitator of Working Group 01 on Sustainable Production Systems and Environmental Impact (WG01), gave an overview of the different subgroups within WG01 that were created during the last reporting period, highlighting the activities within each of them. The coordinators then proceeded to present the points of discussion and latest updates with the support of the Secretariat.

On the Subgroup on the Farm of the Future, Mr Jeroen Kroezen explained that the project was envisioned as a potential umbrella topic for the whole WG01. The coordinators hope to count with the participation of governments, as well as the participation and match-funding of the private sector. P4G – Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goods 2030 – was mentioned as a potential donor for funding in later stages.

On the Subgroup on Agroecological Practices, two topics were presented. Ms Ríos presented the latest advances of the discussions that took place regarding a potential event to be held at Fruit Logistica in Berlin next February. A call for interest was opened in order to find organizations that are planning to attend the fair and want to participate as panelists/donors/coordinators for a two-hour side event related to lessons learned in agroecological practices. It was decided to share this call for interest during the plenary. In addition, Ms Elisabetta Tagliati, Agricultural Officer from the FAO Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), presented the latest updates on the design of the Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHP) Global Environmental Facility (GEF) project, where banana was identified as one of the main crops to be targeted. She also confirmed that the WBF has been identified as a crucial partner for implementation. AGP is currently waiting for the final feedback from GEF before sharing relevant documents and next steps with WG01.

Regarding the Subgroup on Water Management, Ms Kahlil Apuzen-ito explained that a survey needs to be circulated for validation and subsequent dissemination, in order to identify common water issues between smallholders and big companies. The idea is to try to capture the different approaches in water management, provided different contexts (territorial, availability, types of usage), and use the information to deliver alternatives for climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. Many members offered to share previous research and documents on this topic. Regarding the ongoing Carbon and Water Footprint project (CWF), Ms Ríos mentioned that one project proposal had been submitted to the Inter-American Development Bank by the Costa Rican Government concerning their national production strategy for low carbon bananas that are resilient and adapted to climatic change¹. The items related to next steps for the CWF project are included in the proposal (i.e. funding for the design of an automatized tool for the WBF's manual on CWF monitoring). The use of the FAO's Ex-Act tool is under discussion.

¹ “Estrategia de Producción de Musáceas Bajas en Carbono, Resilientes y Adaptadas al Cambio Climático para Costa Rica”, by its name in Spanish



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TR4 Task Force:

On activities linked to the TR4 Task Force, TR4 was identified as a priority action by the coordinators of the Task Force as well as by all the members of the working group present in the session. Several subjects linked to the activities were mentioned, as described below.

The purpose of the creation of a Global Network on TR4 was presented by Ms Ríos. The aim would be to develop a network that facilitates the connection between national authorities, scientists, local experts, decision makers and users of information in the field. The platform could follow up on the ongoing joint WBF-GLOBALG.A.P Call for Action launched at the beginning of November. A good foundation could also be the data base of members and partners of the current Task Force. The Secretariat, along with the coordinators, is working on the mandate of the network and will circulate it shortly for inputs.

In addition, the current stage of the development of a TR4 App was presented. A concept note has been drafted and is currently being used for fundraising purposes. The design of the App is still under discussion between the WBF Secretariat, TR4 Task Force coordinators and FAO's Information Technology Division (CIO). Follow-up will be done by the Secretariat and fundraising opportunities will be assessed accordingly.

On capacity development on TR4, the coordinators of the Task Force, with the support of the Secretariat, will contact members to collect all capacity building materials and tools related to TR4 in order to consolidate the information and identify key messages. The call for participation, along with the concept note describing the process, will be circulated following the SC15.

In addition to these discussions on the working group and the task force, key messages were outlined, including the need to: avoid duplication of efforts; reinforce public-private alliances for on-site implementation and co-funding; seek to scale up results; promote diversification of stakeholders, like local experts that can bring over a deeper knowledge of the local context; work on capacity building; focus on priorities and feasible outcomes; ensure that initiatives are culturally and territorially pertinent; enhance research; and use technology and innovative tools.

Conclusions of the Breakout Session

The main points of discussion within the WG01 breakout session were then shared in plenary with the rest of the SC and WG members. TR4 was extensively discussed and re-affirmed by the participants as one of the main topics to be addressed by WG01 and the World Banana Forum as a whole.

It was deemed important by the Secretariat to create a global network on TR4 in order to adequately include governments and phytosanitary agencies in TR4-related processes. The main task of the WBF/FAO would be to explore the necessary agreements with governments. The purpose of the envisioned global network would not only be to build awareness but also to coordinate global activities and build synergy using the TR4 App as an early warning system. Potential next steps include the revision of national and regional protocols to prevent the spread of the disease, as well as their socialization.

