



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Report of the Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC27)

Attended by the Steering Committee (SC) members and Working Group (WG) coordinators

12-13 November 2024

Online Meeting

Tuesday, 12 November 2024


1. Welcome by the WBF Secretariat - Opening remarks, objectives and expected outcomes of Day 1

Pascal Liu (FAO) opened the meeting with an overview of global banana markets, outlining the latest projected trends and market dynamics. With global exports of bananas and plantains expected to stagnate or slightly decline, he observed significant divergences in trends among producing countries: some suppliers are facing decreased production, while others are anticipated to see substantial growth. According to FAO's estimates, a significant exports reduction will be experienced by countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, despite increases in Colombia. Asian exports are likely to rise, with countries like India, Pakistan, Myanmar and Viet Nam leading the trend. While imports are expected to grow in the European Union, they are projected to remain stable in the United States of America and decrease in other large markets. Pascal Liu emphasized that the current climate is clouded by uncertainty, stemming from the compounding effects of geopolitical tensions and risks of conflict escalation, which may lead to higher oil prices, increased inflation and subsequent rise in production costs. He also raised concerns about economic growth prospects in key markets, which may lead to reduced consumer demands for tropical fruits, including bananas. He then addressed the pressing challenges facing the industry, including the spread of pests and diseases such as Fusarium Race Tropical 4 (TR4), the increasingly devastating effects of climate change, and uncertainties surrounding the future of international and EU regulations, all of which pose compliance challenges for value chain actors in the agricultural sector. He underscored the importance of international and interregional collaboration to address these issues, with the World Banana Forum (WBF) playing a crucial role in fostering consensus on sustainable practices. He introduced two new members of the WBF Secretariat: Mr Ian Andrades, who supports Working Group 02 (WG02) on Distribution of Value, its Commission on Living Wages and Income and the two subgroups, and Ms Valeria Villacorta, the new focal point for WG03 on Labour Rights, the Gender Equity Task Force (GE-TF) and the Certification Commission.

Lastly, Pascal Liu presented the agenda for the first day of the SC27 and wished all attendees a productive session.

2. Welcome to new WBF members

Pascal Liu welcomed four new members who recently joined the WBF: Tropic Biosciences, an agricultural biotechnological company using gene-editing technologies to develop high-performance tropical crops, including bananas; The Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Association (PBGEA), the largest producer association of the Philippines; Coliman, a Mexico-based company specialized in production and trade of fruits



and vegetables, including bananas; Small Banana Producers Cooperative (EMPREBANCOOP) from Colombia; and the Association of Banana Producer Organizations from Canary Islands (ASPROCAN), the coordinating body of banana producers in the Canary Islands.

3. Updates on Steering Committee members and Advisory Board members

- **New Advisory Board**

Pascal Liu introduced the newly formed Advisory Board (AB) which comprises 18 members. He highlighted that the AB is already well-balanced in terms of geographic and gender diversity. However, he acknowledged that government and retailer representation could be strengthened to better reflect the broader spectrum of stakeholder groups in the sector. Additionally, while stakeholders from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe are well represented, there is room to enhance representation from African and Asian actors to ensure a truly global perspective.

- **Chairpersons**

Pascal Liu then addressed the appointment of two Co-Chairpersons for the SC and the AB, following preliminary discussions held during the SC26. He thanked Christelle Owona (Compagnie Fruitière) and Andrew Biles (Chiquita) for their valuable contributions as Co-Chairpersons thus far. He noted that five SC members have volunteered for the position in written form: Javier Aguirre (Agroamerica), Andrew Biles (Chiquita), Jennie Coleman (Equifruit), Jose Antonio Hidalgo (AEBE) and Marike de Peña (CLAC) (in alphabetical order). Following a suggestion from Jennie Coleman, the five candidates introduced themselves and shared their motivations for the role with the participants.

Pascal Liu explained that in the past, co-chairpersons have been selected by broad consensus, without the need for a formal voting process. However, he acknowledged that if consensus could not be reached, the Secretariat would invite SC members to express their preference via email. Representatives from Association of Colombian Banana Growers (AUGURA) and AEBE proposed conducting a vote and suggested that the voting period remain brief to expedite the process. Christelle Owona emphasized the importance of achieving a balanced representation across stakeholder groups, geographical distribution and gender. It was therefore proposed that the Co-Chairpersons should reflect a balanced representation across these three dimensions, reflecting the plurality of perspectives within the SC.


Next steps:

- The Secretariat will organize the next AB meeting in December 2024 or January 2025.
- Considering a consensus could not be reached during the meeting, the Secretariat will invite SC members to indicate their preferences for the Co-Chairpersons via email.

4. Activities of Working Group 01, the Subgroup on Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation and Biodiversity Conservation and the TR4 Global Network (TR4GN)

- **Carbon and Water Footprint (CWF) Initiative**

Victor Prada (FAO) discussed the challenges and opportunities posed by EU due diligence legislations, such as the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD), to advance sustainability in the banana sector. He highlighted the importance of aligning the WBF activities, including those undertaken by WG01 on environmental sustainability, with these new mandatory regulatory frameworks, to ensure that producers, regardless of size, have the resources and knowledge needed to comply and remain competitive in global markets.



Matheus Lima (FAO) shared updates on the CWF Initiative. He mentioned that the Secretariat continues supporting users of the tool and issued credentials for approximately 40 new users, mainly from smallholder organizations in the Dominican Republic and Colombia. Both in-person and virtual capacity building sessions were organized for producers in these countries, with logistic and financial support from CLAC. Matheus Lima then provided an overview of several enhancements to be integrated into the tool, noting that a coordinated and gradual approach was agreed upon with the developers to prioritize key areas of improvement. These enhancements include the integration of new databases and modules covering emissions from input manufacturing, maritime transport, ripening stations and storage and distribution networks. These improvements will allow the calculation of the product footprint, addressing the growing need for comprehensive supply chain emissions reporting, including Scope 3. Additionally, Matheus Lima shared that the CWF tool was presented at international events, including an official side event of the Sixteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, in Cali, Colombia, at the invitation from Alliance Bioversity International and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT). A technical meeting was also organized at Alliance Bioversity International – CIAT's regional office for the Americas to showcase the initiative, offering the Secretariat an opportunity to strengthen collaboration and explore future joint projects with the Alliance.

