



► Promising practices for fair recruitment

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Commitment to fair recruitment and due diligence in the sugar and palm oil industry of Guatemala

Key points

- Commitment by companies to fair recruitment throughout value chains in the sugar and palm oil sector
- Fair recruitment policies in both sectors result from multi-stakeholder consultations including employers, workers and the Chamber of Agriculture
- Capacity of companies involved in both sectors was built to address the risk of involvement in abusive practices throughout value chains
- Mechanisms to verify compliance are in place in both sectors

Focus

FRI pillar: Promoting fair business practices

Sectors: Sugar, palm oil production

Country: Guatemala

Responsible organizations: Chamber of agriculture (Cámara del Agro CAMAGRO), Sugar producers association (Asociación de Azucareros de Guatemala, ASAZGUA), Palm oil Producer asociación (Gremial de Palmicultores de Guatemala, GREPALMA)

Description of the practice

Through the technical assistance of the REFRAME Project as well as a consultative process, companies have been sensitized to the fact that the responsibility to respect human rights comes with accountability and transparent reporting requirements, in accordance with established criteria. Subsequently, it was agreed to develop two specific sectoral policies, one for the sugar sector and the other for the palm oil sector, which take as a reference the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles

and Rights at Work, as well as the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment (GPOG). Companies were provided with guidelines for the verification of good business practices in the respect of human rights, operational complaint mechanisms and suggestions for remedial action. Examples of good practices were also described in the guide along with criteria to measure their effectiveness.



Agriculture workers in Guatemala. © ILO

Proof of impact/progress

Following the consultations, the sugar producers association ASAZGUA, the palm oil producer association GREPALMA and its partners made a declaration of commitment to observe and comply with the human rights set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ILO Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work – taking into account the UN Principles on Business and Rights Human Rights and the ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment. They committed to promoting respect for these rights throughout value chains, including the right to freedom from forced labour, which is often the result of unfair recruitment.

ASAZGUA, GREPALMA and its partners committed to doing due diligence to prevent, mitigate and resolve current risks throughout value chains, including those related to recruitment irregularities and human rights violations.

ASAZGUA committed to “maintain the timely periodicity of the due diligence evaluations in matters of human rights to our associates”, and to “give continuity to the monitoring, evaluation and improvement system in social, labour and environmental aspects establishing goals of specific improvement for each associate”.

GREPALMA committed to training their partner agencies in human rights and fair recruitment and incorporating a mechanism to verify compliance. These actions have been validated with every participating company. Furthermore, the Sustainability Department of GREPALMA has been tasked to deal with queries related to compliance with the policy. GREPALMA also ensures follow-up to the implementation of the policy through its Board of Directors, and shares its bi-annual progress

reports through its communication platforms with concerned parties. The content of the adopted human rights policies will also be reviewed annually as part of an evaluation process.

Thousands of (migrant) workers benefit from these measures. The 11 associated mills in ASAZGUA generate around 63 thousand direct jobs and 315 thousand indirect ones in the sugar sector, while the palm oil sector in Guatemala generates 28,575 direct jobs and applies to 143,000 indirect beneficiaries.

Other promising features

Participation and representation

The elaboration of both policies for palm oil and sugar producing organizations was a participatory process involving their Boards of Directors, Chamber of Agriculture, companies and workers. During the formulation process they identified the human rights challenges together, including those related to forced labour, freedom of association, and non-discrimination (migrants, gender) and identified remedial action including the application of the principles of fair recruitment.

Ripple effects

Through due diligence, a process has been developed to respect human rights throughout value chains, and capacity has been built to identify, prevent, mitigate and remedy the risk of involvement in human rights abuses in companies own activities or due to their commercial relationships.



Women work in a plantation in the municipality of Almolonga, department of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, April 20, 2020. © ILO

Five years of the Fair Recruitment Initiative

- This promising practice is part of a series, and results from a stocktaking exercise undertaken five years after the launch of the Fair Recruitment Initiative (FRI).
- The FRI aims to ensure that recruitment practices nationally and across borders are grounded in labour standards, developed through social dialogue, ensure gender equality. Specifically, they:
 1. Are transparent and effectively regulated, monitored, and enforced;
 2. Protect all workers' rights, including fundamental principles and rights at work (FPRW), and prevent human trafficking and forced labour; and
 3. Efficiently inform and respond to employment policies and labour market needs, including for recovery and resilience.

Resources

[Política de Respeto a los Derechos Humanos de GREPALMA y sus Socios.](#)

[Palmicultores de Guatemala presentan política de respeto a los derechos humanos.](#)

[El Azúcar de Guatemala presenta Política Gremial de Respeto a los Derechos Humanos.](#)

[ILO General Principles and Operational Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and Definition of Recruitment Fees and Related Costs \(GPOG\).](#)

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