



Climate & Human Rights working group – learning from 2024

This document is a summary of the case studies shared in the Climate Change and Human Rights working group meeting on 31st January. Members of the working group were asked to share some of their work and learning from activity on climate and human rights in 2024 and their priorities for 2025.

Key learning

It is important to recognise that all the businesses participating in the working group have different structures, priorities and resourcing allocated to this work, so it is not relevant to infer any trends from these case studies. However, some of the challenges and issues experienced by members are summarised below:

- Cross-departmental communication and collaboration is key to integrating human rights into the business model. Members have varied ways of doing this. Human rights might sit in the technical team, or as a separate function in the business and how the work is merged within the different business functions has an impact on how integrated the business' understanding and approach to human rights and sustainability more broadly.
- Fresh produce businesses might have to mitigate climate impacts very directly because it might influence supply, however all businesses notice an impact of climate change in their supply chains. Where a business sits in the supply chain influences the amount of visibility and leverage they have to identify, understand and mitigate impact.
- Risk assessment data does not necessarily pick up what suppliers are doing to mitigate climate risks, so businesses will need to use other sources (site visits, phone calls) to build a more complete picture.
- Lower tiers of the supply chain - suppliers have “reporting fatigue” so a business needs to prioritise and have efficient communications on climate/human rights, and demonstrate why data is being collected or measures are being requested.

Case studies

All the case studies are anonymised, and listed only as a business “type”.

Retailer - Summary of work in 2024-2025

Partnership with Nottingham Human Rights Lab to understand the impact of climate transition plans. When it is public, hoping to share with FNET.

- Practical research work with La Isla Network in Spain on heat stress in Spain, They'll be seeking to share that learning with other suppliers in 2025.
- FNET resources are useful as is hearing what other initiatives are doing via working group meetings or fortnightly calls is really valuable.

Retailer - Priorities for 2025

To move from reactive to proactive and look at the resilience of sites impacted by climate change, workers wages not being paid following crop failure. Important to ensure it is seen in time. Exploring the many resources and identifying what is helpful to the business. The current structure is to have a pragmatic approach to implementation and want to see the whole picture of big supply chains. Cross functional teams within the business are key to influencing buyers and commercial teams.

Fresh produce business

Global fresh produce supplier with lots of growers and farm suppliers around the world of varying sizes.

Structure of climate and human rights function

Business has different sized supplier farms so the supplier relationship within the business is held by one technical person who has a combined ethical, technical & sustainability approach. It helps to triangulate sustainable, ethical and commercial and not confuse the supplier with lots of information requests coming from different departments. Relationships are key.

Work in 2024

- Currently the ethical and environmental approaches sit side by side – might one day integrate them and they use WWF and Yale's EPI tools. Risks have been identified and the next steps are to go through all sites to prioritise them on risk assessment
- The FNET water and heat guidance have also been adapted into their approach and preparation work with suppliers.
- Important to ensure the best course of action – how do you identify what to do and what the issues are?
- Business also asks suppliers whether they have done a risk assessment.
- When they start doing prioritisation they will assess whether they do lots of business with the supplier i.e. have leverage, versus not having any leverage at all. UK asks more information and commitment from suppliers so need to balance the requests with the commercial relationship.

- Always need to have more information to understand the context of high-risk suppliers – something might be indicated via a risk assessment, but it might not actually be an issue so the next step is a conversation with supplier and then might be a site visit. It is important to spend time on a site to understand what the risk is.
- As a business they are where they were 12 years ago with ethical, so just beginning the process of integrating climate and human rights and can see the journey ahead.

Global fresh produce supplier

Work in 2024

- Active participation and funding in WRAP water roadmap projects - South Africa - Western Cape and in Northern Chile catchment where there are avocado growers. Increase knowledge and mitigation in place.
- Carbon reduction work in scope 3. Looking at carbon removals for commercial apples and pears in supply chain with a pilot - soil organic carbon - use as a tool - how to address hard to abate farming emissions. Requirement
- HRDD - people director on FNET board. Meaningful participation and representation of women and minority groups on
- Used FNET resources to send information out to suppliers. Took some information, tailored it and added some additional suggestions with in-country managers who have the local experience.