With respect to the TR4 App, it was suggested to adopt a long-term vision from the start in order to avoid a duplication of versions and efforts. The Secretariat mentioned that the App would not be developed just to build awareness on TR4, but rather to be an interactive tool that can be useful for farmers in the field by giving guidelines and trigger on-time responses from pertinent authorities. Since it is envisioned as the backbone on which the global network would be built, these two components ultimately reinforce each other. Benchmarks are being conducted by the Secretariat on similar existing materials within and outside



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FAO in order to assess potential synergies with pre-existing tools. The possibility and importance of promoting an early warning system for producers through the App was discussed. In this sense, the WBF would act as a facilitator of information but also as the communication channel enabler between producers in the field and competent national authorities and phytosanitary agencies. This way, the App will trigger preventive and mitigation actions. These actions should be implemented with the help of response protocols that are territorially relevant, for which, in many cases, they have already been developed by regional phytosanitary agencies.

When asked about collaborations with governments, the Secretariat reported that FAO had been working on the actions of governments to address TR4 (e.g. border control) through the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC). Meetings have been held to discuss this with member countries. It was mentioned that beyond actions with governments through international bodies, the involvement of all relevant actors is needed, for what the Secretariat asked the members to involve their networks as much as possible. Two practical guides had also been produced by FAO during the summer of 2018, one for travelers and one for government officials, employees and extensionists. They will be shared with the TR4 Task Force.

Several members requested more details and updates on the status of the FAO Global Programme on TR4 presented in Geneva in November 2017. The Secretariat explained that despite being active on this, FAO had not been successful in convincing major donors due to outbreaks of other major pests and diseases affecting food crops. Some expressions of interests have been collected but funds still need to be raised. Two events have been implemented by FAO to raise awareness of governments, phytosanitary agencies, research institutes and other stakeholders.

On related topics, the need to anticipate a response to the possible spread of TR4 to Latin America was mentioned. Questions about the implication of FAO's response to the TR4 outbreak in Mozambique were also raised. The Secretariat explained that the WBF had not been involved in this process but that the link could be made with the competent division, FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division, in order to obtain information from their part. The need for transparency and openness on the issue of TR4, whether actions taken are successful or not, was called for several times and deemed crucial for the effectiveness of the Forum and its members.

Some members underlined the need to address TR4 as a soil-borne disease by looking at the difference in terms of the impacts between conventional and organic systems on TR4 management. Others stressed that alternative production systems may be a way of containing TR4 but that further data and research is still needed to confirm this. It was suggested that these two visions had to be put in relation with the work of the Subgroup on Agroecological Practices. It was, however, reaffirmed that the spreading of TR4 was mainly due to human causes and that exclusion was the only reliable solution at the moment. Finding a banana variety resistant to TR4 was mentioned as being the only viable solution in the long-term, as it had been the case for TR1.

It was further mentioned that the private sector initiative for the creation of an association of the main banana-exporting companies announced during the Third Global Conference had to be put on hold due to management changes in some major companies. Nonetheless, it was affirmed that the major companies would continue to work on finding a new resistant variety. Some participants stated that, while the private sector and others will continue to work on this to find a solution to TR4, it was expected for FAO to take the necessary measures on its side.



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The Secretariat concluded by confirming to the members that TR4 would continue to be treated as a top priority for the Forum and that a more in-depth and active follow-up on this topic would now be possible by the fulfillment of a strengthened team.

4. Working Group 02 Breakout Session– Economic Sustainability

Breakout Session

The main topic of discussion for the Working Group 02 breakout session revolved around the current theme of living wages and the creation of the new Subgroup on Covering Costs of Sustainable Production.

Mr Victor Prada, facilitator of Working Group 02 on Distribution of Value (WG02), delineated the main aims and objectives of the subgroup as established in the mandate, amongst which are the need to: (1) study methodologies for calculating costs of production, particularly living wages; (2) agree on a common methodology on living wages; (3) understand the role and responsibilities of all stakeholders along the supply chain – including consumers, retailers and governments; (4) use a wide range of strategies for enabling the implementation of living wages, taking into consideration the different needs and demands of stakeholders; (5) provide support to diverse stakeholders in developing appropriate strategies; and (6) study examples of precompetitive cooperation in other industries and sectors to understand how they can be adapted to the global banana industry.

