

Responsible business conduct in the Thailand agri-food sector

Global decent work challenges in the sector

Global supply chains (GSCs) connect producers of food to consumers across the world. In many developing countries, agri-food GSCs shape the outcomes for the agriculture and food sectors, with GSC participation a driver of sector development and growth (OECD 2020). It is estimated that about 2.6 billion people around the world rely on agriculture for their livelihoods (Lim and Kim 2021). The share of the agriculture sector to global labour has steadily declined largely as a consequence of the advancement of agricultural technologies and the growth of other sectors. The percentage share of agriculture to global employment decreased from 43.70% in 1991 to 26.76% in 2019 (World Bank 2021). However, while the numbers of people working in agriculture are estimated to decline

over time, it is the main source of employment for rural populations in developing countries. Women account for more than 40% of the workforce. The creation of decent employment within agriculture is an essential driver for rural development and reduction of poverty.

Employment in the sector consists mainly of: (i) self-employment, which is often in informal, smallholding farming; and (ii) wage labour, frequently on temporary contracts. In many countries, agriculture is still dominated by family farms, where household members, including children provide labour, oftentimes unpaid, at different times of the year. Migrant workers constitute a large proportion of the workforce in plantations and processing companies. Permanent employees are mainly found in plantations and the processing industries.

Many of the smallholder farmers perform casual wage work on other farms or plantations to supplement their meagre incomes. The incomes of farmers are also subject to uncertainties imposed by the weather, risks of pests and diseases, fluctuating prices, and other factors. Low farm productivity and, consequently, low income among farmers is closely linked to lack of access to finance and extension services.

Agriculture is characterized by seasonal labour peaks, where a large number of workers may be hired for relatively short periods, such as the planting and harvesting seasons. This seasonality of work also extends to the processing sector although food manufacturers generally employ permanent workers and hire additional temporary workers during the peak season. The seasonality of production adds to the challenge of extending social protection coverage to workers who, in many countries, are almost always excluded from national labour laws that extend legal protections that include minimum wages, maximum hours of work, paid sick leave and social security (ILO 2020).

Farm workers receive low wages and incomes for tasks that are performed in poor and hazardous conditions arising from exposure to various safety, health, environmental, and biological hazards, including those related to chemicals, noise, musculoskeletal injuries, and heat. They often lack access to the necessary health, information and training services to adequately respond to these hazards. According to ILO estimates, at least 170,000 agricultural workers are killed each year (ILO nd). Workers in agriculture run twice the risk of dying on the job compared with workers in other sectors.

Higher skilled, permanent positions in the sector are, oftentimes, reserved for men, primarily due to gender stereotyping and bias. Even when women have comparable positions with men, their wages lag behind. Workers, especially those in non-standard form of employment have limited access to training, with more women than men facing these constraints.

Recent studies conducted by ILO in countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America indicate that the level of unionization within agricultural workers is low. The following are the types of legal exclusions that deny the fundamental rights to freedom of association for agricultural workers (IUF 2021): (i) exclusion of agricultural workers from national

labour standards protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining; (ii) exclusion based upon the number of employees or size of farms; (iii) exclusion of self-employed/own-account, temporary, seasonal, and casual workers, which comprise majority of the agricultural workers; and (iv) restrictions on freedom of association for migrant workers.

As part of its corporate social responsibility (CSR), Tesco PLC, a British multinational retailer, and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco, and Allied Workers Association (IUF) signed a global framework agreement to work together to support workers' rights globally, with a specific focus on how women in global food supply chains can benefit from effective grievance mechanisms, freedom of association and trade union representation (Bolton 2022). The partnership aims to: (i) work collaboratively to support workers to access effective representation; (ii) jointly create a process for incident reporting that allows for effective resolution of identified issues; and (iii) identify opportunities to reduce women workers' vulnerability and increase women's voices and representation in the workplace.

During recent years, there has been a broadening of the scope of voluntary social standards in response to external pressures placed on retailers by consumer groups and civil society. The inclusion of labour standards in voluntary social standards and responsible business conduct could be seen as a defensive measure designed to reduce the chances of damage to companies' reputations from exposés of poor labour conditions. Codes of conduct are pushed through the tiers of the supply chain, which can provide points of leverage and the platform for the promotion of socially responsible labour practices.