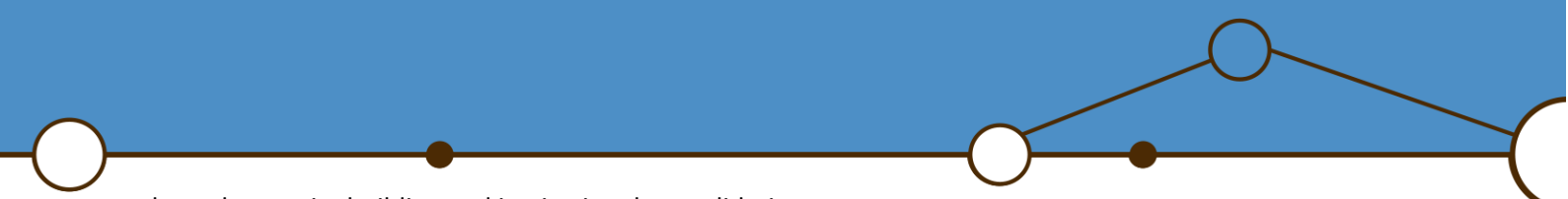
Fernando Marulanda (CLAC) thanked the Secretariat for facilitating training sessions with smallholders in recent weeks. He described CLAC's Sustainable Banana Program, structured around four pillars: Soil and Water Management, Climate Change Resilience, Biodiversity and Linking Sustainable Production and Markets. In the Magdalena region (Colombia), CLAC represents 650 smallholder farmers from 7 cooperatives, 5 of which participated in the CWF trainings. He shared that eight farms have been selected for a pilot involving the installation of flow meters to start estimating the water footprint and implementing reduction measures. He also expressed CLAC's interest in conducting virtual CWF trainings in Peru and Ecuador.

Svetlana Boincean (IUF) inquired whether the CWF tool considers heat waves, especially in relation to the water footprint, and highlighted the strong link between heat waves and the health and safety of workers in banana plantations. Matheus Lima explained that while the tool does not specifically account for heat waves, the water footprint estimation relies on the plant's evapotranspiration rate, which is influenced by factors like wind temperature and radiation. This variable helps farmers determine the appropriate amount of water required by the plant. Sebastien Carpentier (Alliance Bioversity International – CIAT) added that FAO's tool [AquaCrop](#) is useful and regularly updated, as it models the yield response of various crops, including bananas, to water, particularly in environments where water is a limiting factor. He also highlighted ongoing efforts within his organizations to understand how individual banana genotypes respond to changing environmental conditions, such as humidity, temperature and CO₂ levels.

Marike de Peña (CLAC) highlighted challenges facing smallholders in calculating their footprints. To support broader adoption of CWF calculation, monitoring and reduction, she stressed the importance of developing guidelines for selecting representative farmers within cooperatives or producer associations, allowing their CWF data to serve as a benchmark for others in the same or similar organization.

Pascal Liu (FAO) announced the recent publication of a [methodological guide on measuring carbon and water footprints in pineapple value chains](#) in English, French and Spanish. He also shared that an automated online tool specific to pineapple is planned for release next year.

Victor Prada (FAO) emphasized the value of the CWF tool as an accessible and standardized resource that support banana producing organizations, regardless of size, to comply with due diligence regulations, particularly in light of the high costs associated with carbon assessments by private consulting firms. Additionally, he noted that the Secretariat successfully advanced through the first phase of a major project proposal in a key banana producing country. If the proposal progresses through the second phase, the WBF will collaborate with the government and industry stakeholders to enhance climate change mitigation efforts



through capacity building and institutional consolidation.

Next steps:

- Continue capacity-building activities with small producers in the Dominican Republic and Peru.

- **Sustainable soil management in the banana industry**

Matheus Lima (FAO) provided updates on the WBF/Global Soil Partnership (GSP) pilot project, which aims to adapt the Global Soil Doctor Programme (GSDP) for banana production, focusing on sustainable soil management and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Following consultations, it was agreed to implement the pilot in Magdalena, Colombia, targeting smallholder farmers. The Colombian Corporation for Agricultural Research (AGROSAVIA) has been appointed as the national promoter, responsible for training technicians from the Association of Banana Growers of Magdalena and La Guajira (ASBAMA), AUGURA and the Banana Research Center (CENIBANANO). These technicians will train 30 smallholders, termed "soil doctors," who will subsequently disseminate knowledge to 150 small producers through a farmer-to-farmer network. Training sessions will be conducted at the Caribia Research Center using banana-specific GSP modules and educational materials, with insights from producer associations and GIZ's [Manual on Sustainable Agriculture](#). Matheus Lima noted that a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with AGROSAVIA is being finalized, and beneficiary lists are being compiled. The project's long-term goal is to expand to other regions and countries, with plans to include additional training modules for medium and large producers in the future.

Marike De Peña (CLAC) conveyed CLAC's interest in the pilot, highlighting the organization's ongoing support for seven cooperatives in the Magdalena region focused on soil sustainable management, through the production of biofertilizers and compost. Matheus Lima noted that it could be highly beneficial to integrate a field visit to a biofertilizer facility into the soil doctors training, provided that Fusarium TR4 protocols are strictly observed.


- **Plastics in the banana industry**

Adriale Benedetto (FAO) informed SC members about the development of a Voluntary Code of Conduct (VCoC) for the Sustainable Use and Management of Plastics in Agriculture by FAO's Agricultural Plastics Team, whose draft was presented at the 29th Session of the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) in October 2024. The VCoC, a non-binding voluntary instrument, is now available for countries to adopt and adapt within their national contexts. It aims to guide governments, plastic manufacturers, and stakeholders in enabling sustainable plastics management through policies, financial instruments, research, and good practices across the plastics lifecycle. Adriale Benedetto noted that the framework can be complemented with specific codes of practice or technical guidelines for agrifood value chains, including bananas.

