

## **8. Recommendations towards the provision of Decent Work and sustainable livelihoods for women in the global banana industry**

The list of recommendations to follow provides possible strategies and actions for advancing towards the provision of Decent Work and sustainable livelihoods for women in the global banana industry.

The recommendations are intended for discussion at the Third Conference of the World Banana Forum, and the Second World Banana Forum Global Women's Meeting, which will be held in the days immediately prior to the Conference. Participants may also wish to consider recommendations to their national governments that the World Banana Forum could support.

### *Recommendations for Multi-Stakeholder action within the World Banana Forum*

Enable women in production (employed workers and small holders) from different export regions to meet and discuss issues affecting them, in order to learn from each other and develop shared strategies at a global level.

Enable and encourage women in production to discuss their experiences with other women who have influence at other stages of the supply chain.

Conduct analysis on the socio-economic impact of women's low participation in the banana industry for communities in regions where it is the main source of formal employment. Both Colombia and Ecuador would be important case studies, the former for the unusually low levels of women's employment, the latter for the importance of the banana industry to a country where, in 2013, 92% of the land in 3 provinces was dedicated to banana production (MAGAP, 2014).

Conduct more detailed investigations into the situation of female small holders, including an analysis of how the livelihoods of women producers can best be safeguarded and strengthened through multi-stakeholder action, and how women can be supported to participate equally and take leadership roles in their producer associations.

Facilitate a process for company and trade union representatives to collaborate to develop guidance on the safe employment of pregnant women and nursing mothers in banana production, including clear delineation of appropriate tasks and strategies for workforce organisation. This guidance can be incorporated into company OSHE management plans.

Promote policies and standards that address issues of concern to women in banana production and enable multi-stakeholder sharing of best practices, specific recommendations include:

- Produce case studies to share the best practices and experience of the medium sized companies in Ecuador that have policies aimed specifically at promoting women's employment and valuing women's work.
- Carry out research on the productivity benefits of employing women in specific roles often undertaken by men, both in the packing station and on the plantation, as identified by women workers and their representatives.
- Produce case studies of where mature industrial relations between producer companies, and trade unions which have a women's secretariat, have enabled the companies to address issues of concern linked to women's employment, for example gender-based harassment in the workplace, or OSHE and women's reproductive health.

- Monitor the impact of the Chiquita / IUF / COLSIBA Regional Agreement for women workers on Chiquita owned farms and in the Chiquita supply chain, including the Panama Pilot project and the clause on sexual harassment.
- Monitor the impact of the implementation of gender-specific aspects of the Fairtrade International Hired Labour Standards.
- Share learning from the Fairtrade Foundation calling for businesses, governments, NGOs and other agencies to support and incentivise producer organisations to address gender equality, including the relation to business and development outcomes (Fairtrade Foundation, 2015)
- Support and validate continued women-led programmes aimed at empowering women workers and small holders to challenge unequal treatment and harassment. Share best practice of successful initiatives and facilitate exchange of experiences.
- Share examples of government policies that have had a positive impact for women workers and women small holders.
- Continue research into the situation of women working in production in the banana industry, with particular input from national and multi-national companies. Include analysis of the existence of gender-specific and gender-sensitive policies, and the implementation and monitoring of these policies. Priority focus areas should be decided in consultation with the Women's Secretariats of the independent trade unions representing women workers.

#### *Recommendations for Producer Companies*

Actively promote gender balance in the company at all levels:

- Run targeted recruitment campaigns that encourage applications from female candidates for production work;
- Ensure systematic technical skills training for all workers, in order to promote gender equity as well as ensuring that all employees work productively and safely and develop knowledge of a range of functions and tasks;
- Re-evaluate established gendered division of tasks with the aim of increasing women's participation in a broader range of production activities;
- Take active measures to redress the gender imbalance at supervisory level and support women's leadership.

Ensure systematic training in occupational health, safety and environment for all workers, including women's reproductive health and safety. Ensure that all workers have, and use, adequate Personal Protective Equipment.

Strengthen the capacity of joint workplace Health and Safety Committees, ensuring the direct and active participation of women workers.

Introduce gender-sensitive policies on: safe employment of pregnant and nursing women as well as policies that target sexual harassment, with the enforcement of an official complaints procedure. Ensure that pregnant and breast feeding women are properly rotated to avoid inappropriate physically demanding tasks or tasks that involve direct contact with pesticides or chemicals, including in the first months of pregnancy.