Mr Prada then presented the strategy of the subgroup in relation to its work on living wages. The first phase entails the finalization of living wage benchmark studies in remaining banana-producing countries, as it has been stressed by WBF members that these cannot be standalone initiatives. The WBF Secretariat has prepared and submitted a draft proposal to IDH, which outlines living wage activities to be carried out in ten additional banana-producing countries. The aim is to continue working with the Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC) in order to apply the same methodology in all countries so as to be able to compare results. Through these benchmarks, the subgroup would then need to understand how to work with diverse industry stakeholders – including trade unions, civil society organizations, producers, retailers and governments of exporting and importing countries – for the implementation and monitoring of living wage activities. The second stage would thus require advocacy activities with public and private sector representatives in exporting and importing countries, with the ultimate goal of enabling agreements between actors that can support the sustainability of living wage implementation initiatives in the long-term. For these efforts to succeed, it will also be necessary to support studies and activities on antitrust and competition laws.

The introduction to the subgroup, its mandate, and its strategy on living wages was followed by a presentation by the co-chairs of the GLWC, Fairtrade International and Rainforest Alliance. Ms Noura Hanna, from Rainforest Alliance, provided an overview of the GLWC and its aim to address living wages through the application of a commonly accepted methodology – the Anker methodology – in order to conduct living wage benchmark studies and develop reports that can be used to inform wage discussions between governments, employers and workers. Mr Wilbert Flinterman, from Fairtrade International, emphasized that the GLWC is a unique initiative because, even though the six standard-setting organizations currently part of the coalition are in competition on a day-to-day basis, they have come together to enable pre-competitive collaboration in order to seek mutual recognition of the technical standards they seek to apply in their own requirements. Ms Hanna stressed that the GLWC is primarily



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involved in the living wage benchmark research as well as advocacy activities with CSO and private sector, but it is not itself involved in implementation activities of the living wage benchmarks.

Ms Hanna further reported on a three-year project proposal that has been developed and confirmed between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ILO, which will build on a modified version of the Anker methodology to estimate the needs of workers in six pilot countries – including banana-producing countries – using a supply chain approach. It was emphasized that this project could result in significant advances at a policy level.

Next, Ms Sonia Cordera from IDH, presented an overview of the living wage activities that IDH has recently engaged in, particularly those initiatives it has carried out in collaboration with the WBF and its members. In addition, she highlighted the IDH study being conducted that aims to capture the best practices at farm and trade level.

She further provided updates on the Dutch covenant, an initiative started by the Dutch government with the aim of encouraging Dutch retailers and manufacturers to come together to address a key topic, ultimately chosen to be living wages. Through this covenant, Dutch retailers and manufacturers will initially focus on two commodities – coffee and bananas. The Dutch government will facilitate the activities within this covenant and is expected to provide support throughout the negotiation processes.

At their 10-Year Event in mid-November 2018, IDH also had the opportunity to announce their project on bananas, which they will work on in collaboration with key members of the Dutch Food Retail Association, CBL. IDH will work as the Secretariat for the working group on living wages, which will use the Anker methodology as a framework. The working group aims to have a concrete plan developed by early 2019. Ms Cordera stressed the importance of this initiative but emphasized the need to collaborate with other European retailers beyond the Netherlands. She also emphasized the need for direct collaboration with the WBF in the future.

Conclusions of the Breakout Session

The main points of discussion within the WG02 breakout session were then shared in plenary with the rest of the SC and WG members. Ultimately, the living wage activities currently being conducted were supported by WBF members, particularly the benchmark studies. They also emphasized their recognition that these activities must be conducted in solidarity, involving all actors along the supply chain.

However, some members raised concerns about the fact that the living wage concept resembles the notion of what a minimum wage ideally should be. This was highlighted as concerning, considering that minimum wages in several countries are not established adequately, and can often even fall below the extreme poverty line. Thus, it was emphasized that collective bargaining must be included in the living wage strategy. GLWC members clarified these concerns, stating that the calculation of living wage benchmarks is meant to provide inputs to help define minimum wages. They also ensured all stakeholders that the activities being conducted are only meant to inform and enable social dialogue between actors, and not replace other interventions such as collective bargaining. Ultimately it was suggested that an important outcome of these activities would be that these benchmarks are eventually used in tripartite dialogue in minimum wage-setting negotiations.

Another concern raised was the fact that living wage benchmarks need to be country and context specific, as incomes and costs of living differ in different countries and regions. GLWC members ascertained WBF



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members that the benchmark studies are in fact place specific. Ultimately, members also stressed the need to move beyond the research phase towards more tangible results. It was deemed necessary to consider the implementation phase, and what impacts or distortions the implementation of living wages in one sector could have at the national level.