He then announced the publication of the factsheet, [Towards a Banana Sector Free of Plastic Contamination](#), prepared by the WBF, which is now available in English and Spanish. This resource describes plastic use in the banana supply chain, addresses environmental challenges, and highlights over 20 industry initiatives to promote sustainable plastic management.

He also provided updates on the [WBF's Survey on Plastic Use and Management in the Banana Industry](#). The survey targets producers, trading companies, retailers, and certification schemes and aims to identify the main types of plastics used, their management, highlight good practices implemented and pinpoint opportunities for future projects. So far, seven responses have been received from private producers, cooperatives, and trading companies operating in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. However, the WBF plans to broaden participation to other regions and stakeholders, targeting 40–50 responses for a comprehensive dataset.

Next steps:

- 
- Circulate the survey on Plastic Use and Management in the Banana Industry among WBF members.

- **Updates on activities of the TR4 Global Network (TR4GN)**

Matheus Lima (FAO) announced the publication of the report from the [Event on Fusarium wilt TR4 and the Future of the Banana Industry](#), now available in English, Spanish, and French. Held on 11 March 2024, one day prior to the Fourth Global Conference, this event addressed several critical topics such as FAO's role in coordinating the global response against the disease, the status of recent TR4 outbreaks, advanced diagnostic and surveillance technologies, and breeding efforts for resistant varieties.

He also shared that the WBF is organizing a webinar titled *Fusarium wilt TR4 in Asia: Lessons Learned and Current Innovations*, scheduled for December 2024. The event aims to address challenges, management strategies and innovations in Asia, with confirmed panelists including the Chinese Academy of Tropical Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) (China), the International Tropical Fruits Network (TFnet) (International), the National Research Centre for Banana (NRCB) (India), and pending confirmations from the Philippines, Viet Nam, Laos and Indonesia. Lastly, Matheus Lima noted ongoing discussions with FAO's Plant Production and Protection Division (NSP) to enhance the TR4GN platform, aiming to solidify it as a leading resource for stakeholders combating TR4.

Victor Prada (FAO) explained that the Secretariat has been invited by CATAS to attend the First Global Tropical Innovation Conference, scheduled to be held between 5–7 December in Sanya City, China. This in-person conference will be the opportunity to share the latest technological innovations in disease management, including TR4, and foster collective actions to address phytosanitary threats. Xue Zhang (CATAS) encouraged interested WBF members to attend and highlighted this event as an opportunity to bring more Asian stakeholders into the WBF.


5. Activities of Working Group 03 (WG03) and the Gender Equity Task Force (GE-TF)

Victor Prada (FAO) briefly introduced Valeria Villacorta (FAO), the new focal point for WG03 and GE-TF related matters and gave her the floor.

- **Update on EU regulatory framework and its relevance for the banana industry**

At the heart of a shift from voluntary to mandatory due diligence frameworks, Valeria Villacorta (FAO) elaborated on the CSDDD and the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD). She highlighted their distinction: the CSDDD, adopted on 24 May 2024, requires member states to transpose it into national legislation within two years and mandates company behavior by holding businesses accountable for their actions. In contrast, the CSRD, already in effect, obliges large companies to start sustainability reporting in March 2025, focusing on transparency without prescribing specific actions. These two directives are closely linked, as due diligence is embedded within the European Sustainability Reporting Standards (ESRS). Valeria Villacorta then outlined key CSDDD steps and their alignment with the ESRS, which include integrating due diligence into policies and risk management, identifying and addressing adverse impacts, preventing or mitigating harm, providing remediation for company-caused or contributed damage, engaging with stakeholders (particularly those affected), establishing notification and complaint mechanisms, monitoring due diligence systems and publicly communicating outcomes.

Additionally, Valeria Villacorta provided an overview of key disclosure requirements central to the due diligence process. Companies must report on their policies for managing impacts, risks and opportunities, including human rights commitments and mechanisms to monitor compliance with UN Guiding Principles, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines, and International Labour Organization (ILO) fundamental rights conventions. Disclosures cover areas such as human trafficking, forced and child labor,



workplace accident prevention, anti-discrimination and harassment policies. Companies must also report on actions and resources to prevent or mitigate negative impacts, and to provide remedies where harm has occurred. Additionally, they have to disclose the targets set to monitor the effectiveness of these actions. She highlighted two additional disclosures relevant to WG03: processes for engaging with workers and their representatives on impacts, including vulnerable groups like women and migrants, and mechanisms for remediating negative impacts, including grievance systems and complaints monitoring. Relevant metrics specific to the workforce include collective bargaining coverage, gender distribution at top management levels, adequate wages, number of workplace fatalities, accidents, and ill-health incidents, gender pay gap, and severe human rights incidents.

Looking ahead, Valeria Villacorta outlined the next steps in sustainability reporting, emphasizing the unique opportunity for the WBF and the banana industry to influence the European Commission (EC) and EFRAG future actions. These include supporting the implementation of the adopted ESRS, with three guidance documents already released. The banana industry could identify indicators that pose challenges for information collection and need further guidance. Concurrently, two SME standards are being finalized for EC approval: one mandated for listed SMEs, that will set the value chain cap for large companies; and a voluntary one for companies outside the CSRD scope but required to meet reporting demands from business partners and investors. A non-EU standard is also being developed for companies with significant operations in Europe, requiring global impact reporting. Sector-specific standards are also in progress, with two directly relevant to the banana industry: agriculture and food. Based on this context, Valeria Villacorta proposed four key initial activities to help stakeholders effectively fulfill their legal and ethical obligations: organizing a series of webinars on due diligence in the banana industry, focusing on challenging topics for stakeholders; establishing a neutral, grievance mechanism common to all retailers, potentially hosted by the FAO; and developing practical tools on social dialogue and health and safety management.


