

The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC17)

Attended by the Steering Committee members and Working Group coordinators

Online General Sessions: 26-27 November 2019

Tuesday, 26 November 2019

1. Welcome by the WBF Secretariat

Mr Pascal Liu, Team Leader on International Investment and Tropical Fruits and Coordinator of the World Banana Forum (WBF), welcomed participants to the seventeenth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC17), noting that the decision to hold the meeting online was a result of the discussions held during and after the SC16 in May 2019. He informed participants that the general sessions of the SC17 were preceded by online thematic sessions of the three working groups (WGs) and their respective task forces (TFs) in early November 2019. It was acknowledged that the thematic sessions resulted in successful discussions and led to important decisions taken regarding upcoming activities of the WBF.

Mr Liu also stressed the importance of these general sessions, as key decisions were to be taken with respect to two major events of the WBF in 2020, namely WBF activities in Fruit Logistica (refer to Section 4) and the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF (refer to Section 3). He concluded the opening session by outlining the main objectives and expected outcomes of the meeting, and encouraged members to actively participate in the discussions that were to take place.

2. Overview of Recent Activities and Working Group Thematic Sessions

Mr Liu provided an overview of the main activities conducted by the WBF Secretariat following the establishment of the revised WBF action plan during the SC16. Some of the main activities include: the creation of the new Advisory Board (AB) – previously known as the Executive Board; engagements with the German government and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) to discuss collaboration opportunities and support to WBF activities in 2020; and successful efforts to raise funds from the FAO Regular Programme for various activities of the WGs and TFs. For more information on the activities of the WBF Secretariat, refer to document [WBF-SC17-2019-05e](#).

WBF Secretariat members also presented the main outcomes of the thematic sessions of the WGs, including the activities carried out under [Working Group 01](#) (WG01), [Working Group 02](#) (WG02) and [Working Group 03](#) (WG03) since the SC16, as well as the discussions and next steps established with respect to the WBF events at Fruit Logistica and the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF in 2020. More information on the activities discussed for the Fourth Global Conference and Fruit Logistica can be found in Sections 3 and 4, respectively.

3. Fourth Global Conference of the WBF

Mr Liu stated that the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF will be the most important event of the WBF in the year 2020. The Third Global Conference of the WBF, which was held in Geneva in 2017, counted on the presence of over 300 participants and also resulted in significant outcomes and an increased member base for the WBF. As such, it is hoped that this major event will again provide an opportunity to strengthen collaborations between stakeholders along the value chain to make the banana industry more sustainable.



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Discussions on the Fourth Global Conference began during the SC15, where SC members expressed their preference to hold the Conference in a country that would not face any TR4-related risks. During the SC15 and SC16, one of the main suggested countries was Germany. As such, based on the indications and advice given by the SC, the WBF Secretariat explored with the German government, through the Permanent Representation of Germany to FAO, the possibility of hosting the Conference in Berlin, Germany, during the week of 22-26 June 2020. It was determined that this week would be most appropriate given other major events relevant for the banana industry, including the potential TR4 Conference to be hosted by FAO in early June.

To date, an informal agreement has been reached to hold the Conference on 24 and 25 June, but needs official confirmation from both sides. Discussions have also concerned the possibility of inviting the German Minister of Agriculture to provide the opening address for the event. The Conference would potentially be preceded by an International Meeting on Gender Equity in the Banana Industry – as was done prior to the Third Global Conference of the WBF – and followed by a special session on TR4 the day after the Conference. No objections were received from SC members regarding the dates and events proposed. Therefore, the dates currently being discussed, but yet to be confirmed with the German government and the FAO's Director General are:

- 23 June - International Meeting on Gender Equity in the Banana Industry
- 24-25 June - Fourth Global Conference of the WBF
- 26 June - Special Session on Fusarium wilt TR4 (a banana disease)

Decisions:

- Seek confirmation by the German government and FAO's Director General on the possibility of holding the Conference on 24-25 June 2020 in Berlin, Germany, and its side events on the 23 and 26 June.
- Inform WBF members on final dates of the Global Conference and side events.

