

## FNET's Responsible Recruitment Working Group

### Minutes of the meeting

30<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 14.00 – 15.10 – Virtual / Zoom Meeting

#### 1. Attendees:

| Name - Business  | Name - Business                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Andrew Nicholson – 2sfg   | 8. Ed Smith – Aldi GB & Ireland       |
| 2. Sharon Cross – G's Fresh  | 9. Joanne Gouldbourne - Princes       |
| 3. Lynsey – G's Fresh  | 10. Emma Henry – Berry World          |
| 4. Louise McCafferty – Joseph Robertson  | 11. Carl Cooper – Westbridge Foods    |
| 5. Sarah Robertson - Joseph Robertson  | 12. Rebecca Fitchet– Angus Soft Fruit |
| 6. Rick Fletcher – Greencore   | 13. Courtenay Forbes - Tesco          |
| 7. Rachel Dickens - Asda   | 14. Linda Beresford - FNET            |
| <b>Apologies</b><br>Sam Ludlow- Taylor – Waitrose<br>Rachel Munns – World Wise Foods | <b>Guest Speaker</b>                  |

**Meeting recording link: RR 30 Jan 2024 recording (available for a limited time of 2 months)**

**RR 30 Jan [recording](#) Passcode: 6ND6N%\*C**

Passcode: Agenda slide [deck here](#).

#### 2. EPP Commitment Survey Results

- The survey carried out in January 2024 to WG members can be summarised as: -
  - 18 completed the survey
  - 77% commitment to EPP, 23% N Commitment
  - Those with public reporting used
    - Modern Slavery Statement x 6
    - Other x 6
    - Website x 3
    - Sustainability Reports x 2
  - Not Published x 5
  - The 23% who had Not Committed to EPP (4 members) reported
    - No plans to commit x 1
    - In discussion x 2
    - Commit to Prohibit Workers paying a fee for recruitment but not EPP x1

#### 3. Progress Made - Member of the WG invited to share any updates

- Courtenay -Tesco, opened up the discussion with the good news that recruitment fees in Malaysia and Thailand now include the passport fee which had been a challenge to achieve.
- Sharon – G's Fresh shared progress in recruitment and labour providers has settled down since the same period last year. Number of returners had increased which has helped reduce the need for new recruitment. “Boot on the Ground” strategy has been one of the biggest tools to secure insights/information from workers. Information has been shared with MSIN and GLA from any yellow flags found.
- Carl Cooper – Westbridge Foods shared with the group the news that CF have agreed to repay all passport costs to migrant workers in addition to previously agreed recruitment fees. This was agreed over the Xmas period. CP will cascade the policy to the remainder of the group activities. Although this is great news for the worker there is concern by outside

agencies in Thailand that this will give CP an unfair advantage when recruiting so needs to be managed carefully.

#### 4. Emerging Risks

- Courtenay – Tesco identified as a result of new legislation company claims will be scrutinised which could lead to a move away from public EPP commitments
- Rachel – Asda, agreed that there is focus and scrutiny on all reporting and concerns around 'Greenwashing' are becoming prevalent. Asda are preparing a new suite of HR Policies which will include more scrutiny and we all know the report from Oxfam on HRIA's asked retailers and brands to look at quality not quantity and this will lead to some changes going forward
- Sharon – G's raised concerns that the £50,000 guarantor is a risk to the individual. Lots of legal cases coming through against the Home Office, we are watching the space.
- Carl Cooper – WB – Political instability in the region for example Myanmar continues to create a risk to workers, we have also seen this in Ukraine when the war broke out.
- Rachel – Asda has noticed that payment of fees has started to become an issue in social compliance audits, with a concern that these cannot be closed out in the time period permitted for close out. Reimbursement does not fix the issue, so concern that this is affecting supplier rating. Sharon from G's supported the concern that this was unlikely to be closed out in 29 days when it wasn't previously reported. Carl suggested that these are being reported as Major or Critical depending on the auditor view on the action taken by management when identified. If there is no policy in place and no action to address the issue by the business it will be a CRITICAL, however with the same issue raised, if the auditor is assured there is a robust policy and a remediation in place it will be reported as a Major. This will continue to be an issue until SMETA X is launched.
- Sharon – G's confirmed the new SMETA SAQ has lots of questions related to this and it is easy for practitioners to not ask the questions and them completed as a NO, which is a cause for concern. Those that are transparent about the issues are negatively reported for honest reporting.
- Rick - Greencore – SMETA X should cover this issue in the collaborative stage with members as it is developed. **FNET to request an update as agenda item at the next meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March. - LB**
- Andrew – 2stg – has a query to be put to SEDEX for the next call. **Send to LB to prepare a summary of issues. - AN**
- Rick – Greencore – there is an anecdotal reported low level of informal recruitment fees, £50 here and there, not feed by unscrupulous operators but by friends and family networks. This needs to be addressed and businesses need to consider due diligence to ensure it doesn't get out of hand.

