

The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Report of the Fourteenth Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee

Attended by the Steering Committee members and Working Group coordinators

24 - 25 April 2018

King Faisal Room (D-263), FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

Tuesday, 24 April 2018

1. Opening Session by FAO, WBF Executive Board and WBF Secretariat

Mr Boubaker Ben Belhassen, Director of FAO's Trade and Markets Division, welcomed the participants to the meeting. He underlined the unique aspect of the WBF as an innovative model of collaboration and as the only global platform bringing together all relevant stakeholders from the banana industry in an inclusive manner. Mr Ben Belhassen stressed the importance of this meeting, as it was taking place as a follow-up to the Third Global Conference of the WBF, which recognized the achievements of the Forum in addressing key issues along the global banana supply chain. He concluded his welcome address by emphasizing the important contributions of the WBF to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr Pascal Liu presented the apologies of Mr Renwick Rose, Chairperson of the WBF's Executive Board, who was originally set to facilitate the meeting. Ms Iris Munguía and Mr Jon Tugwell then provided the opening address on behalf of the Executive Board.

Ms Katie Knaggs summarized the achievements of the WBF and the Global Conference. Mr Leo Keller highlighted the very positive results received from the satisfaction survey sent to participants in the aftermath of the Conference. Mr Liu then presented the objectives and expected outputs of the meeting. Ms Knaggs ultimately provided the closing remarks to the session by stressing the need to improve leadership amongst SC members. She encouraged members to take ownership, be proactive and participate actively in the decisions regarding the future of the WBF.

2. Prioritizing Proposals and Defining the WBF Action Plan – Breakout Sessions

One of the principal objectives defined for this meeting was to prioritize the proposals made during the Global Conference in November 2017 and adopt a WBF Action Plan for 2018-2019. In order to do this, a matrix tool compiling the proposals was developed by the Secretariat shortly after the Conference, with the aim of enabling WBF members to develop the proposals by contributing comments, establishing priorities, and proposing focal points and potential sources of funding.

Ms Anna Cooper provided an overview of the structure of the proposals matrix and highlighted the process undertaken by the Secretariat since January 2018 to circulate and receive inputs from WBF members. She underlined the effectiveness of such a tool, as it provided an action-focused and practical way of working with the proposals and putting them into action.

The overview of the proposals matrix was followed by simultaneous breakout sessions for each of the three working groups (WGs) of the WBF, which aimed to discuss the matrix, analyze the respective proposals made during the Global Conference, and establish concrete action plans. Given the extensive list of proposals made during the Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on Gender Equity, the GE-TF met during the

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lunch break to discuss gender aspects and prioritize the gender proposals. As such, at least one member of the GE-TF was present for each of the breakout sessions in order to ensure that a gender perspective was incorporated into the discussions of each of the WGs. Following the breakout sessions, the main conclusions and decisions of each working group were presented in plenary. Summaries of the key conclusions and decisions taken in each session are provided in the subsequent sections.

3. WG01 Breakout Session: Environmental Sustainability (EST Meeting Room – D838)

Ms Farrah Adam gave an overview of the activities carried out during the last reporting period, explaining the collection of proposals made during and after the conference and the importance of focusing on specific and relevant areas in which the members could effectively engage and contribute in order to have tangible deliverables and clear leaders. She then proceeded to discuss the content of the matrix.

Ms Valentina Franchi, Gender Specialist from the FAO Economic and Social Protection Division and member of the WBF Gender Equity Task Force, was also present to ensure that the proposed activities had a gender perspective. In this respect, Ms Adam mentioned a proposal on strengthening the climate change resilience of women in the banana sector, which was submitted to the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) as a joint effort to articulate WG01 and WG03 activities.

The WG01 members defined and prioritized the main areas of work for WG01, ultimately deciding to create sub-groups on specific topics. This decision was based on the positive experience of the TR4 Task Force, in which small groups of members can contribute to specific and tangible outputs according to their background and experience. The sub-groups to be established will focus on the following topics: water management, crop production and protection (which will include topics such as agroecology, pesticide management and organic farming), the Farm of the Future, and potentially capacity building activities (particularly on TR4 and water). Participants stressed that specific actions, dates, collaborators and leaders would require final confirmation from WG01 members to proceed.

