

WAITROSE RESPONSE: BUSINESS & HUMAN RIGHTS RESOURCE CENTRE QUERY
19/04/23

STATEMENT:

A Waitrose spokesperson said:

“We take responsible sourcing seriously, and continue to work closely with our suppliers to address the issues raised by this report. We’re doing so both directly and through the Spanish Ethical Trade Forum, where we work with other retailers to drive change across the sector.”

YOUR SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

Describe how you undertake human rights due diligence on suppliers sourcing from these regions:

We use a range of methods to monitor due diligence of suppliers which we work with, including in-person visits, independent audits and other assessments.

You can read in more detail our Human Rights Policy [here](#).

Questions to all UK Supermarkets:

A number of points were put to all nine major UK supermarkets:

1. Our research suggests [supermarket] is likely to sell fruit and/or vegetables grown in the regions of Almeria and Huelva in southern Spain, and has done so in the past. Do you source from Almeria and/or Huelva, either directly or via intermediary suppliers?

Yes we do.

2. Evidence shows that farms in the regions of Almeria and Huelva are breaking eight out of nine ETI Base Codes on: Employment is freely chosen, Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected, Working conditions are safe and hygienic, Living wages are paid, Working hours are not excessive, No discrimination is practiced, Regular employment is provided No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed. Are you aware of violations of the ETI Base Code on farms in Almeria and Huelva? Would you like to comment on these findings? Have you identified violations on farms from which you source either directly or via intermediaries?

We’ve been made aware of a small number of isolated issues in the past, and have worked with suppliers to address these on a case-by-case basis.

As a responsible retailer our position is to engage with the supplier and support them to make lasting improvements, rather than just walking away.

We're also looking to drive positive change through wider collaborative efforts across industry, to identify and address the root cause of any issues.

Our focus is always on to make sure improvements are made, but we would stop sourcing from a farm if it were to fail to engage or make improvements.

3. The report suggests that “Supermarkets should treat the abuses outlined in this report as endemic and pervasive and assume that they are present within their supply chains.”

It finds that it is highly likely that UK supermarkets are connected to these issues through their fruit and vegetable supply chains, given the widespread and endemic nature of the abuses identified and the importance of both regions for UK supply chains.

Would you like to comment on these findings?

While we're proud of our reputation for responsible sourcing, we recognise that - as with any retailer - there's always areas we can improve, and it's important we work with direct suppliers to ensure we can maintain our high standards.

For example, we've worked with the Spanish Ethical Trade Forums (ETF) since it began in 2015, aiming to improve working conditions in the Spanish horticulture sector through promoting good practice, facilitating collaborative working and building capacity through training. The programme works to understand and address issues impacting growers in three main regions.

The programme operates by issuing a survey to growers in the three main regions they operate in, Huelva and Almeria and Murcia, to understand the issues impacting growers in these regions and identify ways in which they can support.

They are also now set up as an Association to enable smaller organisations to join as members. This enables them to attend events to receive support and learn from a range of stakeholders on key topics.

Examples of some of these topics include ensuring that there are provisions in place for workers to have their health and safety support, taking action against human trafficking and making sure that strong complaint mechanisms are in place.

EXTRA INFORMATION REQUESTED: WAITROSE SPECIFIC:

1. The report notes that Waitrose does not publicly commit to auditing suppliers beyond the first tier of its supply chain.

Would you like to comment?

We use a range of methods to monitor due diligence of third party suppliers which we work with, including regular updates from suppliers directly in our supply chain, visits from both our teams and our suppliers directly, as well as third party audits.

2. The report notes that Waitrose does not have a complaints helpline available to all supply chain workers, in their own language, anonymous and free of charge. Would you like to comment?

We promote the development of effective internal grievance mechanisms and this is a requirement of our Responsible Sourcing Code of Practice and our Human Rights Policy (available online:

<https://www.johnlewispartnership.co.uk/content/dam/cws/pdfs/Juniper/ethics-and-sustainability/John-Lewis-Partnership-Human-Rights-Policy.pdf>)

3. The report notes that in 2019 Waitrose stated that it worked with Global G.A.P.. Is this still accurate? Do you use Global G.A.P.'s GRASP social risk assessment?

We require non UK growing sites to be certified to the Global G.A.P standard, which provides the best well-recognised standard for good agricultural practice.