The global agri-food sector experienced significant trade disruptions due to the COVID-19 crisis and associated lockdown measures imposed by governments to contain the spread of the virus. Key impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on the agri-food sector include the following (OECD 2021): (i) decline in production of certain agricultural products (e.g., poultry) due to difficulties in accessing inputs, seasonal labour, and output markets; (ii) decline in consumer demand, driven by unemployment and income shocks associated with the containment measures, reduced demand for high value products,

consumer shift in demand from food services; and (iii) supply chain disruptions, due in part, to the contamination of employees in processing firms, the adoption of distancing and sanitary requirements, and transport and logistic issues. An ILO study indicated that the movement restrictions and quarantine measures resulted in the reduction of job quantity and quality in the sector, especially at the base of the supply chain (ILO 2020). Many of the farmers and enterprises faced difficulties in accessing markets due to movement restrictions and slowdown of consumer demand. Those with perishable products were the most affected. On the other hand, supply chain disruptions resulted in a lack of supply of raw materials for processing, which was detrimental not only to companies but to daily wage workers. Fragmented supply chains increase vulnerabilities to shocks as well as hinder market competitiveness improvement.

The various studies on the COVID-19 crisis response in agri-food supply chains underscored the integral role of trade unions in securing benefits for workers, such as health and safety measures,

paid sick leave, and job preservation. The studies also highlighted the importance of bilateral and tripartite social dialogues (trade unions, employers, and government) in achieving a consensus on policy and fiscal measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on enterprises, workers, and consumers.

Multinational enterprises can seize the opportunity in rebuilding their supply chains back better by adopting socially responsible business practices. International CSR standards and principles, which address responsibility throughout the whole supply chain, provide a useful framework for building better resilience. Information from supply chain due diligence can be used to understand short and medium term vulnerabilities of workers and suppliers, and support continuity planning to manage disruptions, improve productivity, and enhance market responsiveness while protecting workers and the environment. CSR will help address many of the deep inequalities and decent work challenges that the COVID-19 crisis has brought even more clearly into focus.

Thailand: generating decent work in this sector through responsible business practices

Decent work at a glance: Thailand Auto Parts Sector	
Employment promotion	2019 agri-food sector: 17.9 million workers: agriculture – 68%; manufacturing – 12%; distribution – 20%. Women comprised 41% of agricultural workers. 436,188 regular migrant workers and an unknown number of irregular workers.
Social security	- Only 8% of the agricultural workforce were enrolled in the national social security fund. Permanent workers in processing companies were members of the social security fund. - Migrant workers had access to social security but cards were usually issued late even if monthly contributions were regularly paid.
Forced labour	Instances of forced labour were connected to indebtedness associated with loans to pay recruitment brokers, and withholding of identification documents to prevent free movement.
Child labour	87,498 child labourers worked in the agriculture sector, with 86% engaged in hazardous work.
Equality of opportunity	The mean nominal monthly earning of women workers was lower than men. The wage gap, however, reduced from 29% in 2015 to 21% in 2019.

Decent work at a glance: Thailand Auto Parts Sector	
Security of employment	Formal workers comprised about 8% of the workforce in the agriculture sector in 2019. The remaining 92% of the workers were engaged in informal employment.
Training	Government was the main provider of extension services. A migrant-friendly online training app, which provided pre-employment and on-the-job app-based learning to migrant workers, has been launched. Agribusiness provided training to their contract farmers.
Conditions of work and life	Workers generally received the minimum wage. Migrant workers worked long hours and without days off. Musculoskeletal disorders accounted for the most of healthcare visits. Formal and informal workers had access to Universal Health Coverage System.
Industrial relations	Trade union density is low. Thailand has not ratified ILO Conventions 87 and 98 on the right to association and the right to organise and the right to engage in collective bargaining. Thai laws do not guarantee the right of agricultural workers to form unions.

The key products exported by Thailand include rice, natural rubber, fruits, chicken meat, fish, sugar, and all their by-products. Many of the agriculture products exported by Thailand have a significant market share in the world market and consist of intermediate and consumer products. About 97% of the processed food manufacturers are small and medium enterprises, while large companies comprise 3%. The country has one of the most advanced food processing industries in Southeast Asia. Developed countries such as the United States, Japan, and United Kingdom are the main export countries, although with a declining market share, given the increase in demand from ASEAN countries.

