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This document is intended to help you develop your own communication material about the hazelnut program and to answer questions about it. Please do not share this document in full – instead, copy and paste the relevant parts. For more information contact Christiane Hornikel, Program Manager Nuts&Juices, chornikel@ra.org.
KEY MESSAGES

We are leading the way and taking on the challenge
We are member of the UTZ hazelnut program, an independent sustainability program that works on social, economic and environmental sustainability for hazelnuts.

The journey so far
The program now reaches more than 6800 hazelnut farmers. They are trained to improve conditions for workers, to prevent child labor, and to use good agricultural practices that increase their productivity. If you purchase a product with the UTZ label for hazelnuts, you are supporting the journey to more sustainable farming in the hazelnut sector.

We are working together to drive change
Change depends on the commitment of the whole supply chain, from farmers to traders and all the way through to supermarkets, as well as communities, government and NGOs. As members of the UTZ program we are part of this drive for improvement in the hazelnut sector.

Q&A

UTZ HAZELNUT PROGRAM

1. WHAT IS THE UTZ HAZELNUT PROGRAM?

The UTZ program aims to make the hazelnut sector more sustainable. It is an independent sustainability program that works on social, economic and environmental sustainability for hazelnuts. By bringing together stakeholders - from farmers to traders and all the way through to the supermarkets, as well as other actors like NGOs, government, and so on - the program contributes to tackling issues like child labor, living conditions for workers and productivity.

2. WHERE IS THE PROGRAM LOCATED?

Turkey produces three quarters of the world’s hazelnuts. Therefore our efforts and commitment are focused on this country and on Georgia. Nevertheless, to truly enable sector change, the Hazelnut Program is open to other countries as well.

3. WHAT DOES THE UTZ LABEL ON HAZELNUT PRODUCTS MEAN?

If you purchase a product with the UTZ label for hazelnuts, you are supporting the journey to more sustainable farming in the hazelnut sector. UTZ is an independent sustainability program that works on social, economic and environmental sustainability in the hazelnut sector worldwide.

An UTZ labelled hazelnut product means that the company has purchased UTZ certified hazelnuts. UTZ certified farmers have to implement practices according to the UTZ code of conduct and are audited by independent, third party certification bodies against social, environmental and economic standards.

On the social front, for instance, this includes requirements designed to improve working conditions. Since child labor is a major issue in hazelnuts farming in Turkey, measures to prevent child labor are also an important part of the program.
Furthermore, good agricultural practices enable farmers to strengthen their productivity – producing a higher yield of a better quality, more efficiently.

The UTZ sustainability program started working in the sector in 2014. While there is still further to go and systemic change doesn’t come overnight, we are, step-by-step, tackling the many sustainability issues in this sector.

4. WHAT ARE THE MAIN SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN THE TURKISH HAZELNUT SECTOR?

Possibly the greatest sustainability challenge facing the Turkish hazelnut sector is the reliance on seasonal, migrant workers and with that a number of issues including living and working conditions, the role of labor brokers, informality of employment and child labor.

Due to the seasonal nature of the harvest a permanent workforce is not required, so internal migrant workers from the south-east of Turkey are a regular feature of the harvest period. The exact number of seasonal workers is not known but it is estimated that at least 1 million people comprise the seasonal agricultural sector across all crops in Turkey. Some families travel for many months in a row, working on different crops like apples, peppers, tomatoes and hazelnuts.

Another important challenge is low productivity. Turkey produces about 70% of the world’s hazelnuts. Yet, compared to other leading hazelnut producing countries such as Italy and the USA, and to other types of farms in Turkey productivity is low (its average yield is around 3 times lower than in the USA and twice lower than in Italy).

The issues relating to improving productivity and social issues have been the key areas of focus for the UTZ hazelnut program.

5. DOES THE UTZ LABEL ON HAZELNUT PRODUCTS GUARANTEE (100%) SUSTAINABILITY?

No label can offer a 100% sustainability guarantee. Sustainability is always a journey, not an endpoint.

If you purchase a product with the UTZ label for hazelnuts, you are supporting the journey to more sustainable farming in the hazelnut sector.

