

# ETHICAL TRADE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

A  
SUSTAINABLE  
FUTURE

PEACE  
OF MIND

Our focus is to provide support for our suppliers, work collaboratively to protect the most vulnerable workers, and continue to champion resilient livelihoods for everyone in our supply chain.

We are committed to ensuring that the people providing our own-brand products are treated fairly, and that their fundamental human rights are protected and respected. These rights include international labour rights, such as the right to fair pay, safe and decent working conditions, and protection from forced labour, modern slavery and harsh or inhumane treatment. In 2024, we also conducted a pan-Co-op human rights risk assessment to ensure greater coherence in our approach to tackling modern slavery, more details of this can be found here in our Modern Slavery Statement.

This section is structured around our five strategic priorities, which we continued to focus our work around in 2024.

## DRIVING INNOVATION IN DUE DILIGENCE AND TRANSPARENCY

Our Food business has a robust programme of assessing and monitoring high-risk labour and human rights issues across our supply chain. In 2024, our programme covered 3,035 sites (665 tier 1 and 2,370 tier 2 supplier sites), across 63 countries, employing 758,399 workers. Our expectations are outlined in our [Human Rights Position Statement](#) and our [Sound Sourcing Code of Conduct](#).

We require all Co-op own-brand suppliers<sup>1</sup> in our Food business to join [Sedex](#) (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange<sup>2</sup>), with tier 1 sites in high-risk countries needing an independent audit prior to approval.

## 6,778 improvements

In 2024, we supported 6,778 improvements (5,911 were closed) to working conditions through our comprehensive monitoring programme, spanning 1,581 audits.

We also use information raised by workers through grievance mechanisms and whistleblowing lines, such as [Unseen](#), as well as suppliers and other independent sources of information. Where required, we have supported collaborative independent human rights investigations into issues raised in our supply chain, such as an investigation into harassment and bullying raised this year by a whistleblower at a food processing site in the UK. Our [Modern Slavery Statement](#) includes further information on issues found in our supply chains.

We have increased transparency in our supply chain by ensuring high risk supply chains share Beyond Tier 1<sup>3</sup> site information. This supports our collaborative efforts to mitigate and address human rights risks in these supply chains. As part of our commitment to supply chain transparency, we have disclosed details of our Co-op Food own-brand tier 1 supplying sites and dis-aggregated worker data, along with beyond tier 1 data in high risk

supply chains. In 2024, we took the step of sharing this supply chain data on the [Open Supply Hub](#) where it is possible to engage with our supplier site information through an interactive map.

## EMBEDDING ETHICAL TRADE INTO CORE BUSINESS ACTIVITIES AND WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

We work closely with our internal colleagues to ensure the ambitions and objectives of the Human Rights and Ethical Trade strategy are supported and embedded across all core business functions.

To achieve this, we provide internal ethical trade and human rights training as part of the induction programme and provide regular updates to the wider business. We collaborate with technical and commercial colleagues on the human rights risks within our supply chain, seeking their support where needed. Our commercial processes, including tenders, assess suppliers' capabilities to manage human rights, ensuring that ethical considerations are [woven into the fabric of our supply chain relationships](#).

In addition, to support suppliers, we have regular review meetings and annual cross-functional ethical trade reviews that allow us to discuss human rights strategies and identify areas for collaboration. We encourage open dialogue with our suppliers and work with them collaboratively to address issues when they are identified.

<sup>1</sup> Defined at the Co-op as Bakery, Beer, Wine and Spirits, Dairy, Frozen, Food To Go, General Home and Leisure, Grocery Edibles, Grocery Impulse, Home and Personal Care, Produce and Protein

<sup>2</sup> Sedex is a global technology company that specialises in data, insights and professional services to empower supply chain sustainability. Sedex provides practical tools, services and a community network to help companies improve their responsible and sustainable business practices and source responsibly

<sup>3</sup> Sites 'Beyond Tier 1' include sites at tier 2 and further down the supply chain, depending on the nature and complexity of the supply chain

## BUILDING CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE IN OUR SUPPLY BASE

We recognise the importance of collaboration and knowledge-sharing within our supply chain to address the root causes of human rights issues. That is why, in 2024, we continued partnering with organisations such as the [Food Network for Ethical Trade \(FNET\)](#), [Responsible Recruitment Toolkit \(RRT\)](#), [Stronger Together](#), the [Modern Slavery Intelligence Network](#), [Unseen's Helpline Business Portal & Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline](#), and the [Seafood Ethics Action \(SEA\) Alliance](#). For further details of our collaborative activity please see our Modern Slavery Statement [here](#). You can read more on our [website](#) and in our [Modern Slavery Statement](#).

## TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY AND MITIGATING HUMAN RIGHTS RISKS

This year, we furthered our efforts to meet our goal to eliminate illegal and unfair recruitment fees in our global supply chains. In 2024, we provided free access to modern slavery and responsible recruitment training for suppliers and labour providers in our supply chain through our sponsorship of Stronger Together and the Responsible Recruitment Toolkit. This reached 3,135 delegates across 126 supplier events, representing 1,772 supplier sites. We also continued our work to understand and map the use of recruitment fees in our supply chain.

We continue to analyse and prioritise our labour rights risks and, to support this, we have identified eight priority areas of activity covering 17 sourcing countries. See our [website](#) for detail on what the

priorities are, the supply chain and products, and how we're responding to the issues. These priorities are reviewed annually using insights from trusted partners and external sources to ensure they remain fit for purpose. For more information of our pan Co-op review of our human rights risks in 2024 please read our [Modern Slavery Statement](#).

## EMPOWERING WORKERS AND ENHANCING LIVELIHOODS

In 2024, we collaborated with others to convene a multi-stakeholder roundtable on Gender Based Violence and Harassment (GBVH) in tea supply chains and launched a new programme to address root causes. Please see case-study 4 of our [Modern Slavery Statement](#).

An evaluation of the impact of the [Inua Dada project](#) on women showed that the two-year gender empowerment programme in the Kenyan flower sector has had a significant impact on the women working there.

Alongside other major UK retailers, we've signed [IDH's Living Wage Commitment](#) to work together to close the living wage gap in international banana supply chains by the end of 2027. As a leading Fairtrade retailer, we are already taking significant steps to meet the living wage. However, we recognise collaborative industry action is needed to address wage gaps for all workers. In 2024, we have continued to work with UK retailers and [IDH](#) on the commitment roadmap and have submitted data to inform annual IDH report on progress. Read more [here](#).

These priorities will remain the focal points of our work into 2025 and beyond.

# 3,000 individuals engaged

via supplier capacity building events in 2024







## Treating People Fairly Awards

Every day, all around the world, our global producers face challenges and uncertainty caused by global crisis, supply chain disruption and irregular income. As a co-operative, we recognise that people are naturally at the heart of everything we do, and we are committed to ensuring the wellbeing of people throughout our supply chains.

In 2024, we held our Treating People Fairly Awards, to recognise and celebrate suppliers demonstrating a significant commitment to ethical trade and making a positive impact for workers through their actions. Applications were assessed by an independent judging panel and six suppliers were shortlisted. The judges were pleased to

name [G's Fresh](#) and [La Riojana](#)<sup>1</sup> as joint winners for their projects, along with highly commending four other suppliers for their innovative and impactful projects. G's Fresh have created an industry-leading responsible recruitment programme to address recruitment risks, including illicit recruitment fees. La Riojana have utilised Fairtrade Premium and Co-op funding to bring life-changing benefits to its local community, including a water well and a secondary school.

These award-winning projects have been captured in case studies for businesses and the public alike to learn from. [Visit our Treating People Fairly page to read more.](#)

<sup>1</sup> Argentina's largest wine producer co-operative

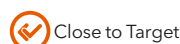
## ETHICAL TRADE & HUMAN RIGHTS DATA



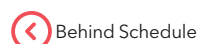
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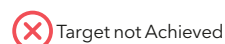
On Track