#### 5. Resource Sharing

- Courtenay - Tesco, shared Upcoming SWS grower roadshows are taking place across the UK in spring (see details at end of the minutes. Issara are opening offices in Nepal – useful to anyone with supply chains using Nepal migrant labour.

#### 6. Working Group Planning 2024

- The workplan developed with the Leads and FNET team was shared with the group. Courtenay reinforced the importance of all WG activity is to value add for members. The Board are tasked to ensure that all WG achieves this. To that end, we would request any concerns, comments, that will help members support their businesses as they drive responsible recruitment can be shared with the leads. The plan can be adopted to add topics requested by the WG members. **Action: ALL**

- Challenge to review the metric for success of the WG – open to ideas to adjust the metric in red below. **Action: ALL**

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Potential member commitment: Public commitment to employer pays and to roll out the learning with at least 10 suppliers?


**Summary**


- Move to Operationalize the Commitment to Employer Pays Principle. Define what we mean by Commitment to EPP, Identify and Discuss the barriers, Implement Effective Remedy and start to consider metrics to measure impact.


**Outputs:**


- Define what we mean by Commitment to EPP – seek clarity and alignment for members – The What....
- Identify the barriers to implementation of EPP –involve commercial/buyer
- Promote Guidance for Operationalizing EPP with case studies covering the how
- Implement Effective Remedy
- Collaborative Deep Dive into different geography such as South America
- Continue to review Modern Slavery Statements in relation to Responsible Recruitment and develop metrics to measure the impact of EPP
- Increase members with Responsible Recruitment Policy & a commitment to EPP
- *MOU for intelligence sharing with MSIN*
- *Ongoing Collective action on Seasonal Worker scheme taskforce*

Working Group Leads

  
Rachel Manns,  
World Wide Foods

  
Courtesay Forbes,  
Tesco

  
Sam Ludlow-Taylor,  
Waitrose

  
PM: Linda

Board representative

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FOOD NETWORK FOR ETHICAL TRADE – Confidential

## 7. Workshop 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024

- A workshop is our next focus for this group. We want to provide a clear guide to members on what is meant by commitment to EPP, is it still viable? identify the barriers and look at remedy. The plan for the session is below. We expect it to be extremely popular and would encourage single business participation to the event to allow more member input.
- Sharon – G's - highlighted that remediation is a challenge in businesses where there could be fraud. How can we stop abuse /fraud of the system whereby workers are remediated several times between differing businesses.
- Agreed this would be a good topic for the discussion, with mitigation at source. - **CF/RM/LB**
- All members are required to complete the EPP survey by 23<sup>rd</sup> February to be send out by 1<sup>st</sup> Feb - **ALL**

## 29<sup>th</sup> February Workshop - Draft Plan

### Objective – How do we get alignment on EPP?

Location: John Lewis Partnership HQ, 171 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 5NN

Time: 10 – 4pm

Agenda:

- What is Commitment to EPP? – what do we mean by that?
  - Is it consistency across all geographies? Raise the inconsistencies and debate
  - Discuss How to Implement EPP, ask IHRB to discuss and facilitate the Barriers
- Output – Develop aligned approach for FNET
- Develop Roadmap

**Speakers:**

 Laura McManus (Woolworths), Neil Wilkins - IHRB,, Rosey Hurst -Impactt – RR from the lens of the victim – Bethan Hunt - RRT, **All FNET Retailer Members**