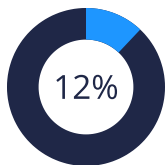




Agriculture & Fishing sector

High Risk of Modern Slavery

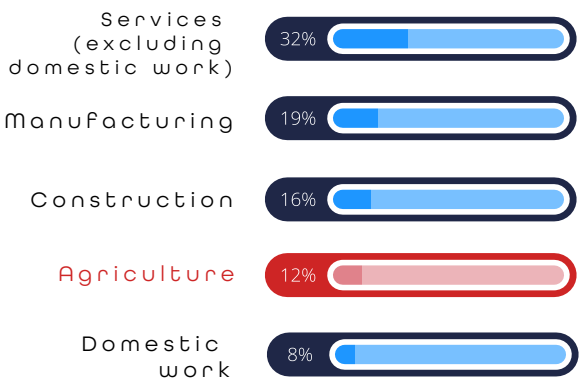


12% of forced labour victims worldwide are within the agriculture sector



Australian-based suppliers cannot be assumed to be low risk. Businesses operating in Australia have been exposed as exploiting vulnerable workers including foreign students and migrants

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) places agriculture as the sector with the **fourth-highest** proportion of victims of **forced labour worldwide**. This represents 2.1 million people.



Risk Factors

Vulnerable Workforce

Modern slavery risks are present during the production, packaging, and processing of food and beverages, as the labour-intensive work is reliant on low-skilled seasonal works. Temporary and irregular work is prevalent, and labourers are easily replaceable, increasing the risk of exploitative practices.

Low-tier suppliers in high-risk geographies

Modern slavery risks (including the occurrence of child labour) are prevalent in the procurement of high-risk foods (such as corn, palm oil, rice, sugarcane, coffee and cocoa beans, seafood, nuts, and tea), particularly from emerging economies. The transport of these products across maritime borders also involves forced labour risks.

High-risk business practices

The industry's practice of relying on third-party labour-hire companies to source workers increases risk by reducing visibility over recruitment practices. To secure engagement, workers are charged high fees that they are ultimately unable to repay, leaving them in a situation of debt-bondage. These conditions are combined with pressure on food prices from retailers as they seek to gain a competitive advantage which can push down wages and enable the conditions for slavery to occur.

Migrant Workforce

Migrant workers are often recruited to perform seasonal work and are more vulnerable to exploitation as there are few resources dedicated to monitoring, training, and managing the rights of migrant workers. Additionally, fraudulent contracting through third-party labour-hire arrangements, debt bondage to migration agents or labour brokers, and/or employer control over visa sponsorship, increase the risk of mistreatment of migrant workers including, the underpayment or non-payment of entitlements, sub-standard accommodation, or the confiscation of passports.



Commodities that may be produced with Forced Labour

The U.S. Department of Labour identifies more than 20 agricultural commodities that are at risk of forced labour.



Bamboo



Beans



Brazil Nuts



Cattle



Chilli Peppers



Coca



Cocoa



Coffee



Cotton



Banana



Fish



Palm Oil



Peanuts



Rice



Sesame



Shrimp



Sugar



Sunflower



Tomatoes



Wheat

Sector Collaboration:

Fair Farms is an industry-led initiative aimed at fostering fair and responsible employment practices in Australian horticulture.

Suppliers Ethical Data Exchange is an auditing and data-sharing organisation allowing participants to collaborate with due diligence measures throughout the sector.

Know the Chain and the global Corporate Human Rights Benchmark both assess food beverage and agricultural sector efforts to identify and address rights violations.

International Labour Organization, (2022), *Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage*.

https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/forced-labour/publications/WCMS_854733/lang-en/index.htm

Know the Chain, (2020), *Food & Beverage Benchmark Findings Report*.

http://ktcdevlab2.wupengine.com/wp-content/uploads/KTC_FB_2018.pdf

U.S. Department of Labour, (2022), *List of goods produced by child labor or forced labor*.

https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tcda2021/2022-TVPR-List-of-Goods-v3.pdf



Case Study



Prevalence of exploitative practices towards migrant workers within Australia

The mistreatment and exploitation of workers within the agricultural and fishing sector are not isolated to fishing trawlers in international waters or factories in foreign countries but also occur within Australian borders.

An investigation in 2020 into the blueberry industry on the New South Wales northern coast is alleging systemic wage theft and underpayment of international workers, with workers paid as little as three dollars a day (in comparison to the legal minimum of \$24/hour). The foreign workers interviewed throughout the case claim to have been both underpaid and exploited by labour-hire firms in return for help in extending their visas.

AWU national secretary Daniel Walton said the report confirmed a disturbing culture of intentional worker underpayment in Australia, stating; "We've seen worker exploitation with passports being taken, we've seen sexual assault and physical violence. The concerning thing for us is that it's getting worse, not better."

