

## **BHRC allegations on tea**

Dear Kate

Thank you for writing to us regarding workers' rights in our tea supply chain, and for bringing these concerning reports to our attention.

We want to reassure you we take any allegations of abuse very seriously and are dedicated to eliminating them from our own operations, and from our supply chains.

We're aware that tea supply chains globally face several challenges such as low wages, gender discrimination and poor living conditions for tea workers and smallholders. Addressing these complexities requires a multi-faceted approach with wider industry and governments coming together to drive improvements across the sector.

We've reviewed the reports you've shared with us and can confirm that between January and December 2022, we sourced from the following four tea plantation companies.

- Talawakelle Plantations linked to Holyrood tea estate
- Maskeliya Plantation linked to Glenugie, Moray and Laxapana tea estate
- Horana Plantations linked to Gouravilla tea estate
- Bogawantalawa Plantation linked to Bridwell tea estate

We are working with our supplier to investigate the allegations and will move to suspend the tea estates if we don't get satisfactory engagement.

Last year we developed and published a new tea sourcing policy with strong requirements to ensure workers' rights are protected throughout our supply chains. This is now being implemented by our supply base and we are regularly reviewing it to see where it can be strengthened, exploring piloting best practice grievance mechanisms, working with suppliers to build more inclusive workplaces and partnering with The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) to advance worker's rights in tea supply chains.

In relation to freedom of association for tea workers, we recognise in some countries there is increasing pressure on human rights defenders, including trade unions. We do not tolerate threats, intimidation, physical or legal attacks on human rights defenders in relation to our operations. We also expect our suppliers to comply with all legal requirements including the payment of legislated wages.

As founding members of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), we have been acting on these issues since 1998. The collaborative nature of our work leads us to engage with a wide range of individuals and organisations who support workers globally to realise their human rights. All of our manufacturers and suppliers globally must comply with our Code of Business Conduct and [Group Human Rights Policy](#), which clearly outlines our expectation that respect, dignity and fair treatment be shown towards all workers in our supply chains

We are members of ETP and the Global Tea Coalition working groups on economics and equality. We have established strong partnerships to address the safety of women and gender-based violence in the Indian tea sector, advance worker's rights in global supply chains through our MoU with IUF and worked with industry and producers to improve wages in Malawi tea industry through Malawi 2020. For more information on these initiatives and others please see:

- <https://www.tescopl.com/blog/protecting-workers-rights-in-global-food-supply-chains>
- <http://www.tescopl.com/sustainability/tea/>
- <https://www.tescopl.com/sustainability/documents/policies/our-approach-to-human-rights/>

I hope this reassures you that we are engaging closely with NGOs, our suppliers and the wider industry to drive improvements in tea supply chains.

Kind regards

**Sophia Cochrane**

**Head of Human Rights – Food & Procurement**