3.1. Strategy, objectives and expected outputs of the Fourth Global Conference

Mr Victor Prada emphasized that the Conference will be a key opportunity to showcase the activities and tools that have been produced by the WGs and TFs of the WBF. As an example, he highlighted some of the main WBF achievements that were presented during the Third Global Conference, such as the institutional impact that was attained through the launch of the National Manual on Occupational Health and Safety in Ecuador. As such, the objective for the Fourth Global Conference will thus be to present the recent successes of the WBF that have contributed to the betterment of the banana industry through strengthened collaborations between stakeholders.

Two topics that were identified as a priority for the Conference by the WBF Secretariat, and supported by participants, are:

1. **Fusarium wilt TR4:** Discussions around the disease are even more critical now that it has spread to Latin America. The WBF would have the opportunity to showcase the current efforts of the Task Force on TR4 (TR4TF) and the launch of the TR4 Global Network (TR4GN) (refer to Sections 5 and 6). In addition, the Conference would provide an important space to build on the results of the potential TR4 Conference to be hosted by FAO in early June.
2. **Living wages:** Discussions around living wages would be in line with current activities being conducted by a diverse range of actors in the industry in efforts to improve the economic



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

sustainability along the supply chain. It would entail discussions on distribution of value, corporate social responsibility (CSR), responsible business conduct (RBC), and due diligence processes. The WBF would have the opportunity to present its Living Wage Strategy, which is currently being developed by a panel of experts within WG02 and the Subgroup on Covering Costs of Sustainable Production (SG-CCSP) following the decisions taken during the thematic session of the WG.

This would further provide the opportunity to discuss specific activities in the industry, including the WBF Living Wage Advocacy Initiative and its current efforts to enable a unique example of pre-competitive cooperation by focusing on activities in both importing and exporting countries. Other initiatives would include activities taking place in, for instance, the Netherlands and Germany on CSR, RBC and due diligence processes.

Additional achievements of the WBF that could be showcased during the Conference include WG activities on occupational health and safety, gender, decent work, agroecological practices, and carbon and water footprint, as discussed during the thematic sessions of the WGs. A brief summary of the main topics proposed during the thematic sessions can be seen below:

Working Group 01– coordinators developed the following actions to take place during the Global Conference:

- Facilitate a session to present ongoing activities that contribute to a change in paradigm in the banana sector, as well as the results and impacts of members' own experiences and lessons regarding agroecological practices and water management within the South-South Knowledge Exchange framework. In addition, highlights, takeaways and next steps of the implementation of the Carbon and Water Footprint project and the automated measurement tool developed as part of it would be presented. An additional workshop is under consideration in order to practice on the use of the tool as a demo.
- Through a permanent audiovisual exposition, the WG01 will display examples of good banana production practices conducted by WBF members and partners, encompassing agroecological practices and improved water management as a model of renovation of banana farming around the world. Special focus will be placed on the importance of cooperation systems to share knowledge and collectively understand sustainability trends within the banana sector.

Working Group 02 and Subgroup on Covering Costs of Sustainable Production – WG and SG-CCSP coordinators proposed among others the following activities to be presented during the Global Conference, in relation to the WG's work on living wages:

- Present key updates on the living wage benchmark studies being conducted under the WBF's Living Wage Advocacy Initiative, as well as the results of the respective benchmark review sessions.
- Introduce the activities being conducted in banana-exporting countries – namely Germany, Netherlands, France and United Kingdom – on responsible business conduct and corporate social responsibility, which are imperative for enabling pre-competitive collaboration amongst actors along the global banana value chains.
- Follow up on the Living Wage Strategy defined by a panel of experts within the SG-CCSP, which was decided on during the thematic session of the WG02.



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Working Group 03 and Task Force on Gender Equity (GE-TF) - members of WG03 and the GE-TF developed two concrete proposals on topics to be presented and addressed during the Global Conference:

- Facilitate a session on Decent Work, which would aim to discuss how Decent Work underpins the various activities and achievements of the WGs, and further analyse how a Decent Work framework could be better integrated into WBF activities. This sessions would count on the participation and inputs from the ILO and IUF.
- Facilitate a session on the newly adopted ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the Place of Work, with guidance and discussions on what this implies for respective stakeholders in the banana industry.