Close to Target



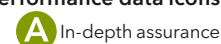
Behind Schedule



Target not Achieved



Restatement



In-depth assurance

Key Performance data icons

Issue	2024 Target	Performance against Target					2025 Target	SDG
Supply Chain Transparency	We will champion the role of women and vulnerable people in our supply chains and, in 2024, we will continue to roll out training to address issues of gender-based violence in the supply chain, and support collaborative initiatives to address the root causes.	<p>With our flower supplier Flamingo, we commissioned an independent evaluation of our two-year Inua Dada programme, which empowered female workers through inclusive policies, capacity building and community-driven solutions. The report summarises key lessons, successes and challenges from our work. It provides valuable insights for others advancing gender equity within sustainability. You can read more <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p>We collaborated to address systemic sexual and gender-based violence and harassment issues at a supplier site, across the Kenyan tea sector and the wider Kenyan and South African agriculture industry. You can read more about this in Food Case study 5 of our Modern Slavery Statement.</p>					We will develop a strategic approach to Enhanced Due Diligence with interventions in 10 high risk supply chains or recruitment corridors.	
	We will continue to work collaboratively to eliminate illegal and unfair recruitment fees in our global supply chain.	<p>We continued our work to understand and map the use of recruitment fees in our supply chains in 2024. Through our support of the UK Seasonal Workers Scheme Taskforce, we are proud to be working with Defra on the jointly funded Employer Pays Principle (EPP) feasibility study to reduce the risk of workers entering into debt for their migration costs. The project includes modelling for how costs could be equitably and appropriately shared along supply chains, whilst also considering the sustainability of UK agriculture. We believe this a vital and important step to making EPP a reality in the SWS in a way that protects the livelihoods of workers and growers in supply chain.</p> <p>In 2024 we completed a collaborative study to map existing commitments to responsible recruitment and the EPP in the global tuna processing sector and are taking steps to address recommendations.</p> <p>We rolled out free training on responsible recruitment through our ongoing support of the Responsible Recruitment Toolkit, which we delivered to 484 individuals and 256 businesses.</p>					We will champion the role of women and vulnerable people in our supply chains, and continue to roll out training to address issues of gender-based violence in the supply chain and support collaborative initiatives to address root causes.	
	We will carry out an independent review of our priority human rights focus areas and continue to publish the steps we are taking to mitigate the root causes of issues identified.	<p>In 2024 we carried out a pan-Co-op review of our priority risks and we continue to publish the steps we have taken to mitigate these risks along with future priorities.</p>					We will continue to work collaboratively to eliminate illegal and unfair recruitment fees in our global supply chain.	
Issue	2024 Target	KPIs	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 Target	SDG
Supply Chain Transparency		Number of supplier sites globally (Tier 1 and Tier 2)	2,620 (733 Tier 1, 1887 Tier 2)	2,838 (734 Tier 1, 2,104 Tier 2)	3,212 (682 Tier 1, 2,530 Tier 2)	3,035 (665 Tier 1, 2,370 Tier 2)		
		% high-risk Tier 1 suppliers completing self assessment in sedex	100	100	100	100		
		% high-risk Tier 1 sites audited	99	100	100	100		
Supplier Capacity Building		Number of supplier engagement events	82	91	121	126	We will support our suppliers in improving human rights across our supply chains through the delivery of our global supplier engagement programme, reaching over 2,500 delegates in 50 events in 2025.	
		Number of individuals engaged via supplier engagement events	7,208	6,557	6,452	3,135		
		Hrs. of engagement at supplier engagement events	9,427	6,551	10,044	13,537		
		Number of sites reached through supplier engagement events	1,441	1,106	1,513	1,772		
		In 2022, we launched a two-year diversity and inclusion programme 'Inua Dada' in Kenya to economically empower and to increase the confidence and visibility of horticultural female workers both at the workplace and in the community. The two-year programme ended in 2023 which has resulted in a decrease of the number of individuals trained through our supplier engagement events throughout 2024.						

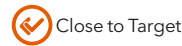
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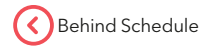
Target Achieved



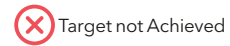
On Track



Close to Target



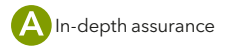
Behind Schedule



Target not Achieved



Restatement



In-depth assurance

Key Performance data icons

Number of sites and workers on Sedex and location of audits in 2023/24	Sites	Workers	Audits	Issues
Africa	969	302,244	686	3,535
Asia	253	21,389	82	339
Europe	1,410	282,304	586	1,931
North & Central America	49	16,186	34	179
Oceania	17	1,794	1	2
South America	337	134,422	192	822
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,035</b>	<b>758,339</b>	<b>1,518</b>	<b>6,808</b>

Status of improvement actions identified in valid audits in 2023/24	Total improvement: actions raised		Improvements: actions completed and verified		Improvement: actions completed by supplier (verification due in 2025)		Improvement: actions due for completion in 2025		Overdue improvement actions			
	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Tier one		Tier two	
	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor	Critical / Major	Minor
Exploitation of labour	59	76	55	75	2	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Freedom of association	32	165	28	156	1	7	2	2	0	0	1	0
A safe & hygienic working environment	2,431	1,188	2,131	1,085	160	62	137	39	2	1	1	1
Child labour	28	23	24	16	3	2	1	3	0	1	0	1
Living wages to be paid	346	280	283	254	33	15	24	9	2	2	4	0
Working hours are not excessive	510	236	393	207	66	15	47	14	3	0	1	0
No discrimination	31	47	28	41	1	3	2	2	0	0	0	1
Regular employment	453	81	406	77	28	2	18	2	0	0	1	0
No harsh or inhumane treatment	152	24	140	21	10	2	2	0	0	0	0	1
Other issue types	409	207	311	180	48	19	46	8	2	0	2	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>4,451</b>	<b>2,327</b>	<b>3,799</b>	<b>2,112</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,778</b>		<b>5,911</b>		<b>480</b>		<b>359</b>		<b>28</b>			