



We're well on the way to organising and training 3,000 workers and 350 small-scale farmers.

The Horticulture Project

Summary:

We're working to improve Kenya's green bean sector and make sure that poor farmers and workers benefit from increased efficiency and better communication across the supply chain. We're helping two main groups to improve their income and their quality of life...

Working with all key players of the supply chain, we're aiming to empower workers and farmers to speak up for their rights together, negotiate better deals and be respected for their work. We want farmers to benefit from better communication in the supply chain and we want more workers to have the security of permanent contracts and to have the skills to effectively represent themselves. This work will benefit over 14,000 people.

This project is generously supported by the Comic Relief, as well grant-making trusts and individuals.

Background:

About 60% of Kenya's fresh produce is exported to the UK, but Kenyan workers growing, picking and packing fresh produce for our tables continue to struggle to make ends meet. This is primarily because of the way the supply chain operates. Too often, power is concentrated in the hands of the buyers - supermarkets and big companies sourcing fresh produce in Kenya for sale in the UK. This leaves their suppliers continuing in poverty, suffering exploitation, unable to assert their rights and carrying more than their fair share of market risks.

Pack-house workers are mostly women (73%) and they operate mainly as casual employees, getting work at the busiest times. They are responsible for unloading, grading and packing vegetables which will then be transported overseas. The work is unskilled and employers have a wealth of labourers to choose from. As a result, pack-house workers must put up with unpredictable and irregular working hours, no childcare provision and even sexual exploitation – all to keep a job that pays very poorly.

Smallholder farmers have little say in how their supply chain works and this means that they end up suffering more when things go badly . For instance, farmers are contracted to grow a certain amount of seeds, but if the market fluctuates, only a small proportion of the total crop will be purchased at harvest time. This leaves them with wasted produce and wasted time. Additionally, smallholders report that the prices they receive are not rising in line with their production costs or with general food prices.

The Project:

Activities include:

- Working closely with British retailers whose 300 suppliers of green beans and 3,000 pack-house employees stand to benefit initially from this project.
- Setting up and strengthening farmer groups, providing training on governance, organisation and group management.
- Strengthening pack-house worker representative bodies so that they can provide much needed support.
- Increasing awareness around workers' rights and giving them the skills to effectively negotiate and represent themselves.
- Implementing a 'ways of working' agreement that will involve both Kenyan and British companies. It will set standards for human rights and business ethics within the sector, creating a fair, transparent and balanced supply chain.
- Sharing our experience with other organisations and developing this line of work so that hundreds of thousands more workers and farmers, involved in export agriculture worldwide, will benefit.

The Benefits:

Your support is helping thousands of farmers and workers to improving working conditions and ensuring fair treatment for marginalised workers and farmers so they can achieve a brighter future for themselves and their families. The project will directly benefit 14,000 people.

We expect both workers and farmers to benefit from an improvement in income. We also expect other benefits such as increased capacity to negotiate and proper contracts.