Following discussions on the living wage benchmark activities, a draft document expressing concerns of the potential impacts that decreasing banana purchase prices at the retail end could have on the living wage implementation activities on the producing end was shared for approval by the SC. This document was prepared by WG02 members in the aftermath of the in-person meeting of the WG02 and Subgroup that took place in October 2018 in Montreal, Canada. The statement was discussed and finalized during and after the SC meeting, leading to the final text below:

At the recent meeting of the Working Group on Value Distribution along the Chain of the World Banana Forum (WBF) in Montréal, Canada, discussions took place to advance the agenda with the aim of promoting an equitable distribution of value along the banana supply chain, including on the purchase prices' outlook for 2019. Considering that the WBF has been promoting, among others, better working conditions and payments of living wages, the possible scenarios of that situation were assessed. Several members of the WBF, especially those of the Working Group on the Distribution of Value, expressed their concerns that it is increasingly difficult to transfer the rising production costs along the value chain. A sustainable improvement in production practices, including working conditions, can only be achieved if producers are able to recover those costs

Ultimately, the WG02 discussions concluded with requests that the WG consider the merit of linking and embedding living wage activities within broader discussions on promoting decent work in the workplace. Members stressed the need to take a holistic approach, ensuring that the WBF is not selective on only a few aspects of the decent work agenda.

5. Working Group 03 Breakout Session – Social Sustainability

Breakout Session

Ms Anna Cooper, coordinator of Working Group 03 on Labour Rights (WG03), provided an overview of the work that has been conducted and achieved within the working group in the last ten years under the three priority areas established, being: (1) freedom of association and collective bargaining, (2) health and safety (for more information, see Section 10), and (3) gender equity. Given the numerous activities already conducted in respect to health and safety as well as gender equity, the session primarily focused on the pillar of freedom of association and collective bargaining and the need to conduct more tangible activities in this respect.

She introduced the new draft proposal developed in collaboration with the ILO on improving labour relations and social dialogue in order to strengthen the decent work agenda in the banana industry. Mr El'vis Beytullayev from the ILO emphasized that the proposal meets one of the general priorities of the ILO on decent labour relations, and highlighted how the ILO has previously worked on decent work issues in various strategic commodities, including bananas. He reported on the diagnostic tool that was developed by the ILO, which uses the ILO Convention 110 on Plantations as a theoretical framework to explore decent work deficits. Ultimately, he suggested this tool could be used for the current proposal



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within WG03, and informed WG members that the ILO could provide support for this project by leading the diagnostic studies.

It was stressed that the study needs to be conducted in countries where there is clear interest and demand for these efforts by national tripartite constituencies, as this is key to the success of such initiatives. Several countries were proposed to start this country-specific pilot project, but these need to be further explored to understand the local interest and feasibility of conducting the studies in those countries. The aim is to focus on one or two countries in 2019, and if the project is successful, to continue the activities in other banana-producing countries. Countries will be selected based on several criteria, such as the presence of organized trade unions, the interest of local tripartite constituencies, and geographical scope amongst others. Once the proposal is updated and approved by other WBF members, it will be necessary to explore funding opportunities.

In addition, another proposal developed by WG03 is to update existing and include new case studies on successful labour relations in the WBF Publication, "[Labour Relations: Successful Cases within the Banana Industry](#)" (2014). One particular case to be included has been identified, being the macro collective bargaining agreement between small producers and trade unions in Peru. It was emphasized that this publication could serve as an important resource for the activities to be implemented in the new WG03 proposal on labour relations and social dialogue.

WG03 members supported the activities proposed but stressed the need to further engage the private sector and governments in these efforts to enable social dialogue and strengthen labour relations. Mr Gilbert Bermudez emphasized the need to engage these actors given the critical conditions and violence faced by some trade unionists around the world as a result of their activities.

Finally, with respect to the WG's focus on gender equity, Ms Cooper reported on the ETI Innovation Project, in which several WBF members are involved. The project aims to gather information to establish a comparative analysis of different plantation-level strategies to improve conditions for women workers, not only from the banana industry, but also the tea and flower sectors. The results will be available in January 2019. It is hoped to soon involve the WBF Gender Equity Task Force in analyzing the outcomes and supporting implementation activities, as well as in integrating key learnings into the strategy of the Task Force.