On water management, members stressed the importance of working on specific tools to measure the water and carbon footprint, and identifying sources of funding to implement the subsequent stages of capacity building and validation, given the success of the methodological guide produced by the WBF and funded by GIZ. The project has mobilized stakeholders in Costa Rica obtaining the endorsement of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Environment, building the foundations for the design of a low-carbon strategy for *Musaceae* in the country. Ms Adam also stressed the interest of the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP) on starting a pilot project in Colombia on water storage in saline environments as an adaption strategy for banana growers. On crop production and protection, members highlighted the difficulty in creating an inventory on pesticides given the variation among retailer demands and regulations in producing countries. Further discussions with the WG01 would be needed. On the Farm of the Future, Mr George Jaksch suggested to have a meeting with Mr Jeroen Kroezen prior to the facilitated brainstorm session in order to sketch some ideas and work on a framework. The importance of reinforcing and supporting the TR4 Task Force was also emphasized, whereby members gave full endorsement to Mr Luud Clercx to lead the activities he considered most relevant and to invite potential collaborators. Capacity-building activities will be focused on TR4 initially, preparing the ground to consider a broader remit on environmental sustainability at a later stage. Ms Adam highlighted that the sub-groups would allow a better coordination by the Secretariat, and thus an improved pace of action for the working group and the importance of identifying potential synergies with the other WGs. Finally, she also stressed the

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need for WG01 members to lead these sub-groups and activities directly, and that the Secretariat could play only a supporting role, as currently happening in the other two working groups.

Decisions:

- Create a dedicated Sub-Group on Water Management
- Create a dedicated Sub-Group on Crop Production and Protection
- Create a dedicated Sub-Group on Farm of the Future, considering it as an umbrella project for the WG activities
- Prioritize the TR4 Task Force activities derived from the matrix
- Confirm with the WG01 members the leaders and contributors of each sub-group
- Continue the efforts to promote the implementation of the next stages of the Carbon and Water Footprint project

Follow-Up Actions:

3	Environmental Sustainability (WG01)	Deadline	Leader	Support
3.1	Contact potential coordinators for each created Sub-Group to assess potential interests in leading them	31/05/18	F. Adam	L. Keller
Water Management				
3.2	Share the study on a Colombian case related to water management	15/06/18	J. Tugwell	
3.3	Share information on the AWICA tool used by IPL to manage the water footprint	15/06/18	I. Harrison	
3.4	Contact WWF for their support on water management and possible WBF membership	15/06/18	F. Adam	L. Keller
3.5	Continue the discussions with the Water Management unit in FAO to assess potential synergies	15/06/18	F. Adam	L. Keller
3.6	Assess the possibility of involving Fyffes in the Water Management Sub-Group	15/06/18	J. Tugwell	
3.7	Develop proposals to implement the next stages of the carbon and water footprint project	01/09/18	F. Adam	L. Clercx
3.8	Follow-up with the NWP on the draft proposal to do a pilot project on water management involving banana growers in Colombia	01/07/18	F. Adam	L. Keller
Crop Production and Protection				
3.9	Contact all WBF actors from the organic sector to assess their interests in joining the Sub-Group on Crop Production and Protection	15/06/18	L. Keller	F. Adam
3.8	Include the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and FAO's Guidelines on Good Practice for Aerial Application of Pesticides in the best practices portals' useful links	31/05/18	L. Keller	
3.9	Assess potential synergies with the Plant production and protection (AGP) and Land and Water (CBL) divisions in FAO	15/06/18	F. Adam	L. Keller

