Position paper

Child Labor

Introduction

UTZ’s mission is to work towards a world where sustainable farming is the norm. Child labor has no place in sustainable agriculture and violates international human rights. Child labor reinforces poverty across generations, undermines economic development and hampers progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.¹

UTZ is committed to the eradication of child labor and promotes certification-based child labor prevention, remediation and monitoring, tailored to local contexts and risk levels. The eradication of child labor from UTZ certified farms should be scalable and in line with international conventions and principles.

UTZ realizes that there is no control mechanism that can guarantee no child labor takes place at any certified farm at any time of the year. In fact, child labor has multiple root causes beyond the farm that cannot be solved by certification alone, but require intensive collaboration with local communities, supply chain actors and area-based administrations. This is why UTZ promotes multi-stakeholder and area-based approaches and encourages collaboration with existing initiatives from relevant stakeholders, including governments, companies and civil society organisations. UTZ advocates for sector-wide change that addresses the root causes of child labor.

The challenge

According to the ILO, 152 million children are victims of child labor of which 71% are in agriculture.²

Children carry out a very wide range of activities and not all work done by children should be classified as child labor. Children’s participation in activities such as helping their parents with the farm and around the home or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays is generally considered positive. This kind of activities contributes to children’s development, provides them with skills and experience and prepares them for adult life.

The ILO defines ‘child labor’ as: “Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school or obliging them to leave school.

¹ See UTZ’s position on the Sustainable Development Goals.
² ILO (2017). Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016. NB: this percentage includes subsistence and commercial farming, including fishery forestry, livestock herding and aquaculture.

CHILD LABOR VERSUS CHILD WORK

The term “child labor” is often used interchangeably with “child work” without differentiating between the two terms. However, there is a difference: child labor refers to children’s work that is banned by law whereas child work refers to children’s work that is permitted.
prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”

Vision

UTZ envisions a world in which children and young workers are protected from work that is harmful and interferes with their schooling and in which farmer groups, cooperatives, estates and companies support and respect this human right; children have access to quality education and vocational training opportunities; and young workers have access to decent work including good working conditions and fair recruitment.

In addition, as child labor is intrinsically related to poverty and gender inequality, it is essential that farming families are empowered and supported in their efforts to address poverty, gender inequality and safeguard natural resources for future generations.

UTZ sees certification as an important tool to tackle child labor. Certification can help to address some of the root causes of child labor by improving access to better livelihoods and decent work opportunities. It can leverage lessons learned from different experiences worldwide and bring good practices to scale in farming communities. It can upscale child labor prevention, remediation and monitoring and facilitate the mobilization of (local) actors and resources that are necessary to create a supportive environment for the prevention and remediation of child labor.

Approach

UTZ’s holistic approach contains social, environmental and economic requirements in the Code of Conduct, which reinforce and complement each other. On the economic side, UTZ emphasizes using good agricultural practices with respect for people and planet, leading to higher productivity, quality and efficiency and thus a better income. These economic benefits normally substantially outweigh the perceived economic benefits of using child labor and are as such an important additional incentive for farmers to no longer consider child labor. On the social side, UTZ emphasizes workers’ rights, the eradication of child labor and gender equality.

UTZ requires farmers to build certification-based child labor prevention, monitoring and remediation systems. Clear requirements are outlined for UTZ certified farmers to undertake activities to prevent, remediate and monitor child labor, tailored to local contexts and risk levels, on the basis of an annual risk assessment.

The UTZ model is based on the Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS) approach, in which UTZ works with farmer groups to prevent and remedy child labor. This fosters trust, transparency and honest reporting and helps build an environment that supports children’s development and helps families farm without relying on child labor. This is more effective in eradicating child labor than applying strict punishments and banning child labor, which leads to child labor being more hidden or taken elsewhere.