Moreover, following the presentation of potential topics by the WBF Secretariat, important discussions arose amongst participants regarding other key topics and issues that could be presented or discussed during the Fourth Global Conference, including:

- Concerns related to world banana production, the balance between global supply and demand, and how to deal with the impacts of expected increases in supply (e.g. global production planning);
- Linking market expectations of living wages to local solutions, so as prevent the disempowerment of producers, trade unions and local governments;
- The marginalization of smallholders in the banana industry and the need to ensure that attention to smallholders is seen as a cross-cutting issue;
- Discussions between retailers to discuss their contributions to the sustainability of banana supply chains (e.g. contributions to value distribution, decent work, etc.);
- Consumer expectations – the gap between expectations and willingness to pay;
- The sustainability of the current banana production system (e.g. low diversity, increasing disease pressure, pesticide use);
- The role of innovation and technology to help solve sustainability challenges, and the role of blockchain for ensuring transparency and traceability.

The WBF Secretariat welcomed other participants to provide additional inputs and suggestions, and informed participants that all suggestions would eventually be submitted to the WBF Conference Organizing Committee (OC) for review.

Decisions:

- Contact SC members via e-mail to request additional inputs on topics, activities and/or tools to be presented at the Conference.
- Compile list of all the topics suggested and inputs provided by SC members.
- Share the document produced with the SC, and later the OC, for review.

3.2 Organizing Committee for the Fourth Global Conference

As was done for the two previous WBF Conferences, an organizing committee (OC) – consisting of WBF members as well as local members from the host country – will be established to support the organization of the Conference. The main tasks of the OC will be to define the strategy and objectives of the



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Conference, prepare the work plan and timeline, decide on the panels and topics, liaise with potential speakers, and support fundraising activities.

Mr Leo Keller informed participants in the meeting that participation in the OC is voluntary, but encouraged SC members to participate and provide their support in taking important decisions regarding the Global Conference. A call for expressions of interest was opened during the meeting, resulting in six organizations present in the session expressing their interest to participate in the OC. The WBF Secretariat agreed to follow up with the rest of the SC, to allow those members who were unable to participate in the meeting to express their interest. The Secretariat will aim to ensure that the OC has a balanced stakeholder, gender and geographical representation.

Decisions:

- Share concept note produced on the tasks and responsibilities of the OC with SC members.
- Consult with SC members via e-mail regarding their interest to participate in the OC, providing a two week timeframe to express interest.
- Share final list of OC candidates with the AB and SC for approval.
- Organize first call of the OC for mid-January 2020.

3.3 Promoting the Conference

Collaborations that have already been established with relevant German stakeholders, including GIZ, will be key to promoting the Conference within the German context and with local stakeholders. The WBF's participation in the Fruit Logistica event in Berlin, Germany, in February 2020 will also provide a sound opportunity to promote the Conference, as the event will count on the participation of important actors in the banana industry. It will also count on the participation of many local stakeholders, which will allow the WBF to build a bigger network with German stakeholders. Mr Keller also welcomed and encouraged SC members to provide suggestions on relevant contacts within their networks that they consider should be invited to the Conference.

In addition, he informed SC members that 2019 marks the 10-year anniversary of the WBF. As such, the aim will be to use this milestone as a promotional tool for the Conference. Finally, it is hoped to increase the visibility of the Conference by contacting key media partners to promote the event in different regions of the world, as was done for the Third Global Conference in 2017.

3.4 Visual Identity for the Conference

Mr Keller presented the latest version of the visual identity that has been developed for the WBF Conference, which has been the result of significant discussions and revisions since the first draft versions that were presented during the SC16. The visual identity for the WBF will be directly linked to the design and visual identity that is currently being created for the materials of the TR4 Global Network.

Currently, the visual designs highlight an important networking component, which is a key characteristic of both the WBF and the TR4GN. The Secretariat welcomed feedback from participants, which resulted in positive responses from SC members who were very satisfied with the outcomes, as well as minor suggestions for improvement. Various elements of the final design will be used to produce promotional materials for the WBF Conference, such as banners, role-ups, save-the-date invitations, and stickers.