The agri-food sector in Thailand contributed USD 130 billion to the economy in 2019, equivalent to 25% of total GDP (Oxford Economics 2021). The agriculture sector per se represented only 7.98% of GDP in 2019 and provided livelihood to 31.61% of the population (World Bank 2020).

The 2020 study conducted by ILO on labour practices in the agri-food sector using the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) as the framework for analysis, identified the following decent work challenges:

Employment. In 2019, the agri-food sector in Thailand employed 17.91 million workers, broken down as follows (Oxford Economics 2021): (i) agriculture – 12.28 million (68%); (ii) food and beverage manufacturing – 2.08 million (12%); and (iii) food and beverage distribution – 3.55 million (20%). Women comprised about 41% of the agricultural workforce.

In 2018, the agri-food sector employed 436,188 regular migrant workers and an unknown number of irregular workers (UN 2019). About 43% of the migrant workers were women. These migrant workers entered Thailand through the following processes: (i) nationality verification (NV) process – 42%; (ii) one stop service centres – 50%; (iii) memorandum of understanding (MOU) – 7%; and (iv) border pass employment – 1%. Migrant workers who entered the country through the NV process, one-stop service centres, and MOU have access to social security. A key issue that affected workers' access to social security was the delayed issuance of their social security cards by employers or the recruitment agencies, despite having paid the monthly contribution as indicated in their payslips.

Good socially responsible labour practices

CPF'S commitment to responsible recruitment

ILO MNE Declaration
Principle: Employment
promotion

Charoen Pokphand Foods (CPF) operates an integrated agro-industrial and food business specialized in livestock and aquaculture. It is one of the world's largest producers of poultry products. The company operates in 17 countries with headquarters in Thailand.

By 2019, CPF had 73,941 employees, where women constituted 52% of the workforce, and men, 48%. About 18% of the company's workforce were migrant workers from Myanmar and Cambodia.

The company has always recruited migrant workers under the Thai government's MOU with neighbouring countries, and through certified agencies at the countries of origin. Starting in 2017, the company shouldered all recruitment expenses such as application fees charged by authorised agents in their respective countries, training fees, medical check-up fees and work licensing fees in line with the Royal Ordinance on the Management of Migrant Workers. Interpreters were also provided throughout the recruitment process to avoid miscommunication. The migrant workers were also provided orientation on their tasks and labour rights, and provided with opportunities to clarify terms and conditions of employment.

In 2019, the company formally launched its Foreign Workers Recruitment Policy and Ethical Recruitment Standard, which explicitly forbids the collection of payments, confiscation of personal documents, discrimination, child labour and forced labour. The policy was developed with the collaboration and guidance of recruitment agencies in Myanmar and labour management in Cambodia. To promote adherence of the policy among suppliers, CPF conducted capacity building activities.

Sources: (CPF 2020) (CPF 2019) (CPG 2020)

Training support provided by Cargill protein Southeast Asia to contract farmers

ILO MNE Declaration Principle:
Training

Twenty-eight years ago, Cargill's poultry business opened shop in Thailand with 1,000 employees processing 400 broilers per day. Today it employs about 17,000 people producing more than 100,000 metric tons of chicken every year, and has become Thailand's top cooked chicken exporter.

Cargill supported the growth of Southeast Asian poultry farmers with training programs ranging from animal husbandry, to safety, to technology. For small farmers, the support plays a key role in bringing labour, food safety and quality standards in line with the requirements to do business in export markets.

One of the contract farmers of Cargill is the Anurak Farm. The farm entered into a contract farming agreement with Cargill in 2006 with a capacity to raise 20,000 broiler chickens per year. Twelve years later, annual raising capacity has increased to more than 1.2 million heads. Anurak Farm attributed this to rising demand for chicken, training support, and steady local investment from companies such as Cargill.

The company has trained millions of farmers around the world to use sustainable farming practices so they can increase yields and profitability. Cargill helped farmers grow crops and raise livestock in the most environmentally responsible ways while improving their productivity and conserving resources.

