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## **Allegations of human rights abuses in the Kenyan tea supply chain**

Thank you for your enquiry regarding our response to allegations of sexual abuse on tea plantations in Kenya, as featured on BBC Panorama/Africa Eye.

The reports were deeply upsetting. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and dignity, and we recognise the courage of those who speak out.

### **Our Kenyan supply chain:**

Since 2019 we've shared our full supplier list for our tea and coffee ranges, recognising the role that transparency can play in developing more responsible and resilient global supply chains. The full list, including all supplying estates and co-operatives in Kenya, can be found [here](#).

We currently do not buy any tea from James Finlay Kenya (JKF), although in 2021 we purchased a small quantity of green tea (about 5 metric tonnes). I can also confirm that we don't buy tea from Unilever (now Lipton Teas and Infusions) in Kenya, but we very occasionally buy small volumes from Unilever estates in Tanzania.

### **Our approach to human rights violations:**

Our approach to protecting human rights is articulated in our [Human Rights and Ethical Sourcing Policy](#) and integrated into our supply chain via our [Code of Conduct: Standards for Sustainable Supply](#). Both these are aligned with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other internationally recognised standards.

The Policy and Code of Conduct are both available on our [Group website](#). Here, we also publish our [Speak Up Policy and Procedure](#) which provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to share any concerns, including issues within our supply chain.

As explained in our Human Rights and Ethical Sourcing Policy, when potential human rights violations come to our attention, our initial approach is to work with suppliers to understand, remedy and protect. If suppliers fail to take the agreed remedial actions, we'd take our business elsewhere. More information on our human rights approach can be found [here](#).

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**Our approach to protecting and enhancing women’s rights:**

We’ve long recognised that as a business and as an industry we need to work harder to safeguard women and protect their rights.

This includes working with our direct suppliers and other partners to establish gender projects which protect women’s rights, improve working and managerial practices, and help increase incomes and access to opportunities.

You can find more information about some of the programmes we’re supporting [here](#), including details of a three-year project in Kenya, with partners including ActionAid and the Ethical Tea Partnership. The project, which covers three of our supplier communities and aims to reach 22,000 people, is working to empower female tea smallholders and workers to know and claim their rights, as well as helping survivors of violence access essential services and legal aid.

**Our actions following the BBC’s investigations:**

We recognise that human rights challenges are driven by multiple factors and systemic in nature and can’t be solved by any organisation working alone. As such, we’re committed to collaborating with others to understand and address the most salient issues in the global tea industry, including safeguarding and empowering women.

We recognise that the spotlight on human rights violations – whether it be via media or civil society organisations – can galvanise action. Although it’s still early days, we will use our leadership roles in the ETP and the Global Tea Coalition to continue to learn from, extend and replicate programmes with clear impacts, and build new strategic alliances that serve to raise awareness of women’s rights, build their capacity and prospects.

Meanwhile, although we don’t buy from James Finlay in Kenya, we have a broader relationship with the parent company. As such, we’re working with the parent company to understand what steps they are taking, including action against the perpetrators and support for the women impacted.

Thank you once again for your enquiry. While we know that there are no quick fixes, we’re committed to playing a key role in addressing the inequalities and challenges that exist in our tea supply chain and making the tea industry safer for women in Kenya and beyond.

3 March 2023