

# Fair Enough?

What difference has ‘Make Fruit Fair!’ made to the tropical fruit supply chain to European markets?

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Final Evaluation Report of the Make Fruit Fair! Project

## Executive Summary

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

This is the Final Evaluation of the 'Make Fruit Fair!' project (MFF) which ran from March 2015 to February 2018 with a budget of nearly €6 million, of which €5 million was funding from the European Commission. The project Consortium involved fifteen Partner organisations in the EU, four Partner organisations in the Global South<sup>1</sup> and eight Sub-grantee organisations in the EU. It was led by Oxfam Deutschland. The project's desired impact was that "Corporate actors in the tropical fruit sector adopt fair policies and practices in relation to small farmers and workers in the tropical fruit supply chain and respect the environment"<sup>2</sup>. The project was implemented through a wide range of integrated activities, arranged into five areas of work or "Results", namely; Capacity Building, Media, Campaign, Advocacy and Networking.

Trade in tropical fruit is very big business. Annual exports of bananas alone are worth more than \$12 billion and the EU represents one of the most important markets, not only for bananas but also for pineapples, melons and other tropical fruit. Bananas in particular are one of the key loss-leader products which supermarkets use to attract consumers and are being sold at unrealistically low prices. The average price of bananas in Europe is 25% lower than that of apples despite the fact that apples are grown locally and bananas have to be transported great distances, largely from Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Supermarkets have increasingly become the key players in the tropical fruit sector and power is now concentrated in the hands of a small number of large retailers as well as some of the fruit companies.

The consequence is that most plantation workers and small farmers in producer countries suffer from very poor working conditions and receive a disproportionately small amount of the product's value, while the large corporate players continue to squeeze workers and pay scant attention to the environment. Workers have to work very long hours for very low pay, their employment rights (such as freedom of association, gender equality, social security etc) are often ignored and they are not given protection from the dangerous pesticides to which they are exposed. So the problems are numerous and serious and the vested interests in the tropical fruit industry are powerful and command substantial resources. In other words MFF set itself an extremely difficult challenge. This challenge has not been made any easier by the recent, general trend towards nationalism, populism and an inward-looking focus (due to factors such as the 2008 economic crisis and the so-called 'refugee crisis') which is not conducive to campaigning on global issues and the rights of workers in other parts of the world.

Despite this challenging environment, MFF has clearly been very relevant in various ways to a range of stakeholders. It has been relevant to a number of policy frameworks, such as the EU's Decent Life for All framework and the EC's 2013 Green Paper on Unfair Trading Practices and the subsequent communications and processes leading towards possible legislation. For the Southern Partners, MFF has been directly relevant to their ongoing work to represent and support workers and small-holders in the tropical fruit sector and for EU Partners and Sub-grantees the MFF topics are either ones on which they were already working or which form a natural extension of their ongoing work. MFF has given all Consortium members a range of opportunities to pursue their organisational goals and to build their capacity. For the end beneficiaries, small farmers, workers and trade unions in the tropical fruit sector there could hardly be more relevant objectives than those of MFF, designed, as they were, to improve their lives. The objectives of raising awareness, educating consumers and increasing the volume of fairly traded fruit in the EU and the accompanying MFF activities designed to deliver them have also been relevant for a range of other stakeholders, from retailers and consumers to policy-makers and media.

This evaluation has been based on a large amount of data and evidence gathered through a range of means. Quantitative data has been gathered by Consortium members using spreadsheet tools including a 'living logframe' and media,

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<sup>1</sup> Partners from the Global South (formerly described as developing countries) are referred to as Southern Partners in this report.