Priorities for coming work

Conducting assessments in high-risk locations. Building assessment templates and evidence of risk mitigation and potential improvement. Build better environmental and HRDD link – while there's a gap in standards.

Global fresh produce supplier

Work in 2024

Very large supply base that they are keen to consolidate. Would have liked to send a summary doc to suppliers. Want to focus on actionable things. Used information from FNET forum to inform supplier visits. Rather than big internal audits - smaller pared down version where it can be more led by in-country teams. Has influenced ethical questions. Want to do more with the WWF risk filter to create an environmental risk assessment. And bring more together with the human rights risk assessment.

- Data capturing conundrum - improving tool and accuracy - has increased the number of medium risk suppliers - also doing a carbon footprint by product. Interesting to see how you can reduce your footprint while you grow as a business.
- There is a qualified auditor in the business - targeted support around audits.
- The business is working with WRAP and Better Origin to reduce food waste. Also work on packaging sustainability. Can improve life of blueberries with additional packaging - trade-offs against plastic reduction.

Priorities

Environmental requirements are quite new and they vary from country - Italy and Spain are ahead of SA, but may struggle to communicate it or express it in forms. Need to do in country visits to really know how people are getting on.

Legislation coming means grievance mechanisms are a big thing - a suggestion box is not sufficient.

Global fresh produce supplier

Business in the UK - wholesale and food service - retail is relatively small.

Work in 2024

Go green group taking actions internally and lots of internal training. Understanding what's coming for the business. Better data capture that is seen in carbon reporting.

2025 biggest plan is to update resilience plans for all sites and suppliers - a world map, a heat map for strategic suppliers and focus on some to work with on projects to make sure they are ready for the future including reporting requirements.

Priorities

Bringing environment more into decision making. New era of sourcing that is facing the sector and requires more education for growers and suppliers. Struggle of resources and time management and identifying the right expertise. Training on future questions for growers and suppliers.

Agent – ambient tinned produce

Supply canned produce to customers – no owned factories. Supply chains can be simple e.g. product grown and canned in one country, or more complex e.g. beans and pulses with lots of suppliers so more challenging to get data.

Structure of climate and human rights function

Technical and responsible sourcing colleagues are involved and they are also conducting market context info via commercial teams. What does a multi-disciplinary team actually look like – it is commercially driven?

Work in 2024

- Struggle to get information from suppliers. An integrated risk assessment is being developed and they are also working on a contingency plan for resilience of supply chain – food fraud (substitution), climate change. Understanding what HRDD is being conducted by the suppliers and where e.g. climate change might risk production so the supplier will substitute with other products (food fraud a concern). Hard to get grower level data – need to do capacity building with the suppliers.
- Has looked at some products (chocolate, tinned fish with ingredients) trying to understand the risk. Challenging to assess all the ingredients, look at claims, assess human rights against country of origin and understand what the threats might be. Full risk assessment includes food security, fraud, economic, human rights risk assessment use different sources – once find out what they are will then visit suppliers to find out what the risks are. And what the controls are. Plan to do first bit as desk-top assessments and then to follow-up with business. Need to improve knowledge on supply chains.
- There is a budget to do the trips and identify what the high-risk sites are, and customers are regularly requesting information about risk. Technical and responsible sourcing – also doing market context from commercial teams to understand context.

Protein importer

Fish and poultry products from Asia and distribute in UK. Like an agent so reliant on another technical team in-country – 3 tier process to get to the right team to get info from sites. Information is collected via Sedex and Manufacture 2030 – every year they ask sites about water, recycling, waste, and sustainability projects – gathering some data. How to combine the two sources of information to not duplicate the questions for suppliers?