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3	Environmental Sustainability (WG01)	Deadline	Leader	Support
Farm of the Future				
3.10	Organize a joint call to define the next steps for the Sub-Group on the Farm of the Future	30/06/18	J. Kroezen	G. Jaksch
3.11	Draft concept note on the Farm of the Future project	31/05/18	J. Kroezen	G. Jaksch
3.12	Draft a note on the landscape approach for the WG01	31/05/18	G. Jaksch	J. Kroezen
3.13	Arrange a webinar to present a similar initiative implemented in Biodiversity Partnership Mesoamerica to the WG01 and assess collaboration opportunities, potential support and lessons to be learned for the WBF	30/06/18	G. Jaksch	
Fusarium TR4				
3.14	Assess possibilities of WBF internal funding of the App for TR4	30/06/18	L. Clercx	F. Adam
Capacity-Building on Environmental Sustainability				
3.15	Lead and support capacity-building activities for the TR4 Task Force	15/06/18	E. Uribe	M. Webb

4. WG02 Breakout Session: Economic Sustainability (King Faisal Room – D263)

Mr Alistair Smith presented the recent activities of the Working Group (WG02) since the Global Conference, including the Work Plan collectively established by WG02 coordinators. He reported on the four priority areas included in the Work Plan, which build on the proposals made during the Conference.

The first priority area established by the WG was to create a permanent observatory and monitoring mechanism for real costs of production in various exporting countries as a follow-up to the work on costs of sustainable production already done by the WG. CIRAD and Le Basic have made a proposal outlining the estimated resources needed to create and operate the permanent observatory, which will be reviewed by the WG.

The second priority area agreed upon was to continue the work on living wages (LW), with a proposal to include two new elements in living wage activities: (1) involvement of governments in the benchmark definition process and capacity building sessions with all the stakeholders, and (2) inclusion of information on the gender pay gap. Mr Médi MOUNGUI, Permanent Representative of Cameroon to FAO, stressed the need to also consider the youth employment aspect. Mr Prada explained the current situation on LW in pilot countries where WBF members have conducted studies. Emphasis was put on the need to increase visibility of those existing initiatives, strengthen efforts in the implementation phase for LW, and establish common objectives for future LW initiatives.

The third priority area of the WG was to establish a Sub-Group on Costs of Sustainable Production. A wide range of stakeholders have been invited to join the sub-group, including retailers and producers. The coordinators of the sub-group have had extensive discussions with competition lawyers to ensure that it does not infringe on competition laws and draft terms of reference have been shared with participants for their review.

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Finally, the fourth area of work was on living income for small producers. Mr Smith reported that the aim would be to join existing work on living income, with a particular focus on small farmers in the banana industry, and to explore how the WG can make a contribution to and gain inputs from the “Community of Practice on Living Income,” a network supported by the German government's cooperation agency, GIZ, and co-coordinated by ISEAL and Sustainable Food Lab. Mr Prada informed participants on recent discussions held with the Community of Practice, the Global Living Wage Coalition (GLWC) and WBF/WG02, including the potential for cooperation.

Ultimately, the participants of the session approved the work plan and suggested further action points to be integrated into the various priority areas of the WG.

Decisions:

- Explore the possibility to create a permanent observatory of the real costs of production
- Continue the work on living wage benchmarks in banana-exporting countries, incorporating two new and important dimensions: (1) involvement of governments in living wage-setting processes, and (2) incorporation of information on the gender pay gap
- Establish a Sub-Group on Costs of Sustainable Production
- Explore the possible synergies with the existing work within the framework of the "Community of Practice on Living Income"

Follow-Up Actions:

4	Economic Sustainability (WG02)	Deadline	Leader	Support
Permanent Monitoring Mechanism for Real Costs of Production				
4.1	Explore the possibility to create a permanent observatory of the real costs of production	15/10/18	A. Smith	D. Loeillet
Living Wages				
4.2	Explore the possibility to organize a living wage workshop in the Dominican Republic to raise awareness of the living wage benchmark initiative	31/12/18	V. Prada	W. Flinterman
4.3	Analyse GLWC's capacity to conduct the studies on LW in countries identified during WG02 in-person strategy meeting in Panama	15/06/18	V. Prada	C. Reinhardt
4.4	Explore funding opportunities for WBF LIWIN Initiative	31/06/18	V. Prada	C. Reinhardt
4.5	Explore the possibility of having common objectives in future initiatives on LW where we will have at least: a) LW benchmark studies; b) bilateral validation sessions with stakeholders; c) appropriate country workshops to validate the results at country level; d) capacity building sessions available for all the stakeholders; e) advocacy activities with governments	31/06/18	V. Prada	C. Reinhardt
4.6	Develop a global proposal for potential funding from IDH to conduct living wage benchmark studies in various countries	10/10/18	V. Prada	C. Reinhardt
4.7	Develop individual proposals for potential funding from IDH to conduct living wage benchmark studies in various countries	10/10/18	V. Prada	C. Reinhardt