<sup>2</sup> This wording is slightly amended from the original logframe (indicator 4.3) and was developed by DP Evaluation and Oxfam Deutschland as part of an effort to make all outcomes explicit, as shared with Partners and Sub-grantees in Vienna in October 2016.

campaign and policy & advocacy trackers and spot-checked by DP Evaluation for accuracy. We have reviewed a large number of project management documents and have carried out a very extensive review of project materials. We have also been able to attend several Partner meetings and to observe project activities and project management communications. Further qualitative data was gathered through detailed questionnaires, based on an outcome-harvesting approach, which were completed by all EU Partners and six of the eight Sub-grantees. We also carried out 39 interviews with a range of Southern Partners, EU Partners, Sub-grantees, trade unions, researchers, NGOs/CSOs, corporates and journalists. Consortium members submitted further information during an extended evaluation session at the final Partner meeting in Krakow. As a result of this comprehensive and mixed range of resources we are confident that our findings are reliable.

## **Project Management**

MFF was not an easy project to manage. The topic being addressed is complex, with many players and factors and the project involved a large number of activities across multiple locations, requiring a wide range of skills. The Consortium was large, with 27 members along with other associates spread over more than 25 countries and with some Partners not speaking English there was a need to operate in multiple languages. In addition to this there was huge variation in contexts across the Consortium, both in terms of organisations (size, resources, experience and expertise etc), and in the national contexts (socio-economic, geo-political, voluntary sector, retail, media and public opinion, etc). Linguistic and cultural differences between EU members of the Consortium and Southern Partners in particular added an additional element to the management challenge. As Lead Partner Oxfam Deutschland rose to this challenge extremely well, not only in our opinion but as unanimously expressed by other Consortium members:

*“Project management, coordination, finance, reporting and communication have been great. We believe Oxfam Deutschland as lead is doing a great job – leading but leaving a lot of freedom to adapt/alter the design of materials and activities so that they match national contexts better.” – Anna Trzaska, BRF (EU Partner), Poland*

Oxfam invested sufficient time and resources in planning and coordination and in systems and processes to support communications, monitoring and reporting and did a great job of keeping the Consortium on track in terms of implementation and of sharing materials and information. This was however only possible with a very considerable commitment of time and energy by the Project Manager and other key staff and because Oxfam was able to draw on its own internal resources (in terms of expertise and support from other functions such as finance, advocacy, campaigns, media etc) well beyond what was envisaged in the project application.

Oxfam’s investment and commitment, both personal and organisational were mirrored among the other Partners and Sub-grantees and in our view, given the complexity of the project and the disparate nature of its members the MFF Consortium functioned astonishingly well. Partner meetings were well attended and very productive with key decisions being reached and Sub-grantees were well integrated into both the overall strategy and the implementation of activities. The Consortium was particularly good at enabling the transfer of skills and knowledge and the sharing of outputs, with many materials and events being developed by one Partner or Sub-grantee and then adapted by others for use in their context. Despite cultural differences and practical issues (such as language and time differences) Southern Partners were fully involved in the project. All EU Consortium members agreed that the Southern Partners made a crucial contribution to the success of the project and the Southern Partners all reported that MFF has been a valuable experience for them and has furthered the work that they do. A concrete testament to the very positive Consortium relations is the fact that a great many new relationships and alliances have been created and look set to continue into the future.

The collection of monitoring data has been good and Consortium members have been very open to the evaluation process. Oxfam Deutschland reports that MFF reporting, both narrative and financial has been completed, fully and on time and the project funding has been fully spent and accounted for.

## Project Outputs

A very noticeable characteristic of MFF was its sheer scale; there were over 50 different types of project activity and the online file storage system and the monitoring tracker tools contain nearly 20,000 items between them – this is a huge output. Furthermore, all the targets at the level of Results have been met or surpassed, in some cases by a large margin and at the level of Activities nearly all targets have also been achieved. For instance, MFF reached a total combined media audience of 458,129,250<sup>3</sup>. Campaign actions were taken by 5,610,628 EU citizens, of whom 485,823 took high level actions. MFF engaged in discussions with 488 corporate actors and 581 political decision-makers. These are all well above the targets and are very impressive numbers.