Source: (Cargill 2018)

Good socially responsible labour practices

Tesco's action to promote responsible recruitment practices among its Thai and Malaysian suppliers

ILO MNE Declaration
Principle: Employment
promotion

Tesco is among the major buyers of poultry products from Thailand. The company also has a network of stores across Thailand with many of the products sourced from farmers and agribusinesses. Tesco has been operating in Thailand for more than 20 years and is committed to promoting the growth of the Thai economy and society.

As member of the Leadership Group for Responsible Recruitment within the Institute for Human Rights and Business, Tesco supported the development of metrics to ensure ongoing progress toward embedding responsible recruitment practices in their supply chains and own operations. The company supports the Employer Pays Principle that 'No worker should pay for a job - the costs of recruitment should be borne not by the worker but by the employer.'

Based on findings from its research that excessive recruitment fees and costs were prevalent in some sectors in Thailand and Malaysia, in 2020 Tesco launched the following responsible recruitment requirements for suppliers and their supply chains in these two countries:

- All suppliers must obtain a clear understanding of the processes and costs associated with migrant worker recruitment. Suppliers should, where possible, also look to understand where workers have outstanding debts as a result of the recruitment process.
- Based on the above, a time-bound action plan should be developed for the employer to shift to a responsible recruitment model. This should be supported by a company or group migrant worker recruitment policy. The action plan and migrant worker recruitment policy should be in line with the Employer Pays Principle and the ILO definition on recruitment fees and costs.
- A company or group migrant worker recruitment policy should stipulate clearly what fees and costs shall be borne by workers and the employer respectively as well as the main principles that shall guide the recruitment activities and their engagement with registered recruitment agencies, registered sub-agents, 3rd party recruiters or suppliers.
- Other than a one-off repayment for past recruitment-related fees and costs incurred by workers, repaying recruitment fees and related costs on an on-going basis does not meet Tesco's requirements regarding migrant worker recruitment. Therefore, in cases where excessive recruitment fees and/or costs are found to have been paid by workers, suppliers should share with Tesco a proposal for remediation for further discussion and implementation.
- Where appropriate, suppliers should engage with recognised and/or reliable migrant worker experts and civil society organisations to map their recruitment supply chain and develop an action plan and policy.



Formal workers, which only comprised about 8% of the workforce in the agriculture sector in 2019, were more likely to be members of the Social Security Fund (SSF). The remaining 92% of the workers were engaged in informal employment. They may voluntarily contribute to the SSF pursuant to Article 40 of the Social Security Act. There is, however, no data on the number of informal workers in the agriculture sector who have opted for voluntary membership.

Reports of alleged forced labour were almost always connected to indebtedness associated with loans to pay recruitment brokers, and withholding of identification documents to prevent free movement. It is alleged that the migrant workers faced coercive working conditions and various forms of intimidation to prevent them from running away (Rujivanarom and Panyasuppakun 2018).

According to the nationwide survey on child labour conducted in 2018 by the National Statistical Office of Thailand, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and the ILO, 177,000 children worked as labourers. Of these, 87,498 worked in the agriculture

sector, with 86% engaged in hazardous work (National Statistical Office of Thailand 2021).

From 2015 to 2019, the mean nominal monthly earning of women workers was lower than men. The wage gap, however, decreased from 29% in 2015 to 21% in 2019 (International Labour Organization 2020). Likewise, wage of women increased at a faster rate than men during the five-year period.

Training. Training services were mainly provided by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DOAE), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, and the Department of Livestock Development. Agribusinesses provided training primarily to their contract farmers. There were also non-government organizations who provided business development and extension services to farmers.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with Quizrr and MOVE, has launched a migrant-friendly online training app, which provided pre-employment and on-the-job app-based learning to migrant workers.

Good socially responsible labour practices

Employees welfare and training at GFPT

ILO MNE Declaration
Principle: Conditions of
Work, Training

GFPT Public Company Limited and its subsidiary operate an integrated poultry business. It is among the top exporters and producers of poultry products in Thailand. In 2017, the company achieved the Good Labour Practices Guidelines for Poultry Farms. GFPT is also a member of SEDEX.

Employees are paid fair compensation. Aside from the mandatory social security benefits, health and accident insurance are also provided to employees. The company also provided free uniform, financial aid, support for the funeral of staff's parents, and education scholarship for employees' children.