Conclusions of the Breakout Session

After sharing the main discussion points and activities proposed with the rest of the SC and WG members, WG03 members emphasized the need to have a broader approach on decent work within the wider framework of the WBF, not only within WG03. This coincides with discussions held in the WG02 breakout session, although members acknowledged that while there are many overlaps between economic and social issues that deserve alignment with respect to WG activities, there is a need to still maintain separated discussions as well.

Members in the plenary also highlighted the need to continue supporting freedom of association and collective bargaining activities, and thereby improved labour relations. In addition to the topics previously discussed, one additional priority established in the WG was to support and facilitate the formation of tripartite committees and national platforms, in order to strengthen social dialogue and improved negotiations amongst tripartite constituencies, thereby contributing to the decent work agenda. As such, the draft proposal presented was endorsed by Steering Committee members.

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Finally, given the very limited attendance of private sector actors in the breakout session, WG03 members stressed the need to engage more government and private sector actors in discussions on social issues. Ms Cooper informed members that the private sector remains actively involved during regular conference calls, but supported the request that company representatives also engage in WG03 discussions during in-person meetings as well.

6. Increasing Collaboration within and between Working Groups

Following the discussions and conclusions presented by each of the WGs, members discussed the need to have a holistic and comprehensive approach when addressing sustainable development within the banana industry. Although there are three dimensions of sustainability, it was acknowledged that many issues within the banana industry are inherently linked to more than one area of sustainability. Ultimately, members stressed the need to find ways to integrate more closely the activities of each of the WGs, by either building on existing initiatives and aligning deliverables, or by developing new activities together.

Furthermore, the concern of limited participation of various stakeholder groups in WG discussions was once again highlighted. However, it was agreed that this seems to be more of an issue in in-person meetings, as diverse stakeholder groups are usually actively involved in the conference calls of each WG. Therefore, it was proposed to re-structure the WG sessions during future in-person SC meetings, so that all participants are able to engage and contribute to the different WG discussions.

Finally, the need for continued involvement of the ILO was emphasized, particularly within the WGs on social and economic sustainability, as most of the issues discussed fall under the decent work agenda. Mr Beytullayev stated that he would be willing to provide support to strengthen collaboration efforts.

Decisions:

- Conduct plenary sessions for WG discussions in future meetings of the SC.

7. External and Internal Outreach of the WBF

External Outreach

Mr Prada introduced the topic of external outreach efforts by highlighting the new members that have joined the WBF in the last year and enquiring if members had any suggestions for potential newcomers, keeping in mind opportunities to engage different types of stakeholders and organizations from various geographical regions.

Mr Prada particularly underlined the opportunities for engaging US-based organizations, given that a WBF meeting will potentially be hosted in the United States in the coming months. He emphasized the need to engage North American stakeholders in future discussions on living wages, especially companies and retailers, as the Subgroup on Covering Costs of Sustainable Production is comprised primarily of European stakeholders. Some members of the SC agreed to provide support in reaching out to their networks in the United States. However, it was mentioned that many companies and retailers in the United States have a different approach to corporate social responsibility activities, which needs to be considered when engaging with them.

In order to expand the member base and funding for the WBF, it was also suggested to consider broadening the WBF to include other commodities, such as pineapples, or tropical fruits more generally. The suggestion arose as many of the companies already part of the Forum work with these commodities



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as well. Furthermore, a proposal was made to consider establishing a network of national platforms as another approach for engaging actors, as this may seem more feasible to local stakeholders in addressing issues that are pertinent to them. Mechanisms would need to be developed to connect these national platforms to the WBF.

Ultimately, however, members also reiterated that the WBF needs to make efforts to communicate all its accomplishments more effectively to external stakeholders, in order to encourage them to join the Forum. Members of the SC raised concerns on the wide range of activities of the Forum. Mr Liu responded by reporting on the broad range of topics that are to be covered by the Forum in order to satisfy the interests and demands of such a diverse range of members. As such, while there are many demands for activities to be conducted within the Forum, there is also a large gap with respect to the resources available to carry out the requested activities. This is an issue that must be addressed in order to implement the activities of the WBF (for more information, refer to Section 9). He also stressed the need to have a more active participation of WBF members in the activities, as it is only through such collective efforts that the WBF can achieve tangible results.

Finally, the launch of the WBF newsletter in August 2018 was highlighted as an important tool for extending the reach of communication on WBF activities to the wider public.

Internal Communication

The main topic of discussion concerning internal communication revolved around issues faced with the use of Dgroups as the tool for communication exchange. Members approved to switch to Google Groups as an alternative communication tool.

Decisions:

- Create a Google Groups account for the WBF and share information with all WBF members.

