



Challenging the broken global food system

Most of the food we buy at supermarkets and discount stores involves human rights violations, environmental degradation, and various forms of injustices. It reaches us via supply chains that exploit smallholders and workers, especially women, while exacerbating the climate crisis. Many workers in global food supply chains are migrants making a living under precarious, exploitative and dangerous conditions. We have reasons to call those slave-like conditions!

Who is ruling these conditions? **Big, global food companies and European supermarket chains** are increasing profits with little regard for human rights, the environment, and thus our collective future. Furthermore, **legislators** are failing to hold these companies accountable for the harm caused by their business practices. The system has historically developed to favour Big Business and disadvantage smallholders and workers.

While supermarkets' profits are at record levels, smallholders and migrant workers fight for their existence! During the pandemic, workers along the supply chains are being exposed to even higher risks, are losing their jobs and ultimately, are let down by the decision makers of food companies.

We are hungry for justice. We won't accept these conditions anymore!

We are an international coalition of civil society organisations bringing together young people from across Europe. Jointly, we raise our voices and call for justice! In solidarity, with migrant workers, smallholders, and human rights activists around the world we challenge the status quo and stand up against these intolerable conditions. **Our vision is a socially just and sustainable food system. A food system, which is human rights-based and driven by agroecological principals. In this new system food sovereignty has become reality.** **Standing in solidarity** our mission is to fight for decent working conditions for all agricultural workers, to advocate for living wages and incomes, to improve the rights of migrant workers and to stop the climate and environment destroying practices of food companies and supermarkets. To bring change we rely on our creativity, our empathy, our vision of change and on the unity of the European Youth.

If possible, we base our own purchasing decisions on sustainable principles and encourage consumers in Europe to do the same. In this way, large corporations are deprived of some of their power. But we as young citizens are convinced that this will not be enough. Companies, markets as well as our own wallets set us limits. Moreover, we do not want to enter this guilt-ridden rhetoric that politicians willingly use towards their citizens regarding their consumption choices. This just diverts attention from the real problem that current business models allow food companies to make profits at the cost of people and the environment. We are aware of our shared responsibilities. Therefore, we increase political pressure and demand from big food companies, supermarkets and politics, a systemic change towards *a food system that is decent and suitable for all beings and future generations!*

The profiteers of injustice

Big global food companies

Currently, key players in the global food system are huge food processing and trading companies. Their mere size gives them enormous market power and through the control of suppliers and processors are exerting pressure on the weaker links in the supply chain (vertical integration). In addition, they exert political influence to continuously shape the system in their favour.

Without a fundamental change in the behavior of these companies, we do not see any possibility for improving the food system. On the contrary, without changing the companies' business practices, the system is heading for the abyss. We welcome serious engagement of companies in multi-stakeholder-initiatives. But judging from the recent past, it would be naive to trust that they will always change things for a better. We will not be satisfied with cosmetic changes and are fed up with green- and social washing campaigns. Hence, we intend to uncover the bad behaviour of companies and put our finger on their weak spots. **Our demands need urgent attention.** Since no serious change had come from within the companies themselves, politics must put an end to the companies' rush for profit on the back of people and the environment.

European supermarket chains and discount stores

Although more and more consumers are looking for alternatives, such as local food networks, large supermarkets and discount stores still determine what ends up on our plates. In fact, they are the linchpin for a more sustainable food production overall. So far, they are using their market power too often to exert price pressure in their supply chains. This makes it impossible to achieve social and environmental objectives. Their central market positions would enable them to make a difference towards a more sustainable food system! Supermarkets have an obligation to rectify obvious injustices. Some have shown that gradual change is possible. We welcome that and continue to support serious approaches participation in multi-stakeholder-initiatives.

However, largely supermarkets are part of a system driven by growth and profit hence they will not meet the requirements needed for a *significant* change on their own. This leads inevitably to the responsibility of political decision makers to create the conditions that push as well as support supermarkets to improve their business practices.