Community-based child labor liaisons have to be appointed if child labor risks are identified, who should document all cases of child labor as well as the remediation that has taken place. UTZ stimulates farmer groups, cooperatives, estates and companies to collaborate with existing public and private initiatives to

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3 Based on ILO Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour and ILO Convention 138 on Minimum Age of Employment.
combat child labor. UTZ can help in identifying partners for specific remediation activities.

The UTZ Code requires adherence to national legislations or in countries where national law is less strict or obsolete, to the UTZ Code, which is based on the ILO definition of child labor. Members are supported in implementing these requirements through training, technical advice and guidance documents.\(^a\)

**Beyond the Code of Conduct**

UTZ realizes that, no matter how strict the requirements and control mechanisms, it is impossible for any viable system to provide a 100% guarantee that no child is working at any certified farm at any time throughout the year. Structural change is needed to tackle the root causes of child labor, including the lack of access to quality education and child protection services, poverty, the need for living income, economic opportunities and decent employment opportunities for young people.

To fully eradicate child labor, a powerful coalition of all relevant stakeholders is needed. UTZ depends on these networks, including local communities and governments, to take an active role, while at the same time constantly assessing and fine-tuning its own policies and working methods. UTZ is building partnerships in selected countries to lobby companies and governments to take their responsibility to protect children from child labor and to provide essential services, including quality and relevant education, occupational health and safety and social services.

**Sector change**

UTZ is a pro-active member of sector platforms and industry groups for cocoa, coffee, tea and hazelnuts. Through these platforms, UTZ promotes certification-based child labor monitoring and remediation systems as a sustainable and scalable solution to monitor and improve human rights in supply chains, in line with the SDGs and the growing human rights due diligence legislation.

UTZ advocates for sector-wide change that addresses the root causes of child labor, including the lack of access to quality education, poverty and the need for a living income, the need for marketable skills training and decent employment opportunities for young people, and the availability of a social safety net and child protection services.

### UTZ AND THE INTERNATIONAL COCOA INITIATIVE

In 2017, UTZ joined the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI), which promotes child protection in cocoa-growing communities. ICI and UTZ already collaborated on the introduction of the certification-based CLMRS approach in the Code of Conduct. Joining ICI allows UTZ to scale up such models and further improve the living conditions of cocoa farmers and their families.

**Sector Partnership Program**

Through the Sector Partnership Program funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UTZ is strengthening the capacity of farmers and civil society organizations in producing countries. UTZ supports farmers to work with governments and companies to engage in issues that require a sector wide approach, including child labor, climate change, gender and the living wage. This

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\(^a\) See the [UTZ Guidance Document on Child Labor](#).
includes the development of multi-stakeholder pilots and initiatives that tackle root causes of child labor on multiple levels.

**The role of governments**
Governments are ultimately responsible for the protection of children's rights, including the right to education and children's protection from harm⁵. In selected countries, UTZ collaborates with governments, UN agencies and NGOs in programs and policy developments that eradicate child labor through increased access to education, creation of viable economic training and employment opportunities for young workers and the enforcement of labor laws that are in the best interests of the child.

**The role of companies**
Companies have a responsibility to respect human rights, including the rights of children, following the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the Children's Rights and Business Principles⁶. Companies should also support governments in their efforts to support human rights, including children's rights.

**Conclusion**

*The UTZ program provides a framework for certification-based child labor prevention, remediation and remediation. By comprehensively addressing child labor in our standard, assurance, implementation support as well as partnership building and advocacy, the UTZ program provides a model that can prevent and remediate child labor occurring on UTZ certified farms and facilitates the mobilisation of actors and resources to tackle the root causes of child labor. By working closely with relevant stakeholders, UTZ is contributing to a sustainable and scalable solution to prevent and remedy child labor by building a world in which children's rights are upheld and child labor no longer takes place.*

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⁵ The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified Convention. Following the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, governments are responsible for the overall protection of human rights and ensuring companies respect human rights.  
⁶ Find out more about the Children's Rights and Business Principles [here](#).