Thursday, 29 November 2018

Chaired by Jeroen Kroezen, Solidaridad

8. WBF Action Plan

Taking into consideration the discussions held and concerns expressed on the first day of the meeting, Mr Liu presented the action plans of the three WGs, which highlighted both the deliverables in the short-term and the long-term objectives given the main priority areas of work within each WG. He further highlighted additional activities that the Secretariat must conduct to support the activities of the Forum.

Decisions:

- Share the revised WBF Action Plan with all SC members for review and input.

9. Financial Matters for the Implementation of the WBF Action Plan

In order to implement the activities indicated in the WBF Action Plan, Mr Liu stressed that it is necessary to consider the resources available. Consequently, he presented an overview of the main sources of funding for 2018, which primarily consist of the annual contributions from WBF members and donors, but also in-kind contributions from FAO. Mr Prada then provided an overview of the collection of annual contributions from WBF members for 2017-2018.



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Mr Liu presented the financial forecast for 2019 and highlighted the limited budget that is currently available and therefore the large gap that still exists between the demands from members and the resources available to carry out all of the activities. He provided the example of Bonsucro, a multi-stakeholder organization that aims to promote sustainable sugar cane, which has a budget nearly ten times greater than that of the Forum. As such, he stressed the need to develop proposals and suggestions for increasing the budget of the WBF.

One option discussed in order to raise more funds was to increase the membership base and fees. However, the decision was already made in the SC14 to increase fees every year, starting with a 10% increase in 2019. Members also suggested to obtain additional funding from other major donors and organizations within the WBF members' networks.

SC members also enquired about the role of the WBF in accessing a portion of the budget from the FAO Global Programme on TR4. Mr Liu informed participants that the Programme is still in the fundraising phase, with no pledges received so far, however. In addition, members inquired about the proposal previously made by Chiquita to establish an association of major banana-producing countries, which could ultimately provide funding for WBF projects and activities. However, Mr Andrew Biles, CEO of Chiquita, informed participants that the initiative has not been launched yet due to changes in the management of some of these companies.

Ultimately, another proposal was to reinstate the Fundraising Task Force that had previously been established within the WBF, which would consist of a few WBF members in charge of providing support with project proposals and contacting donors and charities, amongst other activities. It was agreed that the possibility of reactivating the Task Force would be explored, if enough interest from WBF members is expressed.

Furthermore, in discussing the need to increase financial resources, Mr Liu reminded participants of the challenges encountered by the Forum with respect to the precarious contract conditions of the WBF Secretariat staff, and the impacts that this could have on the stability, institutional memory and the long-term sustainability of the Forum. As previously requested in the SC14, he presented two scenarios outlining possible changes in staff size and type of contract for the WBF Secretariat. For the mid-term, it was stated that the ideal situation would be to have a combination of project posts and consultancy positions, but the ultimate goal would be to create project posts for all staff members in the long-term. This would not only provide more stability to the Secretariat staff, but would also ensure the stability and continuity of the Forum. Such scenarios, however, would require a substantial increase in budget. Mr Liu ultimately proposed to have a scenario for 2019 – 2022 in which the Secretariat is comprised of one project post, with the rest of the positions as consultancies. SC members supported the proposal.

Decisions:

- The budgets for 2018 and 2019 are approved.
- Establish a project post for WBF Secretary within the Secretariat for 2019.



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10. Special Session on Banana Occupational Health and Safety (BOHESI)

The session provided an overview of current and future activities of the Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative (BOHESI), a pilot project being conducted in Ecuador and Cameroon with the aim of improving the working conditions of banana workers, their families and the surrounding communities. The project comprises a unique coalition of private, public and civil society actors that have engaged in collaborative efforts to develop and achieve consensus on manual on health and safety in the banana industry. It has received substantial financial support from private companies and donors, particularly IDH.

In Ecuador, the manual has achieved institutional impact, as it was endorsed and launched as the National Manual on Health and Safety in the Banana Industry by the Ministries of Labour and Agriculture in May 2018. It also led to a new Ministerial Agreement ([No. MDT-2018-0108](#)), which establishes the compulsory status of the Manual and legislations included in it. The launch of the Manual in May also led to training activities for public and private sector representatives in banana-producing regions in Ecuador.

The success of the Initiative in Ecuador has led to discussions with government representatives on how to improve the BOHESI initiative, and to explore opportunities to expand the initiative to other commodities. Major emphasis has been made regarding the fact that the initiative has the potential to impact sectors beyond the banana industry, and that the implementation of the initiative not only benefits workers, but also companies and their commercial activities.