The Company has established three housing projects for employees near the workplace with a total of 22 buildings and more than 1,750 rooms. Workers also have an access to a day nursery where they can leave their children during working hours. The nursery meets regulatory standards and has received approval from the relevant government agency.

In 2019, the company had a total of 695,600 training hours or 123 training hours per employees. Training covered topics such as anti-corruption policy, energy efficiency enhancement, safety and environment, labour law and management, risk management, business and human rights, etc.

Source: (GFPT 2018) (GFPT 2020)

Conditions of work and life. The study indicated that workers generally received the minimum wage. It is also alleged that many of the migrant workers did not receive any days off and worked more than eight hours a day.

As per a study conducted by Yogyorn et al in 2020, field crop and vegetable growers accounted for 86% of the visits to healthcare facilities. According to the same study, the highest number of visits were due to musculoskeletal disorders followed by hearing loss at a far second. The highest number of pesticide poisoning was for organophosphate and carbamate insecticides. Mixed crop and animal growers registered the highest cost per visit at US\$ 149 (Yogyorn, et al. 2020).

Informal workers had access to free healthcare at the point of service under the Universal Health Coverage Scheme (UHCS). Services provided under the UHCS were similar to those provided to formal sector workers through the national Social Security Administration (SSA). Formal sector workers were also covered by the Workers Compensation Fund Act of 1994 that compensated employees who experienced work-related injuries or diseases, disabilities, or had died (Yogyorn, et al. 2020).

Industrial relations. Trade union density rates in the agricultural sector are low. There is no national law upholding the rights to organise and bargain for civil servants, government employees and workers in the agricultural and other informal sectors (Wannasiri 2020). The Labour Relations Act and the State Enterprise Labour Relations Act only provide for workers in the private sector and in state-owned enterprises to formally register trade unions, labour federations, and labour congresses.

Migrant workers are permitted to become a member of and participate in trade union activities. However, they are not permitted to form or become board members or office holders of registered trade unions or labour unions.

Overview of key issues in advancing socially responsible labour practices in the agriculture sector

The outcomes of the study and engagement with sectoral stakeholders have highlighted the following as the systemic constraints that hinder the uptake for a more strategic uptake of socially responsible labour practices in the agri-food sector:

- a) Limited depth and breadth of contractual relationships between and among enterprises.
- b) Downward price pressure across the supply chains, resulting in insufficient investment into the promotion of decent work and strategic responsible business conduct initiatives.
- c) Limited guidelines, guidance and capacity building programmes at the supply chain level on how to operationalize international frameworks on socially responsible labour practices.
- d) Multiplicity of codes of conduct and voluntary social standards and their accompanying requirements for audits and traceability.
- e) Limited systematic processes for documenting and sharing of emerging good socially responsible labour practices and measures to address decent work deficits.
- f) Limited appreciation and understanding among labour recruitment agencies of the codes of conduct and labour and human rights policies and laws.
- g) Lack of institutional clarity, roles and responsibilities among governmental agencies regulating and controlling decent work compliance and CSR best practices promotion and adoption.
- h) Legal and social barriers to the exercise of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The way forward

The ILO MNE Declaration

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) is “a way in which enterprises give consideration to the impact of their operations on society and affirm their principles and values both in their own internal methods and processes and their interaction with other actors.” The main guiding instrument regarding the labour dimension of CSR or responsible business conduct (RBC) is the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration), which was adopted in 1997 and most recently updated in 2017. The MNE Declaration sets out principles in the fields of general policies, employment, training, conditions of work and life and industrial relations which governments, employers ‘and workers ‘organizations and multinational and national enterprises are recommended to observe on a voluntary basis.



How a company relates with its workers, suppliers, host communities, and the marketplace can greatly contribute to the sustainability of its business success. For companies to stay productive, competitive, and relevant in the face of rapid globalization, they have to become environmentally viable and socially responsible. Labour related CSR entails companies taking responsibility for their impacts on decent work throughout their operations and with their business partners and identifying ways to enhance their positive contribution to decent work in dialogue with their workers, suppliers, host communities, and buyers. Responsible businesses create social value by addressing needs and challenges of their stakeholders while simultaneously creating their own economic value.