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4	Economic Sustainability (WG02)	Deadline	Leader	Support
4.8	Meet Ecuadorian Minister and Vice-Minister of Labour to explore their involvement in the validation session and potential adoption of the benchmark results	01/06/18	V. Prada	W. Flinterman
4.9	Conduct bilateral validation sessions on LW in Ecuador	30/12/18	V. Prada	W. Flinterman
4.10	Develop a communication plan/summary document that outlines the work being done on living wages globally, providing a brief update on those being carried out in banana-producing countries	30/12/18	V. Prada	W. Flinterman
Sub-group on Costs of Sustainable Production				
4.11	Invite high level panel of experts on Costs of Sustainable Production	30/06/18	V.Prada	A. Smith
4.12	Organize first in-person meeting of the Sub-Group on Costs of Sustainable Production	30/07/18	A. Smith	X. Roussel
4.13	Establish a Sub-Group on Costs of Sustainable Production	30/09/18	A. Smith	X. Roussel
4.14	Analyse cases of pre-competitive cooperation related to LW and Costs of Sustainable Production relevant for WBF activities	30/09	V. Prada	C. Reinhardt
Additional Activities				
4.15	Organize a WG02 in-person meeting in Montreal	30/10/18	C. Reinhardt	J. Coleman
4.16	Explore ILO's participation in WG02 activities	30/11/18	V. Prada	A. Smith

5. WG03 Breakout Session: Social Sustainability (Cuba Room – B224)

Ms Cooper began discussions by highlighting the challenges that have been faced by the WG in previous years – in particular securing private sector engagement and enabling effective dialogue between trade union and company representatives. However, she outlined the progress it has made today in establishing a neutral and conflict-free space to discuss labour rights issues amongst diverse industry actors. This is the result of the WG's capacity building programs with trade union partners in Latin America and Africa, as well as the WG's focus on disseminating positive examples of labour relations within the industry.

In delving into the proposals made at the Third Global Conference in 2017, Ms Cooper emphasized the need for the WG to establish a work plan that continues to build on the important achievements of the WG, by sharing learning and re-engaging actors around positive examples. Two key achievements to build on were discussed, particularly with respect to the WBF's publication on labour relations (2014) and the Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative (BOHESI).

WG03 members supported the idea of expanding the work that has been done with respect to the WBF's publication on labour relations (2014), which highlights successful cases of labour relations in the banana industry, in order to engage more actors in these activities and develop a 'tool box' that companies can use to implement recommendations made in the report. Ms Cooper informed WG members of the Ethical Trading Initiative's (ETI) module on 'Trade Unions and Collective Bargaining', which along with other resources, could be assessed to see how it can be adapted for use in the banana industry. Ms Knaggs

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further proposed to develop the initiative in line with the characteristics of the BOHESI project – a co-funded initiative with collaboration between the WBF, private sector and civil society actors.

Given the success of the BOHESI project in Ecuador, another priority established for the WG was to promote and replicate the project in other banana-producing countries. WG members stated that the success of the project in Ecuador, and the adaptation of the manual to the Cameroonian context, could be used to develop a manual with general guidelines that could be applicable to all banana-producing countries in a region. It was further proposed to develop a ‘pathway’ with step-by-step guidelines for the replication of the project in different countries and political contexts, as well as to explore the role of BOHESI in establishing a pathway towards the implementation of ILO Convention 184.

Another important element of the BOHESI project is the Conference on Occupational Health and Safety in the Banana Sector, which is planned to take place at the end of 2018, around the same time as the next meeting of the WBF Steering Committee. However, additional private sector financial support is needed. Ms Cooper informed members that a funding proposal will be sent from the BOHESI coordination team to current BOHESI funders and members of the SC.