6. CAN YOU GUARANTEE THAT 100% OF HAZELNUTS USED IN THE PRODUCTS WITH UTZ LABEL COME FROM UTZ CERTIFIED FARMS?

It is not allowed to sell more products as UTZ certified than the corresponding hazelnuts that were purchased. Some UTZ Certified hazelnuts get mixed with other hazelnuts before reaching the final product. If this so called mass balance system is used, it means that if half of the hazelnuts are bought as UTZ certified, the UTZ label can be used on half of the end products – even though these might not contain the UTZ certified hazelnuts. The main reason for it is that hazelnuts are processed in large quantities, which means it is usually very costly to keep certified hazelnuts separate from non-certified hazelnuts. Mass balance makes it more feasible to source more sustainable ingredients, which in turn means more farmers and workers see the benefits.

The mass balance system is similar to when you choose a green energy supplier. It’s impossible to keep the energy from windfarms separate from the energy generated at coal fired power stations – it all gets fed into the same system and through the same cables to reach your home. You are paying for the energy from the
windfarm, while your neighbor pays for the energy from the coal power station, but it gets mixed before it reaches you.
The same is true in the hazelnut sector. When UTZ certified hazelnuts are sourced, more farmers benefit from sustainability – even if the hazelnuts they sell get mixed with other hazelnuts before reaching the final product. Mass balance is also used for many other products, including cocoa, sugar, palm oil, and fruit juice, and in all of these sectors it has significantly helped with scaling up the market for sustainability. We want to contribute to a more sustainable hazelnut sector and mass balance has an important role to play in helping us reach that goal.

CHILD LABOR

7. WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM MEAN FOR CHILD LABOR?
The UTZ program sets out several requirements designed to tackle child labor, bringing together prevention, monitoring and remediation. This means that farmers are trained on the issue of child labor, what exactly it is, how to prevent it and what steps to take if it is found. A person from within the community must be appointed as responsible for building relationships, raising awareness, and identifying any cases of child labor.

For hazelnuts, there is a specific challenge that is different from the other crops we work on: the seasonal migrant workers who travel for the harvest with their children. Therefore we have made some specific requirements for hazelnut farmers who want to be certified. For example:

- The farmer must keep up to date records for each worker including whether they have any children travelling with them. This is very important in order to identify where there is a risk of child labor, and for ongoing monitoring.
- Farmers must ensure appropriate facilities are available for their workers and their children, including living conditions and childcare. If they don’t provide these facilities on the farm itself, the farmer group must reach out to local authorities or NGOs who provide these services and work with them to improve conditions.

In addition, the annual audits check for any evidence of child labor on the farms, but even more importantly that all the systems are in place to prevent it - that farmers were trained, that appropriate facilities are provided for children, and so on.

8. WHAT KIND OF WORK CHILDREN ARE ALLOWED TO DO ON HAZELNUT FARMS?
The UTZ Code of Conduct requires farmers to comply with the code or the national law - whichever is stricter.

In Turkey national legislation states that no children below 16 should work in the orchards, and hazardous work is banned until 18. This means that children below 16 cannot be hired to work on hazelnut farms, and the children of adult workers are also not allowed to work.

This is slightly different for family farms - on their own family’s farm, children can perform light work before the age of 16 as long as it does not interfere with their schooling and is for a limited period of time a day.

9. WHAT HAPPENS IF CHILD LABOR IS FOUND ON A CERTIFIED HAZELNUT FARM DURING AN AUDIT?

If child labor is found during an audit, the child must immediately be taken out of the situation and the situation must be remediated in close cooperation with the child’s family. What this means for the farm and the farmer group will depend on the context and what else the auditors can find out - as well as checking for visible child labor on the farm, the auditors check whether there are systems in place to prevent, monitor and remediate any...
cases of child labor. For example, they check whether there are adequate child care facilities available, whether training was carried out and records were kept of all workers - these are vital aspects to prevent child labor.

10. AREN’T FARMS IMMEDIATELY DECERTIFIED IF CHILD LABOR IS FOUND?

The extensive experience of UTZ and its partners shows that too much focus on sanctions is usually counter-effective. Simply removing the child from the farm often means that the child just goes to work elsewhere. Immediately de-certifying the farm usually means the child labor can continue. Therefore, alongside sanctions, UTZ focuses on prevention, monitoring and remediation.

