



16 November 2023

Thank you for your email of 7 November 2023 highlighting the recent House of Lords' Horticultural Sector Committee report, to which M&S also submitted written evidence. You have asked us to respond to specific evidence given by a researcher from the Open University to the Committee regarding the link between supermarkets' purchasing practices and worker pay and conditions.

At M&S, responsible sourcing is core to the way we do business and we do not tolerate any human rights abuses anywhere in our supply chain. Our [Global Sourcing Principles](#) represent a contractual obligation and set out our expectations of how we and our supplier partners conduct business to uphold human rights along with labour, environmental, ethical and legal requirements in suppliers' own operations and supply chains. They also set out M&S's commitments and responsibilities towards our suppliers, committing to keep our buying practices under review and ensure that our behaviour supports supplier partners in complying with our Principles (p.3).

Our Human Rights Standard for Foods applies our Global Sourcing Principles within the M&S Food supply chain and clearly communicates to all suppliers our programme of work together. It is built on six pillars: (1) driving standards each and every day (2) human rights due diligence (3) access to remedy (4) building capabilities (5) working in partnership to tackle endemic issues and (6) responsible purchasing practices.

Our supplier partnerships are built on open and transparent discussion, with a shared culture of continuous improvement. They are also built on longevity, through long-term relationships with suppliers and growers. We have worked collaboratively with our supplier partners, across all food categories including horticulture, through the recent inflationary market challenges. M&S places high importance on the findings of the [Groceries Code Adjudicator Annual Survey](#) and our suppliers' feedback. In the 2023 survey, M&S was ranked first among the 14 retailers in scope, with our score increasing to a record high of 99% (up from 97% in 2022).

The House of Lords report addresses challenges of seasonal work in the horticultural sector (Chapter 3) and makes recommendations including for Government and the GLAA. Recognising that the challenges are complex and cannot be addressed by one part of the value chain alone, in addition to our longstanding sponsorship of Stronger Together, the Modern Slavery Helpline and the Just Good Work app in the UK, M&S has been involved in the creation of the Seasonal Worker Scheme Taskforce, established in March 2023. The Taskforce's mission is to 'work

collaboratively to develop and implement tangible actions to help safeguard and ensure access to workers' rights in the UK Seasonal Worker Scheme (SWS) and wider UK horticulture. The Taskforce set out to do this in two key ways:

- By developing practical actions that can be implemented within current Scheme design to improve the responsible recruitment and employment of seasonal workers; and,
- By engaging relevant Government departments on potential changes to Scheme rules, regulation, oversight and enforcement to address structural issues within the Seasonal Worker visa which may exacerbate worker exploitation risks and undermine efforts to safeguard workers' rights

The Taskforce is currently made up of over 50 organisations including retailers, growers, Scheme Operators, trade and membership associations and non-profits, who actively contribute to and support the various working groups and activities. Taskforce activities are co-ordinated by Stronger Together, as Secretariat, and governed by a multi-stakeholder Governance Committee on which M&S participates as a retailer representative.

More information on the work of the Taskforce can be found [here](#).