Need to translate questions to suppliers and explain why data is important.

Work in 2024

- Data gathering year.
- In the future, plan to ask questions on how are businesses working on extreme heat – focussing on working conditions, health and safety, animal welfare – do the sites foresee issues and are there mitigation measures in place?
- Also want to focus on specific higher risk species.
- Important to collect information onsite because there might be policies and practices in place, but not being picked up in Sedex or in the endless admin

and forms. How can the business do it in the most effective way, and get additional verification. In their experience sometimes there is a lot of action on the ground e.g. community work and H&S provisions, but it isn't communicated well to the business.

Manufacturing business

Produce ready-to-go meals - chilled.

Work in 2024

- Following the Climate & Human Rights working group on the 9th of July, all the amazing case studies were discussed internally.
- They risk assessed their suppliers and identified the ones to focus on immediately. A tomato supplier in Turkey was the first project. They requested that the supplier would bring a caravan on the fields during harvest, with a toilet and a fridge and they made sure the fridge had adequate cold water and snacks. They created shaded areas using umbrellas under the neighbouring trees and chairs and short frequent breaks were taking place for workers to rest.
- A customer visit followed and their positive feedback encouraged the supplier to carry on. The workers were happy as well to be able to have short frequent breaks under the shade as the tomato plants are low on the soil. Feedback from workers is that they need to be persuaded to take regular breaks as they aren't used to it, worry that employers will think they aren't working as they are supposed to.
- They emphasized how determinantal to health heat stress is and shared a questionnaire with all their suppliers for completion.
- All these good practices are to be rolled out and more actions implemented in 2025 and plan to identify further issues and spread learning to other suppliers (e.g artichokes)

UK manufacturer – sandwiches and ready-to-go meals

Work in 2025

- Important and evolving area in the business, all parts of the business have been in discussions want to deepen understanding.
- 2025 goal is to research and understand how climate change/events impact human rights. How business decisions impact climate change and impact stakeholders located in these areas.
- FNET risk assessment tool in use – and exploring how environmental tools can be overlayed

- Internal conversations can slow down processes but sustainability is high on the agenda with board open to listen.
- Plan is to have an Ownership Model – 2 x hr direct operation/supply chain. 10 = in total to plan owner is from Senior Leadership get buying and importance, building accountability from beginning.
- Sustainable business management group meet every quarter. Really good governance and interest. There might be competing priorities.
- How to educate the business financial/human resources
- CSRD/CSDDD = used as framework
- Recognise risks -but how business/leaders will help us go about it
- Risk to crop and moving business away from regions impact on community in the are

Food service

Work in 2024

- Risk assessment tool review was really useful and took this back internally and brought into in-house risk assessments
- Understanding own risks differently, now looking by volume and product based on climate incidents also. Doing a map of climate impact on stores (cf store closures in Glasgow from recent storm) and seeking to overlay that with impact on suppliers/workers.
- Learned about ASI forced labour tool via FNET
- Find the Climate Issues XLS sheet really good – can we have more of a push on people updating it and share real case studies as a visual map to make more of an impact with that document?

Action for 2025

- Integrating environment and human rights into supplier questionnaire for 2025, and into supplier meetings. Have learned that Just Transition terminology is not familiar to/clear to suppliers, so asking questions differently.
- New scheme of staff volunteer projects, seeking to bring opportunities related to climate and human rights impact into that.
- Some of the sourcing challenges around lack of young farmers in the UK, so need to address that. Indirectly related to both climate and social issue changes.

Additional suggestions

Actionable suggestions from suppliers

Assessments on water in Peru – to work more closely with colleagues (M&S)

What to do with guides and financial viability of sites – what can we do in terms of resilience – what is best practice

One key suggestion: can we turn the XLS of climate / human rights impacts into a map with the same info made visual ...

- Find the Climate Issues XLS sheet really good – can we have more of a push on people updating it and share real case studies as a visual map to make more of an impact with that document?