Based on the outcomes of the study, various workshops and policy dialogues were organized to address the advancement of socially responsible business practices in Thailand. The outcomes of these events provided key policy insights and takeaways from stakeholders in Thailand's agricultural sector, including: (i) members of employers' organizations (Employers' Confederation of Thailand, Thai Feed Mill Association, Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association, Thai Poultry Veterinary Association, Broiler Association; (ii) pineapple and poultry farmers; (iii) pineapple processors and exporters; (iii) representatives of trade unions (Labour Congress of Thailand, etc.); (iv) multinational enterprises (MNEs) such as Costco, Texco, McDonalds, Cargill, etc.); (v) officials from the Ministry of Labour, Labour

Standards Development Bureau, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Rights and Liberties Protection Department, Ministry of Justice, The Stock Exchange of Thailand, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, etc.; (vi) representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) and academe engaged in promotion of labour standards and worker protection.

Drawing on the principles of the ILO MNE Declaration, and other international instruments on responsible business, the following policy recommendation have been identified as measures to foster implementation of responsible business conduct among enterprises, with a view of 'building back better' by advancing decent work in COVID-19 recovery of the agri-food sector in Thailand:

Policy recommendation	Stakeholder
MNEs should ensure that their procurement policies are equitable, sustainable, and support the achievement of decent work across all functions in their supply chains.	MNEs
MNEs, in partnership with government and civil society organizations, should support Thai suppliers in aligning their operations, particularly their procurement system, to socially responsible labour practices. This may be facilitated through dialogues between importers, Thai processors, and government to generate a shared understanding of procurement trends and the codes of conduct of importers. MNEs may also provide the following assistance to their suppliers: (i) development or updating of procurement policies and planning and management systems, in line with socially responsible labour principles; (ii) inclusion of socially responsible principles and standards in contract farming agreement; and (iii) research and development and widespread dissemination of technologies that can help smooth out production throughout the year, improve labour productivity, and promote judicious utilization of raw materials	- MNEs - Government - CSOs - Thai enterprises/agribusinesses
Employers' organizations, in partnership with government, academe, and civil society organizations, should come up with a consolidated socially responsible labour agenda that they can jointly implement, including operational guidance and guidelines at the supply chain level. Policy dialogues that took place in Thailand identified the variety of international and regional policy frameworks and initiatives from various government agencies. These dialogues outlined the need for further actions to enhance coordinated actions among the stakeholder groups of each sector. Actions to enhance actions by employers may include: (i) roundtable discussions with stakeholders in the agri-food sector to facilitate the setting up or updating of Good Labour Practices for the various subsectors; (ii) capacity building support from MNEs, government, and CSOs to Thai companies in enhancing the labour dimensions of their existing CSR/RBC initiatives, which includes conducting due diligence in their supply chains; (iii) setting-up of compliance monitoring and assessment systems at the company and association levels; (iv) dissemination of emerging good practices to the various subsectors; and (v) upgrading the capacity of existing CSR providers to assist enterprises implement socially responsible labour practices at the enterprise and supply chain levels.	- Employers' organizations - CSOs - Academe - Government