Decision:

The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

- Circulate visual identity materials with all SC members for final feedback and suggestions.

3.5 Fundraising (including for sponsored participants)

To conclude the session on the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF, Mr Liu reported on the budget forecast for the event, stating that the Conference will require significant funds to cover, *inter alia*, the meeting rooms and the conference hall, interpretation, sponsored participants, promotional materials and catering.

Although it is hoped to have a partner who will co-sponsor the event, such as GIZ or the German government, it is likely that additional support will be needed to cover the full costs of the Conference. He therefore encouraged participants to think about other potential partners or sponsors, and to consider the possible contributions their own organizations could make to support the event.

In addition, he informed members that the WBF Secretariat has been able to mobilize funds from FAO to support the costs of the International Meeting on Gender Equity that would be held the day prior to the Fourth Global Conference. The funds would cover the costs of the meeting as well as the participation of up to twenty sponsored participants. He reported that the meeting would be organized in close collaboration with civil society organizations that were actively involved in the organization of the previous International Meetings on Gender Equity, namely Banana Link. SC members had no objection on the decision to have Banana Link organize the meeting for FAO using these funds. The proposal must be endorsed by FAO before the end of the year. The Secretariat will thus keep SC members informed on the outcomes of this proposal.

Wednesday, 27 November 2019

4. Events at Fruit Logistica 2020 – 5-7 February 2020

Mr Prada introduced the session on Fruit Logistica, informing participants that it is the most important fair covering all sectors of the fresh produce business. It therefore provides an important opportunity for the WBF to showcase some of its key activities and achievements. As such, following the decisions taken during the SC16, the WBF will participate actively through three principal activities and events at the fair, which are described in further detail below.

4.1 Panel on Industry Sustainability at the Fresh Produce Forum – 5 February

The Fresh Produce Forum (FPF) is the center stage for important topics in the industry to be discussed by international experts and stakeholders. FPF organizers have given the WBF the opportunity to hold a session on the first day, 5 February.

Following exchanges held with FPF organizers, it was decided that the WBF session would be focused on the economic sustainability of the banana industry. The main topic to be discussed, as agreed by WG02 and SG-CCSP members will be: “Can the banana industry trigger a new era of doing business?” It will consist of a multi-stakeholder panel that will discuss banana industry efforts for global pre-competitive cooperation in order to achieve economic sustainability. A special focus will be placed on present activities that aim to enable a global approach to the issue of distribution of value and corporate social responsibility. The role of diverse stakeholders in these activities will further be debated.

The session will count on seven panellists representing a diverse range of stakeholders, with the session lasting approximately 1-1.5 hours. The stakeholder groups proposed for this session thus far include:



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

- Exporting country government
- Importing country government
- Trading organization
- Producer organization
- Retailer(s)
- Civil society organization

Specific organizations to represent the diverse stakeholder groups have been proposed, but have yet to be confirmed. As such, the WBF Secretariat welcomed participants to provide additional suggestions on the potential panellists to be invited, before the panel is finalized.

4.2 WBF-ABNB Stand – 5-7 February

The second main activity of the WBF at Fruit Logistica will be a joint WBF/ABNB stand during all three days of the fair, which will allow the WBF and ABNB to present their main outputs and achievements in the exhibition center. It will further provide the WBF an important opportunity to strengthen its network with key industry players and to promote the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF. The stand will be located in Hall 23.

The WBF Secretariat encouraged the support and participation of WBF members at the stand, which would allow them to share their experiences as members of the WBF. It also invited WBF members to share with the Secretariat any outputs and materials they would like to present at the stand from their organizations. Several members expressed their interest to participate in the stand, and it was thus agreed that the WBF Secretariat would follow up on this matter accordingly.

Decision:

- Send a communication to WBF members regarding the call for expressions of interest to participate in the WBF-ABNB stand, as well as to encourage members to share key materials they would like to present at the stand.