Marike De Peña (CLAC) thanked the Secretariat for clarifying the implications of due diligence regulations, highlighting the compliance challenges smallholders currently face. She suggested mapping the new requirements per stakeholder group in order to propose targeted support and questioned whether a phased approach would be more effective to ensure inclusion and compliance throughout the supply chain. Victor Prada stressed the urgency of planning as importers are already requesting sustainability reports from suppliers. Amanda Penn (Sustainable Trade Initiative, IDH) expressed her organization's interest in participating in WBF activities to strengthen social dialogue between supply chain actors.

- **Activities on occupational health and safety (OHS)**

Valeria Villacorta presented the WBF's proposed activities on OHS across several countries. In Ecuador, plans include collaborating with the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) project implementation partner to update the existing health and safety manual and develop an online training platform addressing OHS. In Colombia, efforts will focus on replicating and expanding gender-sensitive OHS trainings, incorporating other labour rights through a risk assessment methodology and creating a flyer to showcase key outcomes. Similar activities are proposed for Costa Rica and Ghana. In Cameroon, the Secretariat plans to resume discussions with the government to approve the updated Banana Occupational Health and Safety Initiative (BOHESI) manual, alongside training activities. Additionally, fundraising efforts to replicate the BOHESI initiative in other countries will continue.

- **Activities on decent work in the banana industry**

Valeria Villacorta outlined various activities to promote decent work, highlighting the WBF's ongoing collaboration with industry actors, governments, and intergovernmental organizations such as the ILO. In Ecuador, plans include developing a guide on child labor prevention and decent youth employment in partnership with the USDOL project. In Colombia and other countries, efforts will focus on expanding OHS



trainings to include additional labor rights such as freedom of association, collective bargaining, living wages, child labor prevention and grievance mechanisms. She proposed evaluating the feasibility of a common grievance mechanism and a stakeholder engagement tool for retailers. Additionally, she emphasized the Secretariat's goal of strengthening relationships with trade unions and exploring collaborative opportunities.

- **Activities on fostering gender equity in the banana industry**

Valeria Villacorta noted that the Secretariat is revising the Guidelines on the healthy and safe employment of women in Latin America in English, incorporating feedback from stakeholders. The Secretariat also plans to develop a booklet showcasing good practices by industry actors on gender equity. Additionally, she discussed a proposal to organize webinars on gender-related topics, including on existing tools and initiatives (e.g. Tesco Gender Toolkit, ILO Gender audit), initiatives from other agrifood value chains (coffee, cocoa) and workplace harassment. Marike de Peña (CLAC) stressed the need to address gender-based violence and harassment by developing new educational material, launching awareness campaigns and working closely with governments.

6. Any Other Business (AOB) – Open Discussion

- **Main outcomes of the WBF participation in Fruit Attraction 2024 (FA24)**

Victor Prada provided an overview of key points discussed during the WBF panels at FA24 and noted that the reports have been shared with panelists for feedback before publication. Below is a summary of the sessions.

- **Expected Impacts of the EU's CSDDD on Global Fruit Trade and National Markets (8 October 2024)**

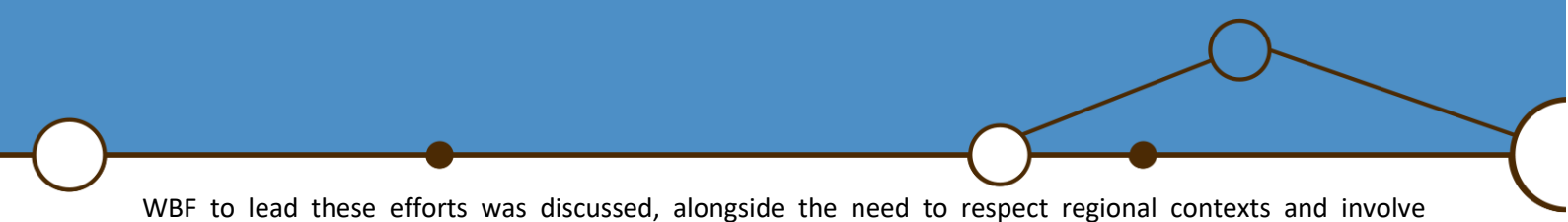
This session explored the CSDDD's implications for the banana value chain, focusing on compliance challenges, producer adjustments, and retailer and government roles in supporting implementation. Key themes included equitable distribution of compliance costs across the supply chain, fair pricing to support sustainability efforts, and the directive's potential to strengthen labour standards and formalize employment. Discussions also highlighted the need for increased investments in sustainable practices to ease compliance for producers, and the importance of consumer education on true production costs and certification roles.

- **Is it possible to pay living wages, living income and fair prices in fruit production? (9 October 2024)**

This session examined the practical implications of the CSDDD's requirements for ensuring workers' rights, including living wages and income, in the banana value chain. Panelists, including representatives from governments, the ILO, producer associations and retailers, discussed challenges and opportunities for implementing living wages, while balancing regional socioeconomic realities. Key themes included the need for fair pricing to reflect actual production and compliance costs, the importance of social dialogue and collective bargaining in strengthening labour relations and amplify workers' voices and calls for greater retailer involvement and responsibility in supporting these efforts. The panel also stressed the critical role of consumer awareness in educating the public about true costs of production and the importance of living wages and income for the industry. Lastly, the discussion underscored the key role of the WBF as a multistakeholder platform and provided updates on the ongoing consultation process led by GIZ/IDH, in partnership with the German Retailers Group, on the Responsible Purchasing Practices (RPP) framework.

- **Can a global multi-stakeholder agreement lower certification and audit costs? (10 October 2024)**

This session gathered representatives from leading certification schemes and producer associations across Latin America and the Caribbean to explore creating a unified framework aimed at reducing certification and audit costs. Discussions focused on streamlining processes, reducing redundancies and alleviating burdens on producers. Key topics included leveraging the EU's CSDDD for mutual recognition of standards, simplifying certification processes and reducing inefficiencies. Rainforest Alliance announced an ambitious simplification plan to reduce standards and improve audit efficiency, while GlobalG.A.P. and Fairtrade presented several initiatives and expressed willingness to collaborate. Panelists called for stronger retailer engagement to support harmonization and reward compliant producers. A proposal to appoint a neutral expert under the



WBF to lead these efforts was discussed, alongside the need to respect regional contexts and involve consumers to align demand for sustainable food with certification goals.