In Cameroon, the situation was quite different, as the industry is much smaller compared to that of Ecuador. However, due to its small size, the initiative has been able to engage the main banana-producing companies, as well as a large majority of trade union organizations. However, unlike in Ecuador, government involvement has been difficult to secure. Training sessions were to take place in September 2018, but had to be cancelled due to the current political situation in the country. As a result, IDH has agreed to postpone the activities in Cameroon beyond the project deadline in December 2018. Ultimately, the project has led to the significant engagement of local trade unions and companies, and has supported social dialogue amongst these actors. It is hoped that these relationships will continue, despite the political situation at the moment.

In addition, the activities conducted in Cameroon sparked interest of local stakeholders in Ghana, and activities to adapt the manual to the Ghanaian context will be conducted in 2019. Mr George Kporye from Golden Exotics gave a brief presentation on the activities planned, amongst which is the development of an annex to the BOHESI manual that will provide guidelines and training materials on health and safety risks and prevention for new and expecting mothers working in the banana industry. The information should be available by March 2019 and will be produced in English, Spanish and French, to be included in all versions of the manual.

A proposal is also being developed to expand the project to other banana-producing countries as it is easy to adapt. The manual for workers can be used by any worker around the world, while the manual for trainers would need slight modifications to incorporate national regulations and legislation. Ultimately, members acknowledged that the manual and training materials provide an excellent tool for companies and trade unions.



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11. Governance Matters – Election of the New Executive Board (EB)

Given that the new SC came into effect in August 2018, Mr Liu reiterated that the EB would also need to be renewed. As mentioned in Section 2, the Secretariat had made several calls for expression of interest prior to the SC15 to encourage new SC members to apply for membership in the EB. In the two days of the SC15 meeting, new expressions of interest were also received.

Mr Liu thus presented an overview of the updated list of candidates to show the stakeholder, geographical and gender representation, stating that there was an overrepresentation of European-based organizations. In addition, as a result of the new expressions of interest, he informed members that there were now too many applicants. The current EB thus proposed to establish a system of seat allocation per constituency, limiting their representation to two representatives per stakeholder group. SC members supported the proposal, but requested that the Secretariat develop a new proposal on the type and subtype of constituencies included in the EB. The Secretariat agreed to develop and circulate a proposal on the voting mechanisms for this election, as well as a proposal for the new type of constituencies to be included. Until the election process takes place during the SC16 in May 2019, SC members agreed that the EB candidates for the new EB would represent the interim EB.

Finally, the SC decided to request FAO to extend the WBF project until 31 December 2021.

Decisions:

- Extend the WBF project until 31 December 2021.
- Develop a proposal on the voting mechanisms for the election of the EB.
- Develop a proposal for the new type and subtype of constituencies that compose the EB.
- Declare current EB candidates as the interim EB until EB elections take place in May 2019.

12. Fourth Global Conference of the WBF

As the global conferences take place on average every two years, Mr Liu informed participants that it would soon be time to start organizing the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF. He further indicated that it will be the 10-year anniversary of the Forum, which could be used as an important communication tool for engaging other actors and potential new members.

Prior to the SC15 meeting, only one written proposal (from the Indian Economic Trade Organization) was received for hosting the Fourth Global Conference. Other informal proposals were made to host the next Conference in Abidjan, with the support of the IUF African Banana Workers Union. However, SC members agreed it would not be wise to host the next conference in a banana-producing country.

Members stressed that the location of the next conference should consider the stakeholders that the Forum aims to attract. As such, it was suggested to host the next conference in Europe, possibly in Germany in a back-to-back with the Fruit Logistica trade fair in February 2020. This would allow the Forum to secure more participation from members in Latin American and the Asia-Pacific regions as many of these stakeholders attend the trade fair. SC members supported the proposal and the Secretariat agreed to explore this potential opportunity further.



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Decisions:

- Explore opportunities to host the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF in Europe, back-to-back with the Fruit Logistica event in February 2020.

6. 16th Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC16)

The final topic of discussion focused on the next SC meeting, SC16, which was agreed to take place in May 2019. The Secretariat had previously held discussions with CORBANA to understand the possibilities of hosting the SC16 meeting back-to-back with the ACORBAT event in Miami, which also received support from their end. It was emphasized that it would provide a good opportunity for collaboration between CORBANA and the WBF, but also to engage key stakeholders that will also be present for the ACORBAT event. It would further encourage discussions on important topics related to TR4 and living wages.