Additional Resources



2020 Food & Beverage Benchmark Findings Report - Know the Chain



Agriculture and Modern Slavery Act Reporting: Poor Performance despite High Risk - Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab



2019 Corporate Human Rights Benchmark: Full Data Set Corporate Human Right



Blue Harvest: Wage Theft & Other Labour Infringements In The Nsw Mid-North Coast's - Mckell Institute, 2020



Building on Business Practices



Engage

Education and commitment

- Provide **training** for staff and suppliers to build awareness about modern slavery risks and impacts.
- Create a **working group** to action changes within a company's processes, systems, and supply chains.

Assess

Map operational and supply chain risks

- **Map** the organisation's structure, businesses, and supply chains.
- Perform a **risk assessment** – identifying those parts of the business operations and supply chains where there is a risk of modern slavery.
- **Investigate** high-risk suppliers by carrying out further due diligence.
- Formulate **policies** in relation to modern slavery – this will involve collating current policies, identifying gaps, adapting existing policies and formulating new policies, as needed.

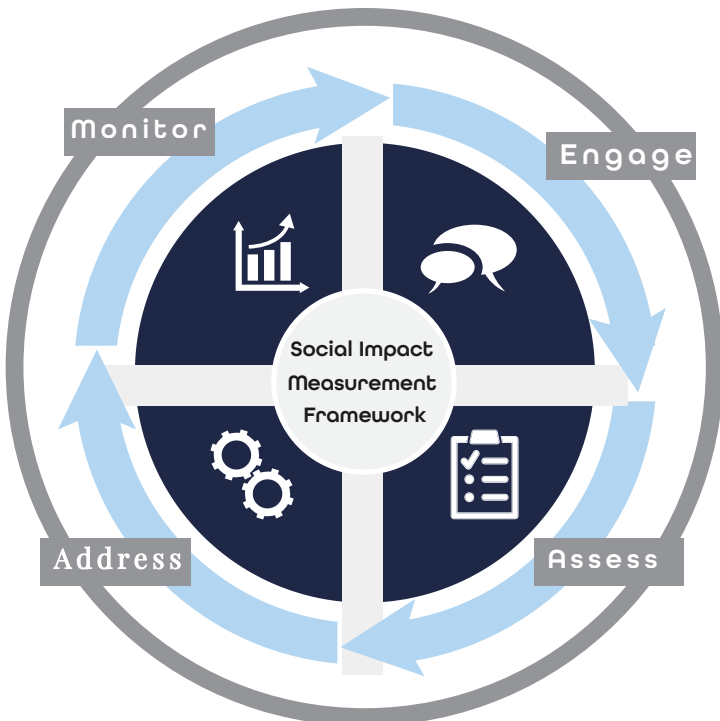
Address

Mitigate risk and build capacity

- **Engage** with suppliers to strengthen understanding of modern slavery and build capacity.
- Improve **purchasing practices** (such as forecasting, contract negotiations, and prompt payment to suppliers) to alleviate undue pressure on suppliers.
- Use **positive leverage** and incentives to encourage and reward the provision of stronger labour standards by suppliers.
- Ensure **third-party recruitment agencies** are ethical and certified.
- Develop **remediation** policies to outline actions required and carrying out those remedial steps if cases of modern slavery are identified.

Monitor

- Elevate worker's voice (both internally and externally) through access to credible grievance systems including whistle-blower mechanisms.
- Establish processes and KPIs to monitor the effectiveness of the steps taken to address modern slavery risk.



Case Study

Forced labour and international restrictions



In May 2021, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection imposed an import ban on seafood from the Dalian Ocean Fishing Co Ltd, alleging the Chinese fishing fleet was using forced labour on its 32 vessels and exploring many Indonesian workers. According to the agency's investigation, many Indonesians hired by the Chinese company found working conditions on Dalian Ocean Fishing vessels far different than what they expected. The workers were subjected to physical violence, withholding of pay, debt bondage and abusive working and living conditions.

On the other hand, the Chinese Foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin stated that the accusations were completely groundless and that the country would take the necessary measures to secure the rights of its companies.

Obligations under the Australian Modern Slavery Act

 READ MORE

Further questions

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Walk Free, (2024), charting progress against Forced labour at sea. <https://www.walkFree.org/global-slavery-index/Findings/spotlights/Forced-labour-at-sea/#Footnote:marker:23>

Reuters, (2021), u.s. bans imports from chinese fishing fleet over Forced labor allegations. <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/us-bans-imports-chinese-fishing-fleet-over-forced-labor-allegations-2021-05-28/>

Department of labour United States of America, (2022), *List of goods produced by child labor or Forced labor*. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2021/2022-TVPR-List-of-Goods-v3.pdf.

Global Slavery Index – 2023 Country Findings: Australia. <https://www.walkFree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/australia/>