Mr Prada provided an update on the BOHESI project in Ecuador, stating that the official launch of the manual in Ecuador would take place on 21 May 2018 in Machala. The launch would be followed by training sessions for the public and private sectors actors. In the case of Cameroon, trainings will take place in September 2018 with local partners. However, Ms Cooper reported on the unsuccessful attempts to engage the Cameroonian government in the initiative. Mr MOUNGUI offered to facilitate communications with the Ministry of Agriculture before the final evaluation meeting.

Finally, WG members stressed the need to engage other relevant stakeholders in WG03 activities, including ILO and private sector representatives, particularly those in decision-making positions.

Decisions:

- Re-circulate the WBF’s publication on labour relations (2014), along with a short summary of its key recommendations, to all WBF Steering Committee members (and other relevant stakeholders) for their feedback and suggestions on potential next steps for engaging more actors in these activities
 - o The objective is to ultimately develop a ‘tool box’ for best practices in labour relations and collective bargaining, with a potential training element
- Explore the possibility to promote and replicate the BOHESI project in other banana-producing countries

Meeting of the Gender Equity Task Force

The Gender Equity Task Force (GE-TF) met during the lunch break to discuss the proposals made during the Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on Gender Equity in November 2017. The GE-TF agreed to continue operating under WG03, although participants stressed the cross-cutting nature of the issue. As such, the Task Force agreed to have focal points from the GE-TF in the various workings groups in order to ensure a gender perspective in future discussions of all WGs. It was further stressed that the Task Force must encourage participation from other actors, primarily male and private sector actors, in order to make progress on gender equity issues.

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The Task Force established five priority areas for 2018-2019, which require further elaboration in upcoming meetings: (1) women's employment opportunities, (2) women's empowerment, (3) gender pay gap, (4) health and safety, and (5) sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Follow-Up Actions:

5	Social Sustainability (WG03)	Deadline	Leader	Support
Labour Relations				
5.1	Use the outcomes and recommendations of the WBF's publication on labour relations and the SC14 discussions to develop a concrete proposal for the next steps / WG03 activities for 2018-2019	30/07/18	A. Cooper	C. Reinhardt V. Prada
5.2	Develop a survey to be distributed to WBF members and specific companies bilaterally to get input on the publication on labour relations and draft proposal for WG03 activities 2018-2019	15/09/18	A. Cooper	C. Reinhardt V. Prada
5.3	Investigate the possibility of including a new case study in the labour relations publication, looking at the experience of the new macro-level Collective Bargaining Agreement between unions and small producer associations in Peru	15/09/18	A. Cooper / I. Munguia	V. Prada / C. Reinhardt
5.4	Examine ETI tool box on freedom of association and collective bargaining, as well as other relevant resources, to determine its adaptability to the banana sector	15/09/18	A. Cooper	C. Reinhardt
Occupational Health and Safety				
5.5	Launch the Manual on OHS together with Ministers of Labour and Agriculture including important representatives from private, CSO sector and media	21/05/18	V. Prada	
5.6	Explore potential sources of funding for BOHESI activities in 2018	30/09/18	J. Kroezen	V. Prada / A. Cooper
5.7	Organize a Conference on Occupational Health and Safety in the Banana Sector to take place in late 2018	30/10/18	J. Kroezen	V. Prada / A. Cooper
5.8	Follow-up with Mr Mougui regarding communications with Ministry of Agriculture in Cameroon	15/07/18	V. Prada	A. Cooper
5.9	Develop OHS manual with general guidelines that can be implemented in any banana-producing country	30/12/18	BOHESI coordinatio n team	A. Cooper / V. Prada / J. Kroezen
5.10	Develop a communication plan in order to attract important stakeholders (i.e. governments and companies) to the BOHESI project	15/07/18	J. Kroezen	V. Prada / A. Cooper
5.11	Promote national roundtables on OHS	15/10/18	J. Kroezen	V. Prada / A. Cooper
5.12	Involve ILO in WBF potential activities to ratify Convention 184	15/10/18	V. Prada	A. Cooper
5.13	Develop a 'pathway' to BOHESI, as part of the project's monitoring and evaluation, with step by step guidelines for the replication of the project in different countries / political contexts	15/10/18	V. Prada	A. Cooper