It was also noticeable that the quality of these outputs was very high. The strategic thinking was strong and it was clear that there was a coherent rationale underlying and coordinating the different areas of activity so that they complemented each other and supported the overall desired impact. The strategy of focussing the campaign primarily on one supermarket, Lidl, worked extremely well and achieved more impact on the retailer's policy and practice than would have been the case had all supermarkets been simultaneously pursued. Materials, from research and case studies to media briefings, from training, campaigning and advocacy materials to websites and films were all excellent and were roundly praised by Consortium members and external stakeholders such as other NGOs, trade unions and journalists. Similarly, although we could only witness a few examples at first hand, we know from reports, photos and interviews that events such as conferences, awareness-raising activities, media trips, speaker tours and lobbying activities were also very well executed. The following three examples serve to illustrate the high standard that was achieved.

Firstly, one of the numerous case studies and research pieces carried out by MFF to provide a basis of facts and examples for the media, campaigning and advocacy work was the "Sweet Fruit, Bitter Truth"<sup>4</sup> report published by Oxfam Deutschland in 2016, which had a significant impact in numerous ways. The research in Costa Rica and Ecuador was carried out by academic researchers and Oxfam staff based on surveys, questionnaires and interviews with workers and a wide range of experts. The report revealed multiple violations of rights and poor working conditions on plantations supplying Lidl and led to significant increases in media coverage in a number of EU MFF countries and prompted a range of responses from Lidl including meetings with MFF in Ecuador, Costa Rica, Germany and France. Ultimately this led to improvements on the plantations such as less use of sub-contracting, the payment of social security and the provision of protective clothing.

Secondly, as a basis for early capacity building work with EU NGOs and CSOs, German Partner Finep produced a high quality set of training materials and delivered four international training events in early 2016 on the MFF campaign for Partners, prospective Sub-grantees and other organisations, all of which were very positively rated by participants. In addition, a very good, comprehensive guide to campaigning (based on the experience of the first half of MFF) was developed and published later in 2016, which was translated into four other languages by Partners:

*"I appreciate the fact that Finep and MFF partners prepared very informative and interactive materials and activities. The training in Budapest was really well done." – Petra Ježeková, Zivica (Sub-grantee), Slovakia*

Thirdly, MFF produced a wealth of information for the media in the form of media briefings, press conferences and invitations to speaker tours and made available a wide range of interviewees. A number of media trips were also organised, giving journalists the opportunity to visit producer countries, see the conditions for themselves and interview workers, trade unions and relevant experts. One such media trip, to Haiti and the Dominican Republic was organised in March 2017:

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<sup>3</sup> The media audience reached is based on the potential maximum audiences for all items of media coverage all added together and does not take account of the fact that some people may have had multiple opportunities to see different items

<sup>4</sup> Sweet Fruit, Bitter Truth", Oxfam Deutschland, May 2016 [Available here](#)

*“I had a very positive impression of this media trip, designed specifically for the six journalists ... to get a good overview of the situation. The media briefing material was good and the trip was very well organised. [...] But meeting the workers and seeing the plantations was the most interesting and useful part. What I witnessed is an empowerment process being facilitated and strengthened by MFF.” – Stefano Liberti (external), journalist, Italy*

## **Key Achievements**

The excellent project management and the large volume and high quality of project outputs described above are all considerable achievements in their own right. However, MFF should rightly be judged on the impact it has in terms of improving working conditions in the tropical fruit sector. Many DEAR<sup>5</sup> projects find it difficult or impossible to establish direct links between their interventions and changes in the world and if they are able to do this at all, it is often years after the end of the project – this is the nature of the beast. So, the fact that MFF can already, at project end, show clearly attributable outcomes across all Results constitutes a very notable success, which is further reinforced by strong indications that other outcomes will follow, for example in terms of EU legislation and the likely future strength of alliances created through MFF. The concrete outcomes to date, such as stronger NGO/CSO capacity and networks, raised awareness among media, public, policy-makers and corporates, increased engagement of several retailers and some changes in their practice and policy (particularly by Lidl), influence on EU and national policy and improvements on some fruit plantations are all really significant – although there is still much to do, the MFF Consortium should be very proud of what it has achieved.