Policy recommendation	Stakeholder
The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Labour, and the Stock Exchange of Thailand should build capacity of trade unions, cooperatives and intermediaries to conduct training on labour standards especially on occupational safety and health and due diligence at their level. Trade unions have an important role to play in developing, implementing and advancing socially responsible labour practices to improve the working conditions of all workers. Accordingly, measures should be taken to build the capacity of trade unions active in the Thai agricultural sector to co-manage and actively participate in the socially responsible labour initiatives of employers/agri-food companies.	- Government - Trade unions
MNEs, employers' organizations, and government should harmonize CSR/RBC codes at the industry and global markets levels, and streamline compliance procedures. The multiplicity of codes and standards has added compliance pressures on various actors in the industry, which range from financial, logistical, and time burdens. Measures should be taken by industry associations/employers' organizations and government to better harmonize and align the various requirements requested by international buyers, which may include: (i) promoting dialogues among major importers and the employers' organizations on how to rationalize compliance, supplier inspections, and reporting practices; and (ii) exploring the viability of upgrading the Thai Labour Standards to conform with the various requirements and auditing standards as well as its future acceptability among buyers.	- MNEs - Employers' organizations
Government should strengthen capacity and compliance of labour recruitment agencies to labour protection law and international labour standards. Actions are needed to address recruitment agencies' limited knowledge and/or respect of labour and human rights policies and laws. These may include: (i) conducting refresher training on labour protection and international labour standards; (ii) facilitating dialogues between recruitment agencies and actors in the Thai agri-food sector to have a shared understanding of the codes of conduct and responsibilities of each party; (iii) exploring the viability of establishing a code of conduct or similar instruments for labour recruitment agencies; and (iv) strengthened monitoring of the recruitment agency contract and arrangements by labour inspectors and other State-based mechanisms to ensure compliance with national laws.	- Government - Labour recruitment agencies
Government should initiate the setting up of an inter-ministerial commission as platform for inter-institutional coordination <i>that would entail a planning division responsible for horizontal and vertical coordination in preparing and implementing a national strategy</i> . To ensure coordination across government organizations, coherence across sectoral priorities and policies, and to promote mutually supporting actions across sectors and institutions, the key aspects to be considered are: (i) identification of the current situation and processes, organizations, institutions, actors, policies, practices, social standards (Thai and international), and other factors that affect decent work compliance and CSR best practices uptake; (ii) establishing inter-sectoral thematic working groups to address issues of mutual concern, which may refer to the principles of the ILO MNE Declaration as framework for policy and action; (iii) development of a shared-national control and monitoring framework and indicators; and (iv) development and implementation of local, regional and national dialogues and promotional events.	Government
Government should improve the enabling environment for the exercise of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining <i>through the following proposed actions for the government</i> : (i) ratification of ILO Conventions 87 and 98 parallel to amending the national laws to make these compliant with the standards; (ii) removal of legal provisions in national laws that discriminate against or exclude migrant workers and informal workers from forming and/or joining a trade union; and (iii) enhancing legal protection measures for union members and their leaders, including protection from being dismissed or discriminated against for any activities related to the exercise of freedom of association and right to collective bargaining.	Government

Further developments

Conduct of peer learning events and capacity building on socially responsible labour practices¹.

The programme organized learning events for poultry exporters and their suppliers and employees on the implementation of International Labour Standards as a competitive factor for the sector. Participants to the learning events included representatives from government agencies, organizations involved in voluntary social standards, and international buyers. The global buyers shared their insights on the trend of increased requirements on social compliance and concrete benefits for Thai businesses to advance labour standards along their production chains.

The project collaborated with the Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association and Employer Confederation of Thailand in the implementation of a capacity building program/Train the Trainer seminar for poultry exporter companies to ensure better jobs creation through responsible labour practices training for their personnel and companies in their supply chains.

Conduct of tripartite-plus social dialogue to promote the labour dimension of responsible business in the agriculture sector in Thailand.

The social dialogues provided the platform for market actors and public and private industry stakeholders to exchange emerging good labour practices and debate on challenges relating to international mechanisms and socially responsible good practices. These events also enhanced the responsible business conduct advocacy capacity of the Employers' Confederation of Thailand (ECOT).

The programme, together with the National Congress Private Industrial of Employees (NCPE) co-organised a "Training seminar on social security and the MNE Declaration" (THA D5). The objective of this training, as requested by the trade union, was to raise trade union leaders' awareness of responsible business, as well as the principles and operational tools of the MNE Declaration. This training was the first time that many of the participants had the opportunity to learn about responsible business conduct and the institutional context around it. The participants requested more training for workers' organisations.

The RSCA programme, together with UNDP Thailand, Global Compact Network Thailand (GCNT), the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Rights and Liberties Protection Department (RLPD) of Ministry of Justice, co-organized the training "Business and Human Rights training: Human Rights Due Diligence Practical Guides." The ILO-led training session provided an overview of the ILO MNE Declaration and its relation to international labour standards, as well as salient human rights issues in Thailand, based on comments of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR or Committee of Experts). It also provided an overview of the CSR Training manual developed in the context of the RSCA programme, the ILO Helpdesk, and the fundamental principles and rights at work to businesses.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/asia/events/WCMS_703488/lang--en/index.htm; https://www.ilo.org/asia/events/WCMS_759957/lang--en/index.htm