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Gender Equity Task Force				
5.14	Focus on ETI Innovation project in 2018 – ensure involvement of GE-TF, WBF members and sharing of learning and analysis	30/10/18	A. Cooper	C. Reinhardt
5.15	<u>Women’s Employment / Empowerment</u> : share useful training resources for women and include materials on new Banana Link / ETI funded online database	30/10/18	A. Cooper	Katie, Tania, Valentina
5.16	<u>Gender Pay Gap</u> : Combine the work of WG02 living wage activities and understand what resources and support they need from the GE-TF to analyze the gender pay gap	30/10/18	A. Copper	V. Prada
5.17	<u>Health and Safety</u> : Follow up on the COLSIBA proposal on repetitive strain and musculoskeletal disorders, exploring how this can be incorporated into the activities of the GE-TF	30/10/18	I. Munguia	A. Cooper
5.18	<u>Sexual Harassment and Gender Based Violence</u> : Organize a specific GE-TF call on SH and GBV to discuss how we can advance within the framework of the WBF – invite share action and BSR to join call	30/10/18	C. Reinhardt	A. Cooper

6. Cross-Cutting Proposals and Final Decisions for the WBF Action Plan

Mr Keller provided an overview of the different proposals formulated during the Conference panel on competition and collaboration in the banana industry. It was commented by participants that some proposals could be integrated into the most relevant working groups’ action plans, if not done already, in order to be discussed in future calls of those working groups.

Other cross-cutting issues between all three working groups that were discussed include:

- The need for continued sharing of research and best practices to promote and publicize the activities of each working group – this could include (1) new practices, funds provided, to share via the online portal, (2) improved use of the website and (3) regular updates to be sent to the wider WBF community;
- The need for awareness raising, education, training and capacity building within the wider industry around the issues being treated by each working group;
- The relevance of gender-sensitive analysis in the discussions and activities of each working group

More particularly, the proposal to improve the collaboration with national forums was widely discussed and the usefulness of these type of platforms was recognized for producing countries. Ms Adwoa Sakyi reported on the expectations created following the Conference and the case of Ghanaian companies regrouping in what could potentially become a domestic platform. She then called for support from the Secretariat to accompany this type of processes. Ms Iris Munguía further underlined the need for establishing these platforms to facilitate dialogue and decision-making in producing countries. She mentioned the replication of the BOHESI project as a first step for enabling dialogue at country level in order to initiate potential national platforms.

There was more uncertainty regarding the collaboration with importing countries’ platforms, given the lack of clarity on their positioning and action plans. Ms Cooper proposed for the WBF to suggest specific actions to which national platforms could provide support with their network and resources.

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Ultimately, while the working groups successfully identified priority areas and important actions to implement, further work is needed in the coming months to develop detailed work plans for each working group and ultimately the 2018-2019 WBF Action Plan. The Secretariat will incorporate cross-cutting activities into the WBF Action Plan, which will complement the specific action plans to be defined by each working group.

Wednesday, 25 April 2018

7. Funding of the WBF

The first point of discussion focused on the current resources available to carry out the work and activities of the WBF. Mr Liu presented a preliminary estimate of the income and costs incurred by the WBF in 2017. The calculations showed that more than half of the expenditures were due to the costs of the Global Conference. It was emphasized that the estimate did not include the staff time and resources spent by other organizations that provided support to the Conference.

In light of these expenditures, Mr Liu highlighted the main sources of funding for the WBF in 2017. As a result of the significant efforts made by the Secretariat to raise funds, expenditures made from the Multi-Donor Trust Fund during 2017 were low. This, along with the significant annual contributions collected from WBF members for 2017-2018, have enabled a strong financial start for the WBF in 2018. Mr. Liu thanked Ms Adam and Mr Prada for their hard work and vital role in raising funds for the Conference and WBF.