## Capacity Building

The immediate and interim intended outcomes related to Capacity Building were all achieved. Far more multipliers were trained than envisaged (853 against a target of 150) and a total of 453 CSOs across the EU took part in training and/or have used MFF materials, participated in events or otherwise supported the campaign. The longer term intended outcomes were that the capacity of EU Partners, Sub-grantees, EU Civil Society and of Southern Partners and & other workers’ organisations in the supply chain should be strengthened and we are confident that all of these have been achieved.

EU Partners and Sub-grantees have told us that they have learned new knowledge (particularly on the tropical fruit sector) and new skills (particularly on campaigning and advocacy) and that they have developed numerous important contacts (with other Consortium members, with other NGOs, with Southern Partners and with journalists and policy-makers). This capacity strengthening has happened in all directions, but particularly from the more experienced to the less experienced organisations. It has been delivered firstly, through the formal training events and materials, secondly, through expert advice from one Consortium member to another (for example from FTAO on advocacy, from BananaLink and BanaFair on tropical fruit and from Southern Partners on the realities of the industry in producer countries), thirdly, through the creation and sharing of high quality materials and fourthly, through simply being involved, or learning by doing:

*“I believe all Partners and Sub-grantees have benefitted from the experience. We have all learned a lot from each other and have been able to take out what is useful to us. It has been hard to build in the necessary flexibility to enable this as it makes things more complicated, but I think it is very important.” – Mirjam Hägele, MFF Project Manager, Oxfam Deutschland (Lead Partner), Germany*

The capacity of EU civil society in general has been enhanced through the involvement of over 450 CSOs in the campaign, supported through an extensive series of national training events delivered by Partners, and high quality campaigning and advocacy materials and comprehensive information on the tropical fruit sector. In addition to this EU Consortium members have been able to create new alliances through MFF. This brought other organisations into the project and importantly has also created new relationships which can continue into the future, for example Oxfam Deutschland

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<sup>5</sup> DEAR = Development Education and Awareness Raising

working with Greenpeace, AAF-PSO collaborating with the 'Plateforme Française pour le Commerce Equitable' and Südwind cooperating with 'Weltumspannend arbeiten' the development policy association of the Austrian Trade Union Federation ÖGB. There are many other instances of such alliances.

Southern Partners have all reported that they have benefitted in numerous ways from their involvement in MFF. This involvement consisted of activities such as participating in EUROBAN<sup>6</sup> and WBF<sup>7</sup> meetings, MFF Partner meetings and speaker tours to many EU countries, hosting EU Partners, Sub-grantees and journalists on visits to producer countries, carrying out research, making introductions and contributing key information for Urgent Actions, campaigning and advocacy work. Capacity has been strengthened through participation itself, developing relationships and a sense of solidarity with European organisations, networks and consumers and gaining specific skills and knowledge, for example in campaigning and understanding European institutions better. This has helped Southern Partners to raise awareness in their own countries, among the media and some politicians, to engage better with some corporates and certification bodies and to enhance their status in the eyes of the workers they represent:

*"Our struggle against all the violations of labour rights caused by the fruit companies' pursuit of profits has been going on for a very long time. Make Fruit Fair has given new impetus to our efforts by raising the awareness of consumers, media and politicians in Europe and of the media and the authorities in Ecuador. Being involved in MFF has helped us to strengthen our capacity in areas such as public actions, social media campaigns and working with the media. The new relationships we have developed have widened the scope of our work – we have new allies in our pursuit of social justice." – Jorge Acosta, ASTAC (Southern Partner), Ecuador*

An excellent example of increased capacity came in the shape of the International Workers Forum in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in October 2017. ASTAC<sup>8</sup>, inspired by their involvement in three MFF visits to Europe, decided to raise their profile by organising this event and, with MFF support, were able to attract 150 banana workers, six EU Partners and other organisations and policy makers from the EU and further afield. Crucially, the Ecuadorian Ministries of Labour, Trade and Agriculture also attended and the Forum not only issued a resolution to these Ministries but laid the groundwork for a dialogue with policy-makers and AGROBAN, an industry body representing banana exporters and producers. The event generated a great deal of media coverage in Ecuador and led to ASTAC being consulted by the WBF.

