



***Recommendations for Food Retailers to Address Gender Inequality in Global Supply Chains
June 2021***

To be reviewed alongside Oxfam's [Workers' Rights Recommendations for Food Retailers](#)

The following policy recommendations were developed through an extensive literature review of the issues facing women workers and farmers in global supply chains, in-depth interviews and consultations with women rights' organizations and Oxfam colleagues in Brazil, India, Pakistan, Thailand and South Africa, and the analysis of Oxfam's global Supermarket Scorecard. Oxfam seeks a fundamental shift towards gender equality in supply chains that will need reforms in national regulations and changes in supply chain practices. We call on supermarkets to do the following:

1) Commit to publishing a *gender policy*, by the end of June 2022, covering own operations and supply chains.

The policy should:

- a) Recognize the specific challenges that disproportionately impact women in agricultural supply chains, including their hidden or unpaid productive roles and women's unpaid care work burden; and give an outline of the root causes of those challenges.
- b) Recognize that the root causes of gender inequality often intersect with other forms of discrimination based on race, migrant status, sexual orientation and social status, and that these can make women much more vulnerable.
- c) Commit to gender equality in hiring, training and promotion.
- d) Commit to annual disclosure of gender data and the employer's gender pay gap.
- e) Promote women's representation and rights throughout workplaces/supply chains and guarantee best endeavours at regular, meaningful and constructive engagement with trade unions.
- f) Provide health and safety measures that are gender sensitive.
- g) Commit to engage and validate this policy with stakeholders, including women's rights organizations and local worker-led organizations.¹

2) Commit to publish, by the end of 2022, a gender action plan (with timebound targets) that outlines the following commitments:

- a) Systematically track and disclose, by the end of 2023, gender-disaggregated data for the company's food supply chains to establish which of them involve a high proportion of women.

- b) Achieve meaningful progress in closing the gender pay gap by the end of 2023, in at least three high-human-rights risk food supply chains, and eventually, across all such food supply chains at production/farm levels.
- c) Publish an implementation plan, aligned with ILO Convention 190, by the end of 2023 to address gender-based violence (including sexual harassment and abuse) during the recruitment process, in the workplace and when travelling to and from work in food supply chains, and commit to support suppliers in the process.
- d) Support suppliers to remove barriers to women's representation in workplaces/supply chains and report on progress by end of 2023, in at least three high-human-rights-risk food supply chains by the end of 2023.
- e) Increase the proportion of food products that the company sources from women agricultural producers/processors and women-owned businesses in global supply chains.
- f) Support suppliers in three high-human-rights risk food supply chains, (at least 25% by the end of 2022) with the resources and information needed to promote gender equality across the supply chain.
- g) Provide guidance, in line with international standards, and support suppliers to ensure appropriate and sufficient occupational health and safety provisions and maternity protection/family leave policies² that are gender sensitive by the end of 2023.

3) Commit to embedding a *gendered analysis* within the company's existing human rights due diligence (HRDD) approach by the end of 2022. This includes the following actions:

- a) Publish a saliency mapping that includes at least three high-human-rights risk food supply chains where women workers/farmers are most prevalent.³
- b) Based on the saliency mapping, publish at least one human rights impact assessment (HRIA) focusing on the impact of supply chain operations on women (paid and unpaid) in a high-human-rights risk food supply chain, within two years, and subsequently conduct and publish at least one HRIA with a focus on women annually.
- c) For each gender-focused HRIA: commit to publishing a timebound gender action plan⁴ for improving the position and conditions of women based on the findings of the respective HRIAs.
- d) Engage with and validate the analysis and plans with women's rights organizations and local stakeholders throughout the process and report about the engagement.

4) Commit to ensuring that workers in all high-human-rights risk food supply chains have access to gender-sensitive grievance mechanisms by 2023, with demonstrable progress in at least one supply chain by 2022 on the following:

- a) Demonstrating that women have safe and effective access to the grievance mechanism and remedy, and how any barriers are addressed.
- b) Disclosing details of its functionality (especially regarding involvement of local women's rights organizations).
- c) Disclosing how the grievance mechanism meets the quality criteria of the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.⁵

5) Demonstrate what actions it is taking to understand and tackle low wages and bring them in line with living wage benchmarks in three food supply chains, and commit to publish annually (starting by the end of 2022) gender-disaggregated data on the amount of wage increases.

6) Commit to advocate, either individually or with others, to address the root causes of gender inequality in food supply chains, and report annually about efforts and outcomes.

- a) This could include advocacy to: reform national regulations to eliminate gender injustice; ensure appropriate and sufficient occupational health and safety provisions; provide maternity/family leave that are gender sensitive; protect and promote women's rights in supply chains in identified high-risk countries; and encourage recognition of hidden or unpaid productive roles and women's greater unpaid care work burden.

NOTES

¹ A women's rights organization can be defined as a civil society organization with an overt focus on women's or girls' rights, gender equality or a feminist purpose; these organizations play a central role in spearheading change in support of gender equality. (from OECD: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/OECD-report-on-womens-rights-organisations.pdf>)

² This should include social protections for women and access to maternity healthcare, and provide fair flexible working arrangements and homeworking when possible (https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---multi/documents/publication/wcms_764977.pdf)

³ The mapping should include the following data: (1) number of women in those supply chains (down to the cooperatives/produce groups level); (2) women's employment status, pay and position; and (3) information related to care responsibilities.

⁴ In line with ILO Convention 190 and based on country-specific context.

⁵ To comply with the UN Guiding Principles, grievance mechanisms should be 'legitimate, accessible, predictable, equitable, transparent, rights-compatible, a source of learning, and based on engagement and dialogue'. See United Nations. (2011). *Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework*. pp. 33–34. New York and Geneva: United Nations. Retrieved from: https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/guidingprinciplesbusinessshr_en.pdf