Mr Prada stressed that, up-to-date, the collection of annual contributions from WBF members for 2017-2018 had raised more funds than in previous years. He further highlighted the success of the early bird discount system that was established by the SC, as it had enabled the WBF Secretariat to collect nearly 80% of the expected contributions for 2018.

Mr Liu continued by presenting a detailed outline of the total budget forecast for 2018 and highlighted the constraints to the future work of the Forum. One important constraint is the limited resources of the Secretariat to carry out all the functions and activities necessary to support the implementation of the work plan proposed by WBF members. He therefore emphasized the need to increase the work force of the WBF Secretariat to support its activities.

SC members inquired further about the funding available for projects, including the project on occupational health and safety (OHS) in Costa Rica to review the OHS manuals of banana-producing companies against the manual produced by the BOHESI project. Furthermore, upon requests from SC members for further funding to expand the WBF's Good Practices Portal, Ms Farrah Adam stated that sufficient funds must be raised to do this, as the activity requires much work for data collection and developing best practices, relevant content and materials.

8. Financial Matters for the Implementation of the WBF Action Plan

Mr Liu stated that although the membership, responsibilities and activities of the WBF have increased substantially since the Forum's inception in 2009, the financial and human resources available for the Forum have not increased in similar proportion. He highlighted the lack of resources and capacity of the

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Secretariat to fulfill the responsibilities and activities it is mandated to implement. He also informed participants of the current challenges encountered by the Forum with respect to the precarious contract conditions of the WBF Secretariat staff and the impacts that this could have on the stability, institutional memory and long-term sustainability of the Forum.

Mr Liu stressed the need to increase the budget of the WBF in order to enable the Secretariat to successfully execute its responsibilities and activities, and ultimately ensure the continuity of the Forum. He also emphasized the need to not only increase the staff size of the Secretariat, but also to change the type of contracts provided to its staff. Mr Liu presented two scenarios for the new composition of the Secretariat, presenting a change in staff size but also different contract types. It was stated that intermediate scenarios could also be considered that would take into account both the need to increase Secretariat posts and budget constraints. The resources needed for either scenario, however, were far above the current budget of the WBF. Thus, Mr Liu stressed the need to find solutions for closing the resource gap and invited participants to propose mechanisms for doing so.

While it was acknowledged that part of the resources should be obtained from donors and fundraising activities, it was stated that more stable mechanisms were needed. One solution proposed was to increase the annual contribution paid by every WBF member on a gradual basis every year. Several participants noted that the individual contributions had remained unchanged for several years, a situation that they considered as inadequate. It was therefore agreed that an annual increase of the contribution paid by every WBF member, starting with an increase of 10% in 2019, would be an effective and fair approach to increasing funds for the Forum. This alone, however, would not be sufficient to provide all the resources needed by the Secretariat.

Mr Bernardo Roehrs proposed to use the global conferences of the WBF as a source of income for the Forum. Although this could bring more value and commitment of participants to attend, Ms Adam reported that according to the legal office, it is against FAO rules to charge participants for attending a conference. Alternative approaches and institutional arrangements were discussed.

Mr Roehrs also suggested exploring the potential for implementing a levy mechanism per banana box traded. Mr Frederic Verborg stated that this is in fact a topic being discussed in the proposal made by Mr Andrew Biles during the Global Conference of forming an association that would bring together major banana producing companies. However, important issues to be considered include the feasibility and costs of such a mechanism, the potential violation of competition laws, and the potential for an unfair distribution of costs amongst various stakeholders.

Furthermore, it was proposed to examine how the main commodity roundtables finance their structure and operations in order to try and draw suggestions for future funding mechanisms of the WBF. Another important proposal by Mr Roehrs was to explore the possibility of relocating the WBF Secretariat outside of FAO in order to reduce costs. While it was agreed that this option should be explored for the long term, participants stressed the importance of FAO as a neutral convener and in providing credibility to the Forum.

Other potential solutions proposed included obtaining support from governments, strengthening leadership amongst WBF members to implement activities currently being carried out by the Secretariat, and encouraging WBF members to promote WBF membership to contacts in their networks.