4.3 One-day WBF/ABNB Session – 6 February

Finally, the WBF and ABNB have booked a room on 6 February, which will allow for a full day of sessions to present the activities of the WBF and ABNB in greater detail. There will be four dedicated 1-1.5 hour sessions of the WBF to present the activities of WG01, WG02, WG03 and the TR4TF. Additionally, there will be a one-hour session for ABNB.

Discussions during the thematic sessions of the WGs led to each WG developing a concrete proposal of the activities to be presented during the dedicated session, as seen below:

- **Working Group 01 and Task Force on TR4**

WG01 coordinators proposed to have a panel session to present two different topics. First, the WG will share best practices on agroecology and organic production methods in the industry, which will also include information on actions of smallholders for climate change adaptation. These activities will be supported through interspersed presentations of audiovisual materials.

The second topic to be presented will be on the results of the second phase of the Carbon and Water Footprint project, which aims to develop an automated measurement tool derived from the Methodological Guide published in 2017. It is expected that once the tool is ready, trainings and



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

validations in Costa Rica and Guatemala will follow. Therefore, advances of this processes will also be discussed.

Information on the session to address activities on Fusarium wilt TR4 can be found in Section 6.

- **Working Group 02 and Subgroup on Covering Costs of Sustainable Production**

WG02 members discussed the need to continue discussions on whether pre-competitive collaboration is possible in the banana industry, in line with the panel that will be held during the FPF. However, the suggestion for the panel on 6 February would be to focus on policy developments and potential institutional agreements that can support current activities aiming to improve the economic sustainability of the sector, including on living wages and sustainable costs of production. This would inherently imply detailed discussions on competition and antitrust laws.

- **Working Group 03 and Task Force on Gender Equity**

WG03 and GE-TF members proposed to hold a panel session to present the diverse strategies and approaches that have been used to conduct occupational health and safety activities in the banana industry under the WBF Banana Occupational Health and Safety initiative (BOHESI). Given the institutional impact achieved in Ecuador through collaborations with the Ecuadorian government, and the tailored gender-related activities in Ghana to address the health and safety of women workers, it was proposed to focus the panel sessions on the activities, challenges and outcomes in the context of these two countries.

5. Session on Fusarium wilt TR4

During this session, the main activities undertaken by FAO and the WBF TR4TF were presented. Mr Fazil Dusunceli, Agriculture Officer for FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division (AGP), provided an overview of FAO's activities on TR4, including the creation of an Inter Departmental Working Group on Fusarium TR4, the formulation of a regional emergency Technical Cooperation Project (TCPE) for Latin America and the Caribbean, the creation of a corporate thematic webpage and the formulation of a potential FAO event on TR4 in 2020.

As an example of the activities led by some members of the TR4 Task Force, Mr Nicolas Roux, Coordinator of Musanet, presented Bioversity's "Regional research strategy to face Foc TR4 in Latin America and the Caribbean". A work package on "Building a multi-stakeholder platform to guarantee long term sustainable production systems" was discussed, where the relevance of the World Banana Forum and the TR4GN was emphasized by the SC members.

6. Establishment of the TR4 Global Network

Following the decisions taken during the SC16, the Secretariat presented the work on the establishment of the Global Network on Fusarium wilt Tropical Race 4 (TR4GN), which will serve as a knowledge hub and collaboration mechanism for prevention and awareness-raising regarding the disease.

Currently, the principal activities consist of the creation and validation process of the TR4GN documents. The documents will be ready in their designed version in English before the end of the year. The documents have already been translated into Spanish and French and the design will be finalized by early 2020. It is also expected that an independent TR4GN website will be launched online by the end of January 2020, which will include a registration system to join the TR4GN mailing list.



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

The Secretariat is planning to provide extensive visibility to this line of work during the upcoming WBF events in 2020, namely the WBF activities in Fruit Logistica and the Fourth Global Conference of the WBF, where the TR4GN will be presented during a dedicated event.

Finally, additional activities related to the TR4GN for the year 2020 include the:

- Creation of a TR4GN mailing list;
- Collection of content news and information on TR4 to be disseminated through the website;
- Dissemination of the TR4GN documents through relevant platforms worldwide;
- Development of partnerships with key actors at local, national and regional level.

