



Position statement on human rights

February 2021

All people should be treated equally, with fairness, dignity and respect and with the access to recourse or remedy. However, it continues to be the case that some people in the agricultural supply chain, whether living in poverty and in fragile states or in developed countries, are still vulnerable to human rights abuses and exploitation. When people thrive, they are better able to meet their own needs as well as the needs of their families and communities. Industry as a whole can thrive and ensure a more resilient future for all.

Our key principle here is to achieve **“an agricultural sector that ensures human rights are respected, notably by providing a decent and fair working environment, free from forced or child labour, any type of discrimination and disciplinary practices, where work is appropriately compensated and managed, with access to suitable sanitary, housing and transportation infrastructures and services for farmers, farm workers and their families”**.

Responsible value chains are managed in accordance with national laws, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights¹, the International Bill of Human Rights²; the International Labour Organization (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work³; and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies⁴ and often applied through industry or commodity-specific codes and frameworks. Where national law directly conflicts with these standards, companies rightly follow national law, but seek ways to honour the principles of these internationally recognized human rights.

¹ https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesBusinessHR_EN.pdf

² <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/factsheet2rev.1en.pdf>

³ <http://www.ilo.org/declaration/lang--en/index.htm>

⁴ [Guidelines for MNEs - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/guidelines-for-mne/)

It is key for companies, including SAI Platform members, to ensure a commitment to respect human rights across all food and beverage value chains, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. This includes having a company policy statement and undertaking due diligence on human rights, and establishing remediation processes where material (see Appendix 1 and 2), and commitments to:

1. Eliminate

- a. forced labour.
- b. the worst forms of child labour⁵.
- c. coercion, harassment, or discrimination in any form against workers.
- d. differences in treatment for different genders, e.g. equal pay, access to training, opportunities for promotion for equal work.

2. Provide

- a. protection of workers' rights to associate, organize, and collectively bargain including empowerment for any under-represented groups.
- b. access to grievance mechanisms and legal recourse/remedy.
- c. payment of legal minimum wage, with wages negotiated collectively and increasing the focus on living wages / income and livelihoods.
- d. safe working facilities, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and proper training to avoid and reduce accidents and injury.
- e. protection from the impact of agricultural activities on community rights. For example, clearing of forests for agricultural production that threaten the homes and livelihoods.

3. Implement

- a. provision of potable water, hygiene and sanitation for workers.
- b. good housing conditions for employees and their families, when living on the premises.
- c. effective management systems, policies, procedures and improvement plans on labour issues.

Real progress requires proactive and ongoing engagement with stakeholders and collaborative action. The choices our members make do have impact.

⁵ as per ILO Convention 182 on child labour.

As a membership organisation of over 120 members across the food and beverage industry, SAI Platform recognises our role in supporting our members to realise their responsibility to respect human rights.

- **We have a shared intent to address these challenges.** Success requires a common approach, built on strong science. Practical solutions need to be adopted at scale in order to provide economic, social and environmental viability of the farming sector.
- **We have developed guidance documents** on Child Labour and Forced Labour, which are intended to help to facilitate the development of SAI Platform's Members' own policies and practices in these areas that build from the UN Declaration of Human Rights.
- **We work collaboratively, within SAI Platform membership and across partner organisations,** in addressing human rights issues to most effectively catalyse and scale success, as the magnitude of the challenge requires joint action.
- **We prioritise our workplans and projects** in support of progress on human rights issues.
- **We endorse the leadership already shown** by many of our members and other industry partners, by showing a clear position on the issues and providing support, good practices and common voice for all.

SAI Platform's theory of change

The [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#), the [International Bill of Human Rights](#), the [OECD Guidelines for Multinational Companies](#) and the [International Labour Organization \(ILO\) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#), provide open access to good practices and lessons learned, and the tools to help facilitate and demonstrate our members' implementation of the corporate responsibility to respect human rights.

SAI Platform works with all the parts of the crop and animal protein value chain across all aspects of sustainability - economic, environmental and social change. We position our work as part of a wider set of activities and a wider community of organisations and initiatives with similar aims.

