



07 December 2020

Thank you for giving Unilever the opportunity to respond to the Associated Press Article "Rape, abuses in palm oil fields linked to top beauty brands", 24 November 2020. We are extremely concerned by the allegations raised by the Associated Press and urge anyone with further details to share them with us. We have a zero-tolerance policy for human rights violations and are committed to respecting and promoting human rights throughout our value chain.

We can confirm that two of the suppliers mentioned in the report, London Sumatra and Felda, were suspended in 2018 and that we are engaging with the third, Sime Darby Plantation, to examine the specific allegation, and the steps taken to provide a safe workplace for women.

In order to do business with us, our suppliers must adhere to our [Responsible Sourcing Policy](#) (RSP). Fundamental Principle 3 focuses on equality, respect and dignity, clearly stating that no worker should be subjected to any physical, sexual, psychological or verbal harassment, abuse or other form of intimidation. In relation to safety and gender, the RSP also requires that suppliers create a healthy and safe working environment within which workers' rights are respected and promoted, accidents and injuries related to and occurring as a result of operations are prevented, and that processes and mechanisms are developed to eliminate gender discrimination and promote a gender-positive work environment. If non-conformances to the Mandatory Requirements of the RSP are identified, suppliers must develop and deliver a corrective action plan to remediate the issue within a set time period.

We also expect all of our palm oil suppliers to adhere to our [Sustainable Palm Oil Sourcing Policy](#) which sets out 5 principles: No deforestation; No development on peat; No exploitation of people or communities; Driving positive social and economic impact for smallholders and women while protecting forests; Transparency. In particular, 'No exploitation of people or communities' sets out the necessity to promote equality between women and men in the sustainable production of palm oil including gender equity in access to inputs, resources, training and decision-making rights in rural areas.

We want individuals and communities to raise any concerns with us so they can be addressed, which is why we have the [Palm Oil Grievance Procedure](#). Through our public [Palm Oil Grievance Tracker](#), we monitor progress against grievances and post regular updates online. For grievances involving our direct suppliers, we investigate and discuss findings with our suppliers. We work with both the grievance raiser and the supplier to determine the best approach to resolve the grievance and review the progress report issued by the supplier and/or an independent verification body.

We also publicly disclose the list of our palm oil direct suppliers, refinery and mills, and have recently introduced a [public list of suspended suppliers](#). Through publishing information about both the palm oil suppliers and the mills that process the products we buy and about suspended suppliers, we openly share information with our partners and the wider industry about who we are working with. We continue to engage with our suppliers, as well as monitoring the resolution of grievance allegations on the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) platform.

We've taken action to improve access to women's rights and to promote women's safety in our workplaces, as well as in our extended supply chain, through our safety for women programme. The programme - which began in our tea plantations - aims to empower women and girls socially, economically, and politically and equip them to prevent and address all forms of violence. In 2018, we worked in partnership with UN Women to develop the 'Global Women's Safety Framework in Rural Spaces', a practical, replicable, scalable, and cost-effective actionable blueprint with case studies and practical tools. In 2019, we published a guide to support its implementation and we are now actively planning to extend the programme to other commodities including palm.

We are actively involved in the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) where we successfully drove improvement of the certification's Principles and Criteria which are now aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and our RSP. We continue to push for the effective implementation of these current Principle and Criteria, which is underway, including by developing and improving guidance for assessors and strengthening RSPO's verification and

complaint mechanisms. We are an active member of the RSPO Human Rights Working Group which has recently commissioned the development of a 'Practical Guidance on Gender Inclusion and Compliance with the 2018 Principles and Criteria and 2019 Independent Smallholder Standard'.

We remain fully committed to empowering and including women throughout our value chain. The safety of women in global agricultural supply chains and the particular issues that women face, including in the palm oil industry, remains a key concern for us and we recognise that more still needs to be done and that progress needs to be made quickly. We remain committed to working with governments, NGOs, suppliers and peers to respect and promote women and girls' rights and safety.

For more information on our work to advance human rights, please visit:
<https://www.unilever.com/sustainable-living/enhancing-livelihoods/fairness-in-the-workplace/>