

Morrisons BHRRC Tea Response - March 2023

A BBC Panorama documentary that aired on Monday 20th of February reported concerning allegations relating to the treatment of women working on tea estates in Kenya. We take all allegations of this nature very seriously wherever they occur in our supply chain, and work in collaboration with our suppliers, multi-stakeholder initiatives and other affected parties to support the development of mitigation and improvement activity.

All suppliers are required to comply at all times with the [Morrisons Ethical Trading Code](#) and with all applicable national and international laws, regulations, codes and standards, in the countries where their products are grown, harvested, manufactured, stored and distributed. Our Ethical Trading Code does not have a specific clause relating to gender-based violence and harassment, but expressly prohibits any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender and all forms of harassment towards workers.

Our primary supplier sourced tea for use in Morrisons blends from the estates in Kenya operated by Unilever and James Finlay Kenya (JFK) in both 2021 and 2022. We do not however have any direct commercial relationships with either Ekaterra or JFK.

Since being made aware of the allegations, both Morrisons and our primary tea supplier have maintained close contact with James Finlay Ltd and the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) to discuss the progress of their investigation, immediate corrective actions, and longer term resolution plan. We are also aware that Ekaterra immediately suspended the managers at the centre of the allegations and launched a full independent investigation, which is ongoing.

During this period, our primary supplier placed new purchases from the producers involved on hold until the severity and cause of the issues were fully understood and immediate actions were taken to support victims and protect the welfare of other workers. Our priority is to act in the best interests of workers, so provided suppliers can demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement, have practical plans in place, and demonstrable progress is being made, we will always continue to trade with them.

Given the nature of our relationships with the plantations in question (tier 3/4), we have not been directly involved in site level investigations relating to these issues. We are however aware of and fully support the investigation and resolution proposal that has been developed by James Finlay Ltd in conjunction with the Ethical Trading Initiative. This will be delivered by a locally based NGO and legal firm with full support from senior management at James Finlay.

We are reassured that James Finlay has additionally engaged a third-party organisation to provide additional and immediate independent safeguarding support and opportunities for counselling for all workers at the affected estates.

Our primary supplier is also a member of the Ethical Tea Partnership (ETP) and is working with this initiative to address the wider issue of gender-based violence in tea-producing countries.

We operate a “Tell Us” hotline for colleagues or suppliers to anonymously raise concerns. This is publicly hosted and available in 13 languages, but currently only available in the three countries where Morrisons group companies operate (UK, Netherlands & Hong Kong). In the first instance concerns should be raised via our primary supplier.

James Finlay Ltd has communicated details of their existing safeguarding measures in place to all workers in JFK estates. This includes an anonymous third-party whistle blowing hotline which is managed and overseen by their UK based team.

We will continue to monitor the situation relating to these allegations and actively support the progress of both the wider investigation and long term improvement plans.