Through training and guidance, farmers and communities are well equipped to address the issue of child labor. Auditors will thus not only check if children are working at the farms, but even more so whether documented action is being undertaken with the community to prevent child labor from occurring. Of course, if the situation cannot be solved then measures will be taken that depend on the individual situation, including de-certification.

WORKERS

11. WHAT DOES THE PROGRAM MEAN FOR WORKERS?

The UTZ standard sets out requirements for decent conditions for workers. For hazelnuts there are some specific requirements focused on the context of hazelnuts. Many of these additional requirements are designed to reflect the fact that so many workers are migrants. For example:

- Many of the workers live in accommodation settlements provided by the government or the International Labor Organization, and the UTZ standard requires from the farmer groups to reach out to relevant authorities to ensure that these workers have access to clean water, sanitation facilities, and so on. When group members provide housing to workers themselves, they must provide adequate living conditions.
- Special attention is required for record keeping related to the workers, and whether they are accompanied by children.
- Appropriate child care facilities must be available for any children accompanying the workers.
- It is common for hazelnut workers to find employment through labor brokers, so we say that any broker’s commission must be paid directly by the farmer, not the worker.

12. WHERE DO WORKERS OF UTZ CERTIFIED HAZELNUT FARMS LIVE?

This varies depending on the type of worker and the region. Some live in housing on the farm, some live in accommodation settlements arranged by the government with support of the International Labor Organization, and some arrange their own accommodation.

In some regions there is more family farming, or more use of local workers, in which case housing is not an issue.

13. WHO ARE THE WORKERS IN THE TURKISH HAZELNUT SECTOR?

Many of the workers in the Turkish hazelnut sector are seasonal agricultural workers - mainly internal migrants, meaning they are Turkish citizens, often from the south-east of Turkey.

Some are young single people, often highly educated and looking to earn money for their studies or to get married. Some are families who travel with their children up to the hazelnut producing region during the school
holidays and return to their own region immediately after the harvest. The group that is the most vulnerable are internal migrant families who travel for a longer period, moving from crop to crop for up to seven months per year.

There are also some foreign migrant workers, predominantly from Georgia. Local hired workers, family labor and informal help from neighbors are also common in some regions.

14. ARE SYRIAN REFUGEES ALLOWED TO WORK ON CERTIFIED FARMS IN TURKEY?

The important thing is that any worker hired to work on an UTZ certified hazelnut farm must be registered and have a valid work permit. Checking this is a crucial part of the audits for UTZ certification, because making sure all employment is legal and recorded is a crucial step to drive better working conditions. This is also a matter of Turkish law. This means there could be Syrian refugees, as long as they are registered and have a valid work permit. That’s the most important thing - to make sure all employment is legal and recorded.

15. DO HAZELNUT WORKERS LIVE IN TENTS?

Harvesting hazelnuts is labor intensive, but the harvest lasts just a few days at each farm. This results in a huge amount of people coming for the very short time of the harvest, which makes it very challenging to provide accommodation for all of them in these regions. For this reason, many workers do stay in tents.

To make sure the conditions are decent, UTZ sets out requirements for any housing provided on the farm or in the common settlements run by the government/International Labor Organization – for example, there must be clean running water, sanitation facilities, etc.

Investing in many more concrete buildings is not a straightforward solution - forcing farmers to invest in new concrete buildings that would stay empty most of the year may mean they would not join any sustainability program in the first place.

ENVIRONMENT

16. WHAT ARE KEY ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN HAZELNUTS?

The key areas of focus for the UTZ hazelnut program has been on the issues relating to improving productivity and social issues.

As with all our programs, farmers must follow a range of requirements designed to protect the environment. For example, protecting water sources, no deforestation, and so on.

17. WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS AROUND GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES?

One of the most important aspects of the UTZ program is a focus on good agricultural practices, as a way to improve the productivity and/or quality of a farmer’s crop. Farmers are trained to follow a range of requirements, for example related to weeding, pruning, and pest management, as well as how to handle the crop post-harvest.