7. Closing remarks - Day 1

Pascal Liu summarized the main discussions and decisions, thanked participants for their valuable contributions, and encouraged their continued engagement on Day 2 of the SC27.

Wednesday, 13 November 2024

1. Welcome by the WBF Secretariat - Opening remarks, objectives and expected outcomes of Day 2

Pascal Liu opened the meeting and welcomed all members to the second day of the SC27.

2. Activities of Working Group 02, the Commission on Living Wages and Income and its Subgroups

- **Commission on Living Wages and Living Income**

Victor Prada shared updates on recent Commission activities, including two meetings in June and October and the WBF's participation in the IDH Living Wage Summit in Amsterdam. The June meeting focused on the Commission's action plan, highlighting a risk-based approach and policy alignment within the sector. Stakeholder feedback on fair trade prices was finalized, and the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)'s Living Wage pilot project, including training sessions in Colombia and Costa Rica, was presented. The October meeting, held as part of the WG02 Thematic Session for SC27, addressed fair wage practices. It highlighted the need for transparency in agreements and the importance of discussing and leveraging existing price-setting mechanisms.

- **Subgroup on Methodologies and Tool**


Victor Prada emphasized the Secretariat's ongoing dialogue with the Anker Research Institute (ARI), particularly regarding the Question & Answers (Q&A) document on the Anker Methodology. Recommendations from this document will help guide the subgroup's activities.

Helena Ventura (FAO) presented an overview of the WBF Living Wage Legislation Desk Review, which aims to create a database of national labor laws, minimum wage standards, and related regulations across banana-producing and exporting countries. Covering 14 countries, the review includes details such as enactment dates, legal codes, and summaries of each law's purpose and scope. To date, 132 laws have been cataloged, with research ongoing to expand this list. The findings are being shared with stakeholders for further review and input. She also discussed feedback from stakeholders aimed at aligning the desk review with international standards. She highlighted ILO's work on wage standards and the role of its Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. One of the proposals was to prepare annual reports on minimum wage trends in banana-producing countries, tracking changes, collective bargaining adjustments, and alignment with living wage benchmarks. Victor Prada explained that this activity is a work-in-progress and is intended to address concerns that audits sometimes fail to fully consider the national legal context.

Given the breadth of information collected, Omar Sánchez (CORBANA) suggested renaming the review to "Labour Legislation Analysis" to reflect its broader scope beyond wages.

- **Subgroup on Markets**

Victor Prada provided an update on the subgroup's activities, primarily centered on developing the Responsible Purchasing Practices (RPP) framework by GIZ/IDH. Through multistakeholder consultations, the WBF ensured active participation from all constituencies, including producers, in shaping the guidelines. The



next subgroup meeting, scheduled for January 2025, will analyze feedback on the RPP framework. The meeting was postponed to allow further stakeholder consultations and framework refinement.

- **Summit 2025 (WBF/IDH/GIZ)**

Victor Prada informed the audience that during the WG02 Thematic Session, a joint proposal by the WBF Secretariat, GIZ and IDH was presented to organize two summits. The first, in Latin America, would focus on producers' perspectives, addressing local issues, such as fair pricing, social dialogue and production challenges. The second summit, proposed for Fruit Attraction 2025 (FA25), would be focused on engaging European buyers, such as supermarkets and retailers, to discuss value distribution, shared responsibility and compliance with the EU's CSDDD. For the Latin America summit, Victor Prada shared the two options discussed in the Commission on Living Wages and Living Income: 22–23 May 2025 in Colombia, before CLAC and ASBAMA events, or 16–20 June 2025 in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic. The latter option would avoid scheduling conflicts, potentially allow for field visits and include the possibility of a one-day in-person SC meeting. Moreover, Punta Cana offers affordable flights from Europe, making it accessible for international participants, and provides an opportunity for retailers to engage directly with local stakeholders. He noted that GIZ and IDH will support the participation of sponsored travelers, such as smallholders and trade union representatives. Before opening the floor, Victor Prada stressed the need to confirm the location and date early to ensure that key stakeholders, especially retailers, can plan their participation.

- **Topics and Title**

Producer representatives proposed to include fair pricing, alongside living wages and living income, as a key topic for the meeting and emphasized the need for retailer participation. GIZ and IUF highlighted the importance of involving civil society actors and workers representatives, with IUF recommending that the linkage between wages, workers' rights, collective bargaining and social dialogue be addressed in the discussion. IUF also cautioned against treating living wages and RPP as separate issues. IDH clarified that RPP is integral to its Living Wage Program, and that retailers committed under British and Belgian agreements are required to support both RPP and fair pricing. Many participants suggested framing the meeting around due diligence regulations, given their broad applicability and appeal, to analyze the socioeconomic realities of producing countries and develop a roadmap for living wages, living income, and fair pricing. However, it was recommended not to focus solely on the EU's CSDDD to ensure inclusivity for British retailers and other stakeholders outside the directive's scope.

- **Location and Date**

Participants raised concerns that holding the event in Colombia during the same week as ASBAMA and CLAC events might overburden stakeholders. Punta Cana emerged as the preferred option due to its affordability, accessible flights from Europe and suitability for hosting conferences. The Dominican Republic's relevance as a major banana-producing country further strengthened its case. CLAC suggested the fourth week of June and, alongside ADOBANANO, expressed readiness to support logistics, drawing on experience from previous CLAC events. Participants also noted that negotiating with local hotels for meeting spaces could reduce costs, enabling more sponsored travelers, such as smallholder farmers, to attend.

- **Format**

IDH proposed a practical format with breakout groups and workshops, rather than a traditional conference, and expressed openness to adapt the agenda based on stakeholder input. The Secretariat discussed the possibility of including interactive sessions, roundtables, and workshops, with the specific format to be finalized later.

Pascal Liu (FAO) recommended that the summit address a broad range of topics beyond living wages. He highlighted the importance of involving key decision-makers from retailers, such as purchasing managers and CEOs, to drive meaningful progress. He also stressed the need to initiate preparatory work within existing WG and Commissions to ensure impactful outcomes and agreements.