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Decisions:

- Prepare intermediate budget scenarios for the resources needed to improve the capacity of the WBF Secretariat to implement the recommendations of the WBF Conference
- Automatically raise the contribution paid by each WBF member every year, starting with an increase of 10% in 2019
- Examine opportunities, feasibility and possible institutional arrangements for using the WBF conferences as a source of income for the Forum
- Conduct a feasibility study to analyze and assess the implications and costs of a system of levies on traded banana boxes for funding the WBF
- Analyze the funding mechanisms of major commodity roundtables as possible models for funding the WBF

9. Revision of the WBF Charter

Mr Prada reported on the comments and amendment requests that the Secretariat had received from FAO's legal office (LEG) regarding the WBF Charter. He informed SC members on the major changes and modifications made to meet the requests from LEG, including the incorporation of elements such as the new structure of the WBF, the position of the Secretariat, the inclusion of governments, the revision of terminology, and the inclusion and composition of Task Forces.

He stated that these changes had been discussed with LEG. Several suggestions were further made by SC members, including mechanisms to ensure the regular participation of members in the decision-making bodies of the WBF. The Secretariat will include these suggestions into the revised Charter and submit it to LEG for review.

10. Formation of the New Steering Committee and Executive Board

Ms Camila Reinhardt reported on the upcoming renewal of the Steering Committee and presented the list of current candidates interested in forming part of the new SC. She presented a comparison between the composition of the current SC and the potential composition of the new SC, taking into account the criteria stated in the WBF Charter on stakeholder, geographical and gender representation.

SC members agreed to continue the campaign for expressions of interest in order to try to engage important stakeholder groups from various regions that are currently underrepresented. Bearing in mind the potential increase in candidates as a result of these efforts, Mr Liu emphasized the need to develop a proposal for a possible mechanism to elect SC members in a way that will ensure that the criteria of the WBF Charter are met. This mechanism could then be incorporated into the rules of procedure for the renewal of the SC.

Decisions:

- Extend the call for expressions of interest to be part of the new SC, particularly for regions that are currently underrepresented in the list of candidates, and set a deadline for closing the call
- Develop a draft proposal for a possible mechanism to form the new SC in the future
- Set a deadline for establishing the new SC



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

11. Participation of Agrochemical Companies

Following various agrochemical companies' expression of interest to join the WBF, Ms Farrah Adam reported on the Secretariat's discussion with FAO's Partnership (DPS) and Plant Production and Protection (AGP) divisions on the subject. Both divisions advised against the membership of individual agrochemical companies in the Forum. However, they did underline the importance of involving them and listening to their opinions, and thus supported the idea of doing so via trade associations such as Croplife (composed by the largest agricultural biotechnology companies), Agro-care (representing the independent post patent crop industry-generics) and the International Biocontrol Manufacturers Association (IBMA-representing the global association of the biocontrol industry) to have a balanced representation of both conventional and biological approaches in the WBF. Ms Adam also stressed that a decision from the SC on this matter was urgently needed given the time elapsed from the reception of those requests, and the increasing interest of WBF members to address the issue and have a clear direction from the SC.

An extensive discussion on the potential benefits and drawbacks of the participation of this type of actor in the Forum followed. Given the absence of consensus, it was decided to circulate a note to all SC members to inform them about the discussions held before organizing an online vote. The Secretariat agreed it would then convey the SC's decision accordingly to the agrochemical companies that have expressed their interest in joining the Forum.

Decisions:

- The Secretariat will prepare jointly with the EB a note to help the SC make a decision on the participation of agrochemical companies

12. Conclusions and Next Steps

Mr Edgar Monge offered suggestions on the potential date and location of the next SC meeting, encouraging SC members to hold it in Latin America. Mr Liu stressed the need to consider the impacts this would have on participation, as many SC members are based in Europe.

As Ms Knaggs will leave her company and the WBF soon, Mr Monge and Mr Liu expressed their gratitude for her dedication, leadership and support to the work of the WBF and wished her the best in the next phase of her career and life. Mr Liu concluded the meeting by thanking all those involved in the preparation and execution of the meeting, including the participants, interpreters, messenger and the WBF Secretariat staff.