For more information:

MNE Declaration web portal – www.ilo.org/mnedeclaration

ILO-OECD-OHCHR responsible Supply Chains in Asia: Thailand - https://www.ilo.org/asia/projects/WCMS_678345/lang--en/index.htm

Labour Standards in Global Supply Chains: An ILO training module for SMEs and other enterprises
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_725761.pdf

ILO Helpdesk for Business on international labour standards (www.ilo.org/business)
How to align corporate policies and practices with International ILS and build good industrial relations

Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/--multi/documents/publication/wcms_094386.pdf
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_684935.pdf

Responsible Business: Key Messages from International Instruments
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_724747.pdf

Labour Issues in CSR: Examples from the ILO Helpdesk for Business Q & A
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_740229.pdf

ILO company-union dialogue facilitation
https://www.ilo.org/empent/areas/mne-declaration/WCMS_572115/lang--en/index.htm

Measurement for the employment and labour-related impacts of the Multinational Enterprises (MNEs)
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---multi/documents/publication/wcms_620788.pdf

The ILO MNE Declaration: What's in it for Workers?
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---actrav/documents/publication/wcms_627351.pdf

Engaging multinational enterprises on more and better jobs
http://www.oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---multi/documents/publication/wcms_175477.pdf

Responsible business -- labour standards in global supply chains
<https://www.itcilo.org/courses/responsible-business-meeting-labour-standards-global-supply-chains> - rolled out together with the ILO SCORE programme, targeting SMEs in global supply chains (enhance manager-workers workplace cooperation)

Decent and Productive Work in Agriculture
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_437173.pdf

The Role of Multinational Enterprises in the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_437188.pdf

COVID-19 and the impact on agriculture and food security
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_742023.pdf

ILO Standards and COVID (coronavirus)
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---normes/documents/genericdocument/wcms_739937.pdf

Prevention and Mitigation of COVID-19 at Work Action Checklist
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_741813.pdf

Rural and urban labour markets: Different challenges for promoting decent work
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_757960.pdf

Responsible Supply Chains in Asia (RSCA) Programme in Thailand

www.ilo.org/rsca

The “Responsible Supply Chains in Asia” (RSCA) programme (RAS/16/13/EUR) is a programme developed by the European Union together with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The programme promotes corporate social responsibility (CSR) / responsible business conduct (RBC) with regard to the environment, decent work and the respect of human rights.

This initiative is a part of the EU’s long-standing commitment to promote human rights, decent work and sustainable development, a pledge underpinned by the EU Treaties and reinforced in the European Commission’s trade policy strategy of 2015 “Trade for All”. It falls in particular under the Commission’s commitment to identify opportunities for responsible supply chain partnerships and the EU’s strategic approach to responsible business conduct, which is based on internationally agreed principles and guidelines. It will also contribute to the EU strategic approach to CSR/RBC as put forward in the Commission 2011 Communication “A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility.”

The four-year programme (2018-2021), carried out in collaboration with Japan, China, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, has two broad objectives to:

- a) Promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth by ensuring that investors and businesses have a better understanding of corporate social responsibility;
- b) Create policy environments conducive to promoting responsible business conduct and increased opportunities for dialogue.

The programme in Thailand is making an impact in a number of areas, including through:

The creation of an inter-ministerial committee to advise the programme and drive improvements in policy and coherence within the government. Ministries represented include Labour, Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, among others.

Facilitating peer learning on responsible business practices with poultry exporters and their suppliers, in partnership with Employers’ Confederation of Thailand (ECOT), the Thai Broiler Processing Exporters Association, the Thai Feed Mill Association & the Thai Poultry Veterinary Association.

Collaborating with independent researchers on building knowledge of supply chains for targeted sectors, including the vehicle parts industry and the agricultural sector, identifying decent work deficits, and highlighting good practices.

Promoting policy coherence, including by integrating responsible business conduct in the ongoing policy reviews requested by the Thai government and by providing technical support in the context of the elaboration of the Thai National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights.

Working directly with businesses, including the Joint Steering Committee on Commerce, Industry, and Banking (JSCCIB), Federation of Thai Industry, Thai Bankers’ Association, Stock Exchange of Thailand, and Global

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