Decisions taken:

- Upon approval of the government of the Dominican Republic, the first summit will be held in Punta Cana, on 25–26 June 2025, with an in-person SC meeting on 24 June 2025. The Secretariat will consult with the government and, if the latter agrees to host the summit, seek confirmation of the date with SC members via email.
- The summit will cover living wages, living income, equitable value distribution, fair pricing, workers' rights, social dialogue, and due diligence regulations and compliance. Discussions on selecting the topics and framing the title will continue within the WBF's WG and Commissions.

- **GIZ updates and overview on the Responsible Purchasing Practice (RPP) Framework**


Björn Willms (GIZ) shared updates on the RPP framework, noting that the final round of feedback has concluded, though input can still be provided. GIZ is reviewing feedback with plans to publish the framework. He noted that initial expert reactions indicate no competition law concerns with RPP. The second phase of the German retailers' working group project in the banana sector has begun in Colombia and Costa Rica and will run until October 2026. Stakeholder meetings were held in September and October 2024, with operational plans being finalized and shared with stakeholders by year-end or early next year for feedback. GIZ aims to involve the ILO and engage the public sector, particularly the labour ministries in both countries, in this phase, along with increased participation from civil society and worker representatives to ensure inclusive stakeholder dialogue.

Jhamna Magsig (CORBANA) expressed concerns that the RPP framework places too much responsibility on producers, with insufficient emphasis on retailers sharing responsibility through fair pricing, highlighting several examples to illustrate her point. Björn Willms clarified that this initiative was proposed by European retailers to introduce RPP in their negotiations and contracts with suppliers in a spirit of shared responsibility. Jose Antonio Hidalgo (AEBE) noted that his organization will submit their feedback next week.

- **IDH updates**

Amanda Penn (IDH) provided updates on the next steps of IDH's Living Wage Roadmap, based on feedback gathered through virtual and in-person consultations with various governance committees. The roadmap is transitioning into a collaborative effort, with IDH identifying actions it could lead, co-lead, or facilitate, and those better suited for other organizations. She noted that IDH plans to continue maintaining and improving the salary matrix, testing its features to allow producers to share audit status, sharing case studies on fair pricing and long-term contracts as enablers for living wages, and articulating how the roadmap aligns with the CSDDD. Other organizations could take the lead on involving unions in entering salary matrix data, developing cost-effective methods to audit and verify living wage gap calculations, creating model contracts to balance power between producers and buyers, and building capacity for governments, unions, and employers to support effective collective bargaining for living wages. She emphasized the WBF's potential role in the roadmap, building on its long-standing efforts in promoting decent work, labour rights and access to adequate wages.

Amanda Penn outlined the Banana Commitment plans for 2025, focusing on several key areas. In terms of data, efforts will continue to build capacity for the use of the salary matrix, including refresher training to address updates, exploring risk-based methods for data collection and verification, and conducting gender analysis. Regarding procurement practices, plans include developing a new version of the RPP framework, specifically for traders, sharing case studies on responsible sourcing, and expanding KPI reporting to track retailer action to meet their commitments. Dialogue and alignment efforts will center on the organization of the Summit, harmonizing voluntary approaches, and establishing a trade union-retailer dialogue platform. Additionally, new projects will include a pilot on smallholder living income measurement and expanding collective bargaining initiatives occurring in West Africa to other producing countries.



Omar Sánchez (CORBANA) raised concerns about the confidentiality of the salary matrix data and whether involving other organizations might compromise it. Amanda Penn clarified that in a pilot led by a German retailer, trade unions supported data input and validation, with no confidentiality breach. Any third-party involvement requires the consent of the organization inputting the data. Svetlana Boincean (IUF) cautioned against limiting workers' roles to merely validating data at the end of the process, advocating for their active involvement throughout, including in calculations. She also stressed the importance of aligning Roadmap activities with ILO wage policies and conducting tripartite consultations as recommended by the ILO. Amanda Penn clarified that validation only relates to the calculation of the wage gaps for specific farms, and that IDH methodologies and processes fully adhere to ILO principles. Björn Willms (GIZ) noted that IDH and GIZ are in regular contact with the ILO to coordinate the roadmap and that the ILO is also involved in operational plans for the German retailers' group. Jhamna Magsig (CORBANA) inquired about developing cost-effective methods for auditing and verifying living wage calculations without compromising data accuracy and reliability. Amanda Penn explained that such methods could ideally be embedded in existing voluntary standards and stressed the importance of other organizations leading this effort to ensure effective implementation.

Nex steps:

- The Secretariat will organize the next meeting of the Commission on Living Wages and Living Income before the end of the year.

- **Update of FAO/WBF on Living Income**

Victor Prada (FAO) highlighted the importance of standardized, inclusive tools and urged caution in addressing living income to avoid unintended impacts on smallholders. Ian Andrade (FAO) indicated that the WBF's work on living income aims to build on existing tools and methodologies, not replace them. The objective is to provide free, tailored tools for measurement and implementation, facilitate effective information dissemination, and promote equal stakeholder participation. Guided by principles of methodological rigor and inclusivity, this new framework aims to support initiatives that work to close income gaps without harming small and medium-sized farmers. A key challenge lies in preventing new pricing mechanisms from excluding smallholders, who struggle with lower productivity. Ian Andrade emphasized that closing income gaps requires fostering collaboration and understanding mechanisms that drive meaningful change, not just collecting data or developing tools. Proposed next steps include stakeholder consultations to identify challenges and solutions, a desk review of existing methodologies and implementation experiences, data harmonization, and disseminating technical guidance through publications and workshops.


Marike de Peña (CLAC) stressed the need to better understand the smallholder context in developing the framework, proceed cautiously on pricing issues, and continue efforts to support living income increases for smallholders, including fair wages for their employees. It was noted that FAO might be the most suitable entity to lead this work, as it extends beyond the scope of the ILO.

Nex steps:

- Activities related to living income will be further discussed in detail at the next meeting of the Commission on Living Wages and Living Income.