Ultimately, SC members supported the proposal to explore the possibilities of hosting the SC16 in Miami during the week of May 27, prior to the ACORBAT event. Dole and Chiquita confirmed that they would be able to provide logistical support for the meeting.

Decisions:

- Explore opportunities to host SC16 on 27 and 28 May in Miami, USA, or on 28 and 29 May, as 27 May is a national holiday in the United States.

7. Conclusions and Next Steps

Mr Kroezen concluded the meeting, highlighting the main discussions and decisions that were made. He emphasized the need to set priorities for the Forum's activities and focus on the top priorities, which include combatting TR4. He reiterated the necessity to increase the resources for the implementation of the WBF Action Plan and re-establish the Task Force on Fundraising. Mr Liu then provided the closing remarks, thanking all of those involved in the preparation and execution of the meeting, including the participants, interpreters, messengers, technicians and the WBF Secretariat staff.

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Annex 1. List of Participants

Fifteenth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC15)

28-29 November 2018

List of participants and observers of SC15

PRESENIAL			
#	Name/Nombre/Nom	Organization/Organización/ Organisation	Participation/ Participación/ Participation
1	Sabine Mueller	ALDI South	Observer
2	José Francisco Zúñiga Cotes	Asociación de Bananeros del Magdalena y La Guajira (ASBAMA)	SC
3	Joaquin Vasquez	Asociacion de produccion agricola libertad florida y palmas (ASOPROLIFLO)	Observer
4	Magne Svartbekk	BAMA	SC
5	Helge Fischer	Banafair	Observer
6	Anna Cooper	Banana Link	SC
7	Daniel Mc Gonigle	Bioversity International	SC
8	Andrew Biles	Chiquita	SC
9	Alain Normand	Compagnie Fruitière	SC
10	Carlos Vargas	Cooperative of Producers of AgroFair (CPAF)	Observer
11	Gilbert Bermudez	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Sindicatos Bananeros (COLSIBA)	SC
12	Morag Webb	Europe-Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Liaison Committee (COLEACP)	SC
13	Wilbert Flinterman	Fairtrade International	SC
14	Kahlil Apuzen-Ito	Foundation for Agrarian Reform Cooperatives in Mindanao Inc.(Farmcoop)	SC
15	Jon Tugwell	Fyffes	SC
16	George Kporye	Golden Exotics	Observer
17	Sonia Cordera	IDH	Observer
18	Elvis Beytullayev	International Labour Organization (ILO)	SC
19	Hernan Manson	International Trade Center (ITC)	SC
20	Svetlana Boincean	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF)	SC
21	Florian Schütze	LIDL	SC
22	Luis Fernando Ceciliano	Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations	SC

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23	Mario Arvelo Caamaño	Mission of Dominican Republic to the United Nations	SC
24	Danilo Xavier Aliaga Sancho	Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations	Observer
25	Edison Paul Vallejo Madrid	Mission of Ecuador to the United Nations	Observer
26	Delphine Babin-Pelliard	Mission of France to the United Nations	SC
27	Chaise Pensini	Nutrano	SC
28	Noura Hanna	Rainforest Alliance	SC
29	Florian Schäfer	Rewe Group	SC
30	Jeroen Kroezen	Solidaridad	SC
31	Gerrit Haatje Jan Kema	Wageningen University	SC
32	Giorgia Bailo	WeWorld Onlus/GVC	Observer
33	Stefano Piziali	WeWorld Onlus/GVC	Observer
34	Kozel Peters	Windward Islands Farmers Association (WINFA)	SC

REMOTELY*			
#	Name/Nombre/Nom	Organization/Organización/ Organisation	Participation/ Participación/ Participation
35	Luud Clercx	Agrofair	SC
36	Marco Tulio	Asociación de Bananeros de Colombia (AUGURA)	Observer
37	Juan Camilo Restrepo	Asociación de Bananeros de Colombia (AUGURA)	Observer
38	Kareen Cuello	Asociación de Bananeros del Magdalena y La Guajira (ASBAMA)	SC
39	Gustavo Gandini	Bananos Ecológicos de la Línea Noroeste (BANELINO)	SC
40	<i>Undefined</i>	Corporación Bananera Nacional (CORBANA)	Observer
41	Xavier Roussel	DOLE	SC
42	Alistair Smith	EUROBAN	SC
43	Silvia Campos	Fairtrade International	SC
44	Hugo Hays	Fyffes	SC
45	Leonela Santana-Boado	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)	SC
46	Sam Dickson	Waitrose	SC

* Participants having attended part of the two days meeting are considered as remote participants