

PRESS RELEASE

NEED FOR MORE STAKEHOLDER EXCHANGE TO CREATE MORE SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS

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What and how we buy in supermarkets has enormous impacts on the environment and workers' lives in developing countries, where much of our food is produced. As a result, the sustainability impacts of supermarket products are increasingly being scrutinized by various stakeholders worldwide, such as civil society organizations campaigning for human and workers' rights. Consumers are also gradually becoming more aware and demanding of the social, environmental as well as economic effects related to the way these products are produced and consumed.

In this context, retailers reveal a transformative power in achieving sustainability throughout food supply chains. Particularly, targeting store brands represents an important focal point, given that these are brands where information is least accessible, but where retailers have the greatest control and responsibility. The European Union funded project SUPPLY CHA!NGE aims to advance the environmental, social and economic conditions in developing countries by improving the sustainability of production and consumption patterns of European supermarket store brands.

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The report "SUPPLY CHA!NGE in European Food Chains –Business Forum Report", recently published by the Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP), shows that more collaboration between different stakeholders within and outside of supply chains is needed to overcome major challenges in producing countries. The report is based on the outcomes of the Business Forum 'SUPPLY CHA!NGE in European Food Chains' held on October 23rd and 24th, 2015 at the HOST exhibition in Milan, an official partner of the EXPO. Louise Luttkholt of Helvetas Intercooperation summarized the overall conclusion well by saying: "Supply chains are a common responsibility. Making them more sustainable means investing in common efforts to undertake feasible actions at a multi-stakeholder level."

The Business Forum and the report are a starting point for further engagement. Another key output of the SUPPLY CHA!NGE project will be a transparency platform that aims to make information regarding the sustainability impacts of store brand food products, social and environmental certification and labelling schemes, as well as major European retailers accessible to consumers and other stakeholders. One key objective of this database will be to provide consumers with relevant information so as to be able to improve their own choices and sustainability impacts resulting from consumption by allowing them to compare store brand products and their respective supply chains, labels and retailers. It will also serve as a strategic opportunity for retailers to access information pertaining to their competitors and therefore improve their own social and environmental performance. Further actions to be taken on behalf of the SUPPLY CHA!NGE project will also include capacity building, European and national retailer roundtables, and multi-stakeholder scenario workshops targeted at making store brand supply chains more fair and sustainable. As such, the SUPPLY CHA!NGE project invites key stakeholders, including retailers, suppliers, consumers and policy makers, to engage in future project activities and become part of this vital transformation. More information on the SUPPLY CHA!NGE project and the Business Forum event can be found on the following website: <http://supplychainge.org/the-business-forum/>.