Decisions:

- Continue the work to establishment of the TR4GN, including finalization of TR4GN documents and creation of the TR4GN website.
- Share the TR4GN documents, once finalized.
- Consult with TR4TF members on their participation in the TR4 panel for Fruit Logistica.
- Participate in industry-related events for the promotion of the TR4GN.
- Share any TR4-related material with the Secretariat for publication on the TR4GN website.

7. Implementation of the WBF Action Plan

Following the discussions and decisions taken during the meeting, Mr Liu informed participants that the WBF Secretariat would revise the current WBF action plan to include the activities to be conducted for the two major upcoming WBF events.

In addition, the SC decided to request the extension of the WBF multi-donor programme until December 2022, so as to allow the WBF to plan activities in the long-term.

Decisions:

- Revise WBF action plan and circulate with SC members for feedback.
- Request FAO to extend the end date of the WBF multi-donor programme (MTF/GLO/308/MUL) until December 2022.

8. Next Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC18)

As was decided during the SC15, the next meeting of the SC (SC18) should take place during the third week of May 2020. However, given that the date is too close to the dates proposed for the WBF Conference, it will not be possible for the WBF Secretariat to organize both events. As such, Mr Liu proposed two solutions: (1) hold the SC18 on the eve of the Global Conference, or (2) have a WBF member host the SC18 on an earlier date. SC members present in the call supported the first option.

Decision:

- Confirm the SC18 for 23 June 2020, following the International Meeting on Gender Equity in the Banana Industry.

9. Conclusions and Next Steps



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Mr Liu concluded the meeting, highlighting the main discussions and decisions that were taken. He then provided the closing remarks, thanking all of those involved in the preparation and execution of the meeting, including the participants, interpreters, technicians, and the WBF Secretariat staff.

The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Annex 1. List of Participants

Seventeenth meeting of the Steering Committee (SC17)

26-27 November 2019

List of participants and observers of SC17

PRESENIAL				
#	Organization / Organización / Organisation	Name / Nombre / Nom	Surname / Apellido / Nom	Participation/ Participación / Participation
	Agroamerica	Javier	Aguirre Mendoza	SC member
	Banana Link	Anna	Cooper	SC member
	Banana Link	Paul	Lievens	SC member
	Banelino	Gustavo	Gandini	Observer
	Bioversity International	Nicolas	Roux	SC member
	Chiquita Brands International Inc.	Andrew	Biles	SC member
	COLEACP	Morag	Webb	SC member
	Compagnie Fruitière	George	Kporye	SC member
	COOBANA	Chito	Quintero	Observer
	Dole	Xavier	Roussel	SC member
	Fairtrade International	Silvia	Campos	SC member
	Fairtrade International	Wilbert	Flinterman	SC member
	French Ministry of Agriculture	Marie	Collard	SC member
	French Ministry of Agriculture	Franck	Ah-kit	SC member
	Fyffes	Julie	Cournoyer	SC member
	Fyffes	Stella	Davis	SC member
	Rainforest Alliance	Janneke	Bosman	SC member
	Rainforest Alliance	Leonie	Haakshorst	SC member
	Representación Permanente de la República Dominicana ante la FAO	Patricia	Rodriguez	SC member
	Reybanpac	Leonardo	Viteri	Observer
	Reybanpac	Paulo	Mello	Observer
	Rewe	Florian	Schaefer	SC member
	Solidaridad	Jeroen	Kroezen	SC member
	Tesco	Edgar	Monge	SC member
	Tesco	Tania	Moodley	SC member
	UNCTAD	Leonela	Santana Boada	Observer



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

	WINFA	Renwick	Rose	SC member
	FAO/AGP	Fazil	Dusunceli	FAO
	FAO/EST	Pascal	Liu	FAO
	FAO/EST	Victor	Prada	FAO
	FAO/EST	Martha Maria	Rios	FAO
	FAO/EST	Léo	Keller	FAO
	FAO/EST	Camila	Reinhardt	FAO