

Public consultation on the FAO-OECD Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains: Comments received

Consultation background

The OECD held an online consultation in early 2015 to gather comments on a guidance being developed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the OECD to help enterprises undertake risk-based due diligence to observe standards of responsible business conduct along agricultural supply chains and ensure that their operations can contribute to economic development and food security.

Government, business and civil society representatives, international organisations, and the general public were invited to contribute comments on during the consultation which ended on 20 February 2015.

Contributors

Business: BIAC, BRF, Dean Foods, Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock of Brazil, Datalab

Civil society: World Wide Fund for Nature, Oxfam UK, Fair Trade Advocacy Office, Traidcraft, French Fair Trade Platform, Progressio UK, Italian trade union of fisheries, International Federation Women's Legal Career, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation, SAVE Foundation

International organisations: UNICEF, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

OECD countries: Germany, independent members of the Dutch NCP

Comments

Below is a description of the major comments that the OECD received during the public consultation.

Content of the guidance

The guidance should put more emphasis on gender. References to free, prior and informed consent should be added and align with the language used in the other OECD sectoral guides on responsible business conduct that are under development. The guidance should include further references to climate change, land use change and deforestation and to the Children's Rights and Business Principles. The guidance could expand on anti-competitive and unfair trading practices. It may be enriched by highlighting industry-led best practices and by listing relevant private or multi-stakeholder standards even if those are not considered in the guidance. The inclusion of animal welfare, including references to the five freedoms and the one health concept, was particularly welcome.

The definition of environmental impact assessments versus risk assessments should be clarified and a business case for undertaking these assessments provided. The guidance could underline the need for using existing environmental assessment tools such as high conservation value assessments and the high carbon stock approach. It should nuance the language used in the model enterprise policy on the ability of enterprises to influence their business partners. The guidance should highlight that enterprises should support the development policy goals and strategies of the host country. The centrality of smallholder farmers should be emphasised. Clearer arguments on the benefits of responsible agricultural supply chains should be developed.

Structure of the guidance

The model enterprise policy may be placed either before or after the five-step framework for risk-based due diligence. The guidance should be made more user-friendly, including by making it available on an interactive website. It would benefit from including more figures, tables and boxes.