



Unilever response to Amnesty International report – 30/11/2016

We welcome Amnesty International's [report](#) into the human and labour rights issues in the palm oil industry and are deeply concerned by its findings. We will engage with our industry partners to investigate the grievances the report raises and take action to address them.

While significant progress has been made in tackling the environmental issues associated with palm oil cultivation, we agree that much more needs to be done to address the human and labour rights issues which are prevalent in the sector. We are committed to playing a leading role with the rest of the industry to accelerate progress towards tackling them.

We are at the start of this journey. In May 2016 we strengthened our palm oil policy with a specific emphasis on labour rights, which stipulates mandatory requirements on human rights and protection of workers, and that particular attention should be paid to migrant workers on plantations. It also demands the responsible handling of all complaints or breaches identified, using generally accepted grievance procedures of conflict resolution. Our suppliers have similar policies and commitments.

However, as Amnesty International indicates, having a commitment in place alone is not enough. Much more needs to be done. For example, in order to reinforce our policy and those of our suppliers, audit procedures to identify non-compliance need improving. At a plantation level, like other users of palm we rely on RSPO audits and are engaged in and supportive of their efforts to improve their auditing process - by evolving its Code, and improving capabilities and its grievance mechanism to tackle social issues more effectively.

We also recognise more can be done within our own supply chain to independently verify that the palm oil we use is both environmentally and socially sustainable. To tackle this, we have developed a programme for risk verification which we have piloted through three independent assessments. Our priority now is to scale this up, working with our peers and suppliers. We are also carrying out an independent expert review of our grievance procedures to identify if there are ways in which we can improve them. We would be very willing to engage with Amnesty International to investigate any specific grievances they have identified.

This is a complex challenge, and it will require all those involved to work together to address it – including suppliers, producers, governments, NGOs and others. As a major buyer of palm oil we have an important role to play in driving the industry forward, which we do through the Consumer Goods Forum, Tropical Forest Alliance, Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment, New York Declaration on Forests, Banking Environment Initiative and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

We are fully committed to playing a leading role in eradicating human and labour rights issues from the palm oil supply chain.