We choose our activities based on:

- The priorities of our members and the raw materials they produce and source.
- The scale of opportunity for action and the change we can achieve.
- The potential for SAI Platform to have an impact through open collaboration, sharing and advocacy of best farming practices, at farm and along the supply chain that include consideration of human rights.

SAI Platform has a role to develop and support the systemic changes required. We will:

- **Support our members to improve their own practices.**
 - Using our tools and solutions such as the [European Roundtable for Beef Sustainability \(ERBS\)](#), the [Farm Sustainability Assessment \(FSA\)](#), and the [Sustainable Dairy Partnership \(SDP\)](#), as well as on the ground projects to deliver and scale positive change.
 - Engaging with local stakeholders to implement practical solutions through collaborative action at producer level to address human rights issues.
- **Work with thought leaders and partners** to improve data and methodologies and apply the best available science to our strategies.
- **Support our members with implementation of practical solutions and metrics** to help them adopt best practices for human rights at farm level and across the supply chain.
- **Ensure transparency and provide open access to best practices**, whether they are members or not of SAI Platform, to support the widespread adoption of change across the whole industry.
- **Support the call on governments** to establish policy commensurate with the need for change.
- **Support the demonstration of the business case** for agriculture and identify suitable funding to underwrite the transition needed at farm level to respect human rights.

Current situation

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.⁶

Over one billion people work in agriculture globally⁷, with up to half of them working as hired employees and many as migrant labour whose rights are often limited or obstructed in practice. Yet, despite the critical jobs they perform, agricultural workers remain among the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

Significant, complex and systemic human rights abuses and challenges persist in the global economy and affect people in a number of extended food and beverage supply chains. From slavery, worst forms of child labour, modern slavery, gender inequality, racism and more, the issues are diverse. Such challenges are often linked with poverty, weak rule of law, or the vulnerability of migrant workers.

⁶ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/index.html>

⁷ <https://blog.resourcewatch.org/2019/05/30/map-of-the-month-how-many-people-work-in-agriculture/>

The challenges of forced and child labour are significant. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that there are more than 18 million people engaged in forced labour within the private economy⁸ globally and 85 million children engaged in the worst forms of child labour⁹, the majority of which are working in the agricultural sector.¹⁰ The international community confirmed its shared commitment to taking “immediate and effective measures” to eliminate forced labour and worst forms of child labour in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, announced in 2015.

Most companies with leading human rights programmes are engaged in undertaking due diligence and monitoring and remediating human rights issues focused on the severity of risk to people, including but also beyond tier-one of their supply chains. The most severe issues – such as forced labour and worst forms of child labour – are often found much further into their supply chains. Many prioritise key materials or regions that pose the highest or most salient risk to people not only the most relevant or material risk to the company, and more broadly, they look to partner with others to achieve leverage and a more holistic outcome as an approach to this complexity.

Metrics and demonstrated outcomes from programmes underway are often inconsistent as a result and often track the interventions made with assumed consequential outcomes. The rigour and comparability of assessing human rights outcomes continues to develop and more common frameworks are being developed to drive greater transparency, accountability and impact.

Addressing the challenges faced to ensure human rights are fully considered and respected across agriculture supply chains requires sustained and coordinated action from government, civil society and the private sector, to work together and holistically address the root causes of such challenges.

By working with others, such as business and human rights organisations, academic and research initiatives that focus on business and human rights, other business-led organisations in the food and beverage industry and other partners, we can help spread knowledge and build consensus amongst our members and support their own validation of the actions and progress needed.

By working collaboratively within our membership of SAI Platform and across partner organisations within the sector and whole value chain, we can most effectively catalyse and scale our shared success and address the challenges before us.

⁸ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_181961/lang--en/index.htm

⁹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--dgreports/--dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/Informationresources/WCMS_747421/lang--en/index.htm

Appendices

The two frameworks below provide guidance on implementing the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. They have been developed by Shift and more detailed guidance and examples are available at: <https://shiftproject.org/>

Appendix 1: The Three Pillars Of The UN Guiding Principles On Business And Human Rights



31 Principles, each with Commentary regarding their meaning and implications

Appendix 2: Key elements of Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) for Business

