

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

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.

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.



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.⁴

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

⁴ See the [UTZ Guidance Document on Child Labor](#).