European policy makers

Global food supply chains are determined by international trade and agriculture policies. Hence, we are convinced that legally binding regulations are key to guarantee decent working conditions, as well as to ensure environmental and climate protection.

For us, the most important political decisions are made at European level as well as between and by national governments of our home countries. Therefore, we demand from our political decision makers to ensure ambitious policy processes and legal regulations focusing on the basic right of the most disadvantaged in the global food supply chains: migrant workers and smallholders. In this regard, we identify a law to hold business accountable (mHREDD), the farm to fork strategy as well as the new pact on migration and asylum as critical political projects for the Commission and the EU parliament.

Our food. Our future. Our messages

Decent working conditions without compromises!

We need decent working and living conditions along food supply chains with special consideration for particularly vulnerable groups such as migrant and female workers as well as smallholders. This includes ensuring living wages and incomes, securing freedom of association and collective bargaining, comprehensive health and safety practices, secured legal status as well as protection against gender-based discrimination.

Food should contribute to the environment and climate protection!

To stay within earth's planetary boundaries and secure livelihoods, especially in the Global South, we need to abandon business models that harm our climate and environment. Harmful practices include appropriation or destroying of natural resources such as land, water, seeds and forests. Supermarkets and big food companies need to reduce their impact on the climate crisis and ensure comprehensive protection of biodiversity, habitats and soils.

Strong laws must ensure human rights and environmental protection!

Big food companies and supermarkets must be legally held accountable for human and labour rights violations, environmental destruction as well as land grabbing and forced displacement along their supply chains. Consequently, existing legislation urgently needs to be improved and new laws adopted to enable traceability in supply chains and safeguard justice for those adversely affected.

Only a systemic change will repair the food system!

Even if we pursue a policy of small steps, a fundamental change in the food system must be achieved in the long run. Therefore, current power imbalances in global food supply chains must be addressed. Rebuilding the global food system must put smallholders, workers (especially women and migrants), citizens as well as the climate and environment at its centre. We stand up for alternatives which enable a more just future. Our solution is an agroecological food system that ensures food sovereignty. This new system will build on good living and good work for all!

Demand Paper Big Food Companies

- Big food companies must STOP unfair trading practices that exert disproportionate pressure on upstream actors such as smallholders in their supply chain. We demand big food companies to use their market power responsibly and
- set prices in a fair manner covering the social and environmental costs of the production,
 - stop revoking supply orders on short notice,
 - avoid withdrawing from trade relationships abruptly.
 - Support binding legislation for human rights due diligence duty.

- Big food companies must support their suppliers to prevent, mitigate or remedy the following misconducts:

- Violation of human and labour rights,
- Contribution to illegal deforestation,
- Involvement in land grabbing (especially on territory of small holders or indigenous communities)
- Use of pesticides that are prohibited in the EU.

If suppliers show no willingness to change, the companies must break off these trade relations.

- Within their own supply chains big food companies must COMPLY WITH human rights and environmental due diligence considering the specific situation and vulnerability of migrant and female workers in agriculture supply chains.

This includes

- identifying social and environmental risks (risk assessments and monitoring)
- proactive and continuous efforts to prevent identified risks, e.g. measures to protect (illegalised) migrant and seasonal workers and assert labour rights by implementing legally binding agreements between big food companies and trade unions on housing and health insurance (comparable to the US fair food programme or the Bangladesh Accord in the clothing sector),
- readjust their profits to transfer some of their enormous profit margin to the workers in order to secure living wages! They know how much they would have to pay to give workers a decent life and should do so.
- guarantee migrant/seasonal workers adequate housing, free transport to working sites, legal employment contracts and transparency about their wages,
- account for misconduct and carry out remedial measures.

- Big food companies, MUST respect smallholders' sovereignty to choose their own ways of farming practices respecting their traditional knowledge and abstaining from forcing them into a vicious cycle of dependency on external inputs (such as non-traditional seeds and pesticides).