3. Certification Commission

Victor Prada provided updates on activities conducted under the Certification Commission. The second Commission meeting in July 2024 featured presentations by IDH on its Basket of Standards approach, and its role in promoting harmonization and efficiency across sustainability initiatives, and by the International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling (ISEAL) Alliance on their convening work with certification schemes, Credibility Principles and Codes of Good Practice. Participants emphasized the need to reduce standard overlap, alleviate certification/audit burdens, and improve transparency. The meeting concluded



with plans to map stakeholders, evaluate existing tools, and increase private sector participation. Additionally, at FA24, the WBF hosted a panel titled “Can a global multi-stakeholder agreement lower certification and audit costs?” featuring certification schemes and Latin American producer associations. Discussions focused on aligning standards to reduce inefficiencies, with participants exploring how the EU’s CSDDD could facilitate mutual recognition and streamline processes.

Victor Prada announced plans for a third meeting to discuss hiring a technical expert to lead harmonization efforts under the WBF. While Latin American producers support the proposal, financial commitments from retailers and certification bodies are still pending. Marike De Peña (CLAC) suggested working with ISEAL on how to combine audits for similarly managed plantations to improve efficiency.

Next steps:

- The Secretariat will organize the next meeting of the Certification Commission in the coming months, with a focus on addressing the Commission’s budget and resource needs.

4. National and Regional Commissions

Victor Prada reaffirmed the Secretariat's commitment to supporting activities under the existing National Commissions (Ecuador and Colombia) and Regional Commissions (Africa and Latin America/Caribbean), noting its readiness to address specific national or regional issues with relevant stakeholders. He inquired whether WBF members plan to attend Fruit Logistica 2025 in Berlin, Germany, and offered to coordinate panel discussions or meetings if there was interest. While many producer representatives confirmed their attendance, no specific request was made for Secretariat involvement.

5. Smallholders Commission

Adriale Benedetto provided updates on the Smallholders Commission, noting that the Secretariat has developed a draft table of contents (ToC) for a potential baseline study on smallholder farmers in global banana value chains, following a request made in May 2024 by several Commission members. The study aims to highlight smallholders' critical role in domestic and international banana markets, the challenges they face in environmental, social, and economic sustainability, and provide actionable recommendations on supporting them. The draft ToC includes profiles of four countries – Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Peru – focusing on smallholders' current status, challenges, and opportunities across environmental, social and economic sustainability. Additional countries may be included based on interest from Commission members and stakeholders. The draft will be presented at the next Commission meeting for feedback to refine and guide the study's direction. Adriale Benedetto also noted that a preliminary call was held with CLAC to identify relevant data for potential integration with FAO data, drawing on CLAC’s extensive information on smallholder organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Next steps:

- The Secretariat will soon organize the next Smallholder Commission meeting to review the ToC for this potential baseline study and gather member feedback.

6. Next meetings of the WBF – 28th Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC28)

Pascal Liu reminded the audience of the decisions regarding the possible organization of a summit in late June 2025 and the possibility of holding an in-person Steering Committee (SC) meeting either before (24 June) or after (27 June) the summit. The first option would allow SC members to prepare for the summit, while the latter would focus on reflecting on its outcomes. A consensus was reached to hold the SC meeting in person.

Decisions taken:

- Upon approval by the government of the Dominican Republic, the Twenty-Eight Meeting of the Steering Committee (SC28) will be held in Punta Cana, either just before or after the Summit.

Next steps:

- The Secretariat will prepare a draft agenda for SC28 and circulate it among SC members to gather feedback.
- A Doodle poll will be sent to SC members to confirm the preferred date.

7. Administrative and financial matters

• Status of 2024 fee collection campaign

Laura del Castillo Buelga (FAO) presented the status of the 2024 fee collection campaign. The target for the 2024 campaign is USD 347 483 through the contributions of 53 WBF members. Currently, 96 percent of the expected total fee amount for 2024 has been received (USD 333 323; 48 members), 3.5 percent relate to signed Voluntary Contribution Agreements (VCAs) with pending contributions (USD 12 430; 3 members) and 0.5 percent relate to VCAs that remain to be signed (USD 1 720; 2 members). She noted this is the highest membership fee collection in the WBF's history. Pascal Liu thanked members, linking this year's success with the Fourth Global Conference (WBF4C) and the CWF tool, which has sparked interest among stakeholders. Pascal Liu then outlined the expenditure forecast for 2024, estimating total spending until 31 December 2024 at USD 500 000 (excluding FAO in-kind support). This includes contributions from the WBF multi-donor trust fund as well as sponsors, with the WBF4C conference being the largest expense. He projected the trust fund balance to reach USD 367 573 by year-end, factoring in planned income and expenditure. Looking ahead, Pascal Liu presented the 2025 budget proposal, forecasting USD 487 000 to continue and expand WBF activities, including hiring four consultants and interns to support the different WGs, Task Forces and Commissions. He noted the budget may require adjustments, as it did not include the costs to the trust fund related to the possible organization of a summit, with GIZ/IDH expected to cover a significant share of these costs.

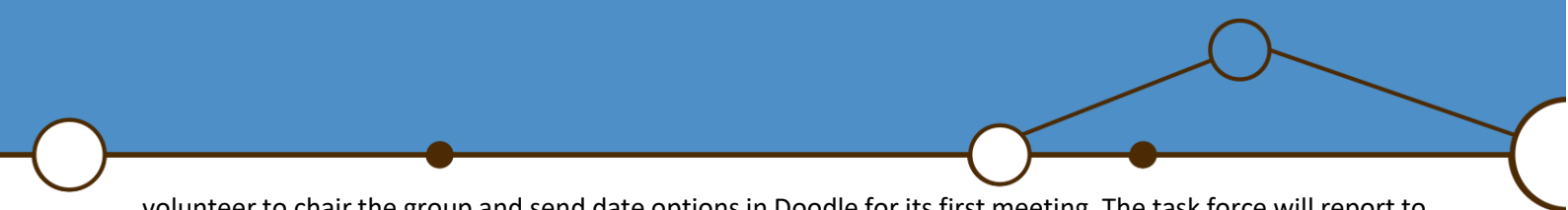
Jennie Coleman (Equifruit) inquired about the WBF's presence at the International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) Global Show in Anaheim, California, in October 2025. Pascal Liu proposed gathering all interested stakeholders and estimating potential costs based on different scenarios, noting that expenses would depend on planned activities (e.g., stands, panels, etc.).