Display information on about women's rights related to maternity and breast feeding as established by national law, and actively encourage women to report pregnancies to the company as early as possible.

Provide human relations training to improve the atmosphere in the workplace, including challenging gender-based harassment.

### *Recommendations for Small-scale Producers and their Associations*

Ensure ongoing training in occupational health, safety and environment, including women's reproductive health and safety. Ensure that producers and workers have, and use, adequate Personal Protective Equipment.

Ensure that pregnant and breast feeding women do not undertake physically demanding tasks or tasks that involve direct contact with pesticides or chemicals, including in the first months of pregnancy. Explore strategies, for example the development of mutual support networks, to enable women producers to safeguard their health and that of their unborn/ new born child during pregnancy and breast feeding.

Provide technical training for female small-scale producers to enhance their skills, especially in the use of new technologies for production, processing and the marketing of bananas (Peters, K. 2014)

Take active measures to promote the full participation of female small holders in producer association decision making, including the provision of leadership training.

Create and strengthen Women's Committees to ensure that women-only spaces exist to identify and put gender issues on the agenda.

Provide gender relations awareness raising sessions for men and women producers, including discussion of the socio-economic importance of domestic and care work as well as the discussion on challenging gender-based harassment.

### *Recommendations for certification bodies & retailers who source directly*

Include equitable employment policies in standards and norms as a high priority. Actively monitor levels of women's employment among certified/ supplier producer companies and associations.

Include gender-sensitive policies in standards and norms as a high priority, including specific policies on: safe employment of pregnant and nursing women; and, on sexual harassment, with the enforcement of an official complaints procedure. Actively monitor practice of certified producer companies and associations in implementing their policies.

### *Recommendations for Trade Unions*

Provide training for women members on topics including: labour, gender and reproductive rights; self-esteem; leadership; the socio-economic importance of domestic and care work; and the gender division of household roles.

Provide gender relations awareness raising sessions for men and women workers, including discussion of the socio-economic importance of domestic and care work in the home as well as the discussion on challenging gender-based harassment.

Provide leadership training to ensure the active participation of women in organisation structures and in company and supply chain negotiations, including promoting 'the incorporation of women into the committees negotiating Collective Bargaining Agreements' (COLSIBA, 2012).

Create and strengthen Women's Committees to ensure that women-only spaces exist to identify and put gender issues on the agenda.

Negotiate to ensure that companies do not discriminate against women leaders, and that they make commitments to incorporate the needs of women workers in company agreements, policies and organisational structures. Incorporate targeted recruitment drives and women's employment goals into Collective Bargaining Agreements, as well as other gender-sensitive clauses.

Advocate for formal technical educational processes aimed at better qualifying women agro-industrial workers to work safely and productively (COLSIBA, 2012).

Collaborate across countries and regions to develop a set of recommendations to companies and certification bodies on strategies for responding to women workers' needs for provision of child care in order to: advance this priority within the space of the WBF; and, support negotiations at company and national levels.

National and International Trade Union Confederations: Build the capacity of trade unions to provide gender training with both women and male workers on the issues of gender discrimination and women's rights within the workplace and at home.

As Irene Sandoval, Senior Communications and Corporate Responsibility Specialist, Chiquita Brands International, stated during the research in late 2014:

*"Our recommendation is that other companies in the industry put gender issues on the agenda, that they make it a priority. It should be included in company targets and specific spaces should be created at corporate level to ensure that women workers increase their competitive edge and participation in the productive workforce. We also need to invite governments and NGOs into these discussions to input on education, training, resources and policies to help the advancement towards greater equality and justice".*

The Global Women's Meeting preceding the Third Conference of the World Banana Forum (WBF) and the ongoing gender activities being driven forward by members of WBF's permanent Working Group 03 on Labour Rights and Other Workplace Issues provide vital multi stakeholder fora for discussing, developing and effecting the implementation of the recommendations detailed above.

It is, however, clear that the outputs of the Global Women's Meeting being held before the Third Conference need to be incorporated into the mainstream activities of the WBF and its three permanent Working Groups; that gender is recognised as a cross-cutting issue that is relevant to all aspects of the WBF's work and governance; and women representatives at all levels are empowered to take forward initiatives to increase and improve women's employment and livelihoods in the male-dominated global banana export industry.