- All of this must go along with measures ensuring the transparency and traceability in supply chains by publishing relevant documents addressing the named issues such as lists of suppliers and accountability reports.

Demand Paper European Supermarkets

→ Supermarkets must **COMPLY WITH** human rights and environmental due diligence considering the specific situation and vulnerability of migrant and female workers in agriculture supply chains.

They must make **continuous efforts to**

- contribute to the implementation of living wages and incomes,
- support the enforcement of measures to promote workers' freedom of association and their right to collective bargaining,
- assert the fulfilment of international agreed health and safety regulations,
- guarantee migrant workers adequate housing, free transport to working sites, legal employment contracts and transparency about their wages,
- stop gender-based discrimination of workers and smallholders in their supply chains.

→ Supermarkets must **ABANDON** unfair trading practices

- They must **STOP** exerting disproportionate pressure on actors in the supply chain such as smallholders.
- They must **STOP** selling products at costs below the cost of sustainable production.
- They must **STOP** manipulative pricing practices.

→ Supermarkets must **PUSH FOR** ecological production in their supply chains.

Therefore, they need to

- pay prices that cover the full costs of sustainable production,
- build up supply chains without deforestation,
- promote agroecological practices of smallholders and remunerate these efforts accordingly.
- ensure that at least 30% of the food they sell originates from organic farming by 2030.
- utilize a purchasing policy that helps prevent food waste.

→ Supermarkets must support their suppliers to prevent, mitigate or remedy the following misconducts:

- Violation of human and labour rights,
- Contribution to illegal deforestation,
- Involvement in land grabbing on territory of small holders or indigenous communities,
- Using of pesticides which are prohibited in the EU.

If suppliers show no willingness to change, the supermarkets must break off these trade relations.

→ Supermarkets must **ENSURE** traceability of all products!

They must ensure this from field to shop counter. This includes providing comprehensible information to consumers such as the publication of their lists of suppliers, accountability reports and audit results.

→ Supermarkets must **STOP** green and social washing their image by selling products that bear pseudo certification schemes.

Instead, they should support effective and credible multi-stakeholder-initiatives and measures to secure human rights and environmental due diligence in the supply chains.

Demand Paper European Policy Makers

→ Implementation of strong Supply Chain acts!

The European Union needs to take responsibility and pass a binding legislation on **mHREDD (mandatory human rights and environmental due diligence)** to oblige food (and other) companies to higher standards in their supply chains. This must include a mechanism to enable affected parties or their representatives (e.g. migrant workers, human right activists, trade unions) to legally enforce their rights as well as the possibility to enforce remedies including sanctions against companies. These laws must be applied at all three levels: National, European Union (EU), international (United Nations (UN) and international trading bodies).

- The EU should encourage national legislation similar to the French "Loi de vigilance" or the German "Lieferkettengesetz".
- The EU must proactively and in a constructive manner help shape the **UN Treaty on Business and Human rights**. The draft should be revised to further strengthen the rights of workers, especially migrants and women, and smallholders.

→ EU governments need to work on an ambitious implementation of the *farm to fork strategy (F2F)* for example through changes to the *Common Agricultural Policies*. This must include a global dimension of food supply chains and pay attention to the perspectives of the most vulnerable actors in food supply chains. Namely, it should address

- fair trade policies, including market access for smallholders,
- promotion of agroecological practices,
- import bans on products which caused verifiably land grabbing and/or deforestation in their supply chains,
- trade bans on pesticides which are already prohibited in the EU.
- **Going climate neutral much earlier than envisaged in the EU Green deal.**

→ The EU must implement ambitious legally binding regulations in the pact of migration and asylum, which guarantee illegalized migrant workers involved in European food production, protection of their human and working rights.

→ The EU must implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)* to guarantee land rights and decent working and living conditions for migrant and seasonal workers in food supply chains.

→ The EU must implement a mechanism that punishes practices by supermarket creating food waste.

Furthermore, we demand our national governments and national political decision makers to support the implementation of the named legislations and political processes.