Next steps

- The financial forecast for 2024 and proposed budget for next year were approved. The budget will be revised to account for expenses related to the summit (if it takes place) and potential WBF participation in trade fairs, including the IFPA Global Show
- An ad-hoc task force will be formed to discuss the possibility of WBF participation in the IFPA Global Show.

8. Updates on the review of the WBF Project Document / Charter

Pascal Liu shared updates on the proposal made during the WBF4C to review the WBF Charter, originally designed in 2008–2009 ahead of the first WBF Conference. He explained that a few years ago, FAO's legal office had formulated several comments, but no consensus was reached among the SC, prompting it to focus on operational actions and projects instead. Recent consultations with FAO's legal office indicated that revising the WBF's Project Document (ProDoc) should be the first step. The ProDoc outlines the WBF's background, objectives, stakeholders, beneficiaries, framework, and key elements such as impact, outcomes, outputs, implementation and oversight processes. Pascal Liu noted that this review could serve as an operational and practical starting point, that can inform subsequent work on the charter. He informed participants that the WBF Secretariat will soon contact the members of the temporary task force overseeing this revision to find a



volunteer to chair the group and send date options in Doodle for its first meeting. The task force will report to the SC.

Next steps:

- The Secretariat will reach out to Task Force members to select a chairperson and organize the first meeting in the coming months.

9. Conclusions of Day 1 and 2

Pascal Liu concluded the meeting by providing an overview of the decisions made on various topics and thanking the SC members, interpreters, technicians, WBF Secretariat and other FAO colleagues for their support to the meeting.

Annex 1. List of participants

Twenty-Seventh Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC27)

12-13 November 2024

List of participants and observers of SC27

#	Organization	Name	Surname	Participation
1	AEBE	Agustin	Delgado	SC member
2	AEBE	José Antonio	Hidalgo	SC member
3	Agroamerica	Susana	Perez	SC member
4	Agrofair	Luud	Clercx	SC member
5	Agrofair	Marcos	Miedema	SC member
6	Alliance Bioversity International - CIAT	Sebastien	Carpentier	SC member
7	Anker's Research Institute	Sally	Smith	Observer
8	ASBAMA	Jose Francisco	Zuñiga	SC member
9	Asociación De Pequeños Productores Agropecuarios Tierra Fertil	Kleber	Pindo	Observer
10	ASOGUABO	Lianne	Zoeteweyj	Observer
11	AUGURA	Emerson	Aguirre	SC member
12	AUGURA	Isabel Cristina	Yoshioka	SC member
13	AUGURA	Helena	Bornacelly	SC member
14	Bakker Barendrecht B.V.	Lisa	Lindelauf	Observer
15	BAMA	Trude	Solvang	Observer
16	Banafair	Helge	Fischer	Observer
17	Banana Link	Holly	Woodward-Davey	SC member
18	Banana Link	Alistair	Smith	SC member
19	Banelino	Gustavo	Gandini	Observer
20	CATAS	Xue	Zhang	Observer
21	Chiquita	Andrew	Biles	SC member
22	CIRAD	Carolina	Dawson	Observer
23	CLAC	José Fernando	Marulanda	SC member
24	CLAC	Willy	Paredes	SC member
25	CLAC	Marike	De Peña	SC member
26	COLSIBA	Cesar	Guerra	SC member
27	COLSIBA	Adela	Torres	SC member
28	Compagnie Fruitière	Christelle	Owona	SC member
29	CORBANA	Omar	Sánchez	SC member
30	CORBANA	Jhamna	Magsig	SC member

31	Dole	Xavier	Roussel	SC member
32	Dole	Javier	Villacis	SC member
33	Dole	Patricio	Gutierrez	SC member
34	Equifruit	Jennie	Coleman	SC member
35	FairTrade International	Blanca	Loaiza	SC member
36	Fairtrade International	Wilbert	Flinterman	SC member
37	FARMCOOP	Kahlil	Apuzen-Ito	SC member
38	GIZ	Björn	Willms	Observer
39	GLOBALG.A.P.	Johannes	Weh	SC member
40	Golden Exotics Ltd	George	Kporye	Observer
41	IDH	Amanda	Penn	SC member
42	IDH	Patricia	Assis	SC member
43	ILO	El'vis	Beytullayev	SC member
44	Independent Consultant	Carlos	Berben	Observer
45	IPL	Tim	Brammer	Observer
46	ISEAL	Amandine	Bressand	Observer
47	IUF	Svetlana	Boincean	SC member
48	LEAF	Leocadia	Muzah	Observer
49	PBGEA	Yvette	Matabalan	Observer
50	Permanent representation of Cameroon	Médi	Moungui	SC member
51	Permanent Representation of Colombia	Nestor	Pongutá	SC member
52	Permanent representation of the Dominican Republic	Patricia	Rodriguez	SC member
53	Plátano de Canarias	Esther	Domínguez	Observer
54	Reybanpac	Sandra	Guerrero	SC member
55	UNIVALE	Silvio	Romao	Observer
56	N.A.	Juan	Gómez	Observer
57	FAO	Adriele	Benedetto	FAO/EST
58	FAO	Andre	Croppenstedt	FAO/EST
59	FAO	Helena	Ventura	FAO/EST
60	FAO	Ian	Andrade	FAO/EST
61	FAO	Iryna	Kobuta	FAO/EST
62	FAO	Laura	Del Castillo Buelga	FAO/EST
63	FAO	Matheus	Lima	FAO/EST
65	FAO	Pascal	Liu	FAO/EST
66	FAO	Valeria	Villacorta	FAO/EST
67	FAO	Victor	Prada	FAO/EST