*"It is really important for us that all those organisations from Europe and from other producer countries, such as Colombia, Peru and the Philippines, attended the forum. This international presence gives us more weight; media, governments and companies take our activities much more seriously." – Efrén Vélez, Chairman, ASTAC, Ecuador*

## Media

MFF significantly surpassed the targets included in its immediate intended media outcomes, reaching a total potential audience of 458 million (target: 20 million), of whom 357 million (target: 8 million) were in 'media segment 1a' (defined as major articles in media with high potential for policy impact). MFF also reached 7,924 journalists (target: 6,000).

The project was very proactive, creating and sharing a wealth of high quality, media-friendly materials which Partners and Sub-grantees could adapt to their national contexts. These materials included the more usual media briefings and press releases but also a range of more innovative and appealing material. Reports and case studies helped to establish MFF as an authoritative source of information, while media trips to producer countries and speaker tours to Europe by Southern Partners and associates, and in some cases plantation workers, enabled journalists to either see for themselves or to hear direct from people on the ground. These generated a lot of coverage, as did photographic and video material, the use of a celebrity spokesperson in Germany and a range of eye-catching campaigning activities, such as 'undercover' actions in

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<sup>6</sup> EUROBAN: European Banana and Agro Industrial Product Action Network

<sup>7</sup> WBF: World Banana Forum: <http://www.fao.org/world-banana-forum/en/>

<sup>8</sup> ASTAC: Ecuadorian banana workers trade union

supermarkets and the use of banana costumes and the banana smoothie bicycle. The result of all this work, along with some more in-depth collaboration with television programme-makers (for example in Germany and the Czech Republic), was an extensive array of coverage across all media.

The interim intended outcome was that MFF should attract “differentiated or 'sophisticated' reporting in influential European media” and there are numerous examples of this, such as a long article in the trade union magazine *ver.di Publik* in July 2017, based on an interview with Jorge Acosta of ASTAC, with a potential audience of over nine million readers, various articles in serious broadsheet newspapers and a lengthy discussion with TV chef (and MFF spokesperson) Ole Plogstedt on prime time German television.

The longer term intended outcome was that the “awareness of EU public is raised sufficiently to put pressure on political and corporate decision makers to take action”. Although it is impossible to prove, it is nevertheless reasonable to infer that with so much, high quality coverage, awareness has been raised and the fact that so many people participated in campaigning activities adds strength to this claim. This level of sophisticated coverage will almost certainly have had some influence on EU policy-makers in their deliberations on Unfair Trading Practices and there is good evidence to show that Lidl and other retailers were not only aware of coverage but in some cases felt the need to respond to it. Finally, there is also strong anecdotal evidence that MFF’s work in producer countries, particularly the research results in Costa Rica and the Workers Forum in Ecuador, generated a lot of media attention in those countries which influenced corporates and policy-makers.

### Campaign

As with the media work, MFF has easily achieved the targets included in the immediate and interim intended outcomes for its campaign work. Over 19 million people (target 2.35 million) have been exposed to the campaign, over 5 million (target 500,000) have taken ‘low level actions’ (such as visiting the website, showing support via social media etc) and nearly 500,000 people (target 150,000) have taken ‘high level actions’ (such as taking part in public actions, supporting Urgent Actions or signing petitions).

There were three main areas of focus for the campaign, firstly the overarching goal of raising awareness and obtaining support to bring about improvements in the tropical fruit sector, secondly the targeting of Lidl to change their policy and practice and thirdly a smaller campaign in New Member States to encourage supermarkets to increase the range and volume of fair trade products. There was also some campaigning on other areas, for example targeting other specific supermarkets such as Aldi and Tesco.

The MFF approach was to produce high quality campaign materials which Consortium members were able to adapt to their national contexts and to use in a very large number of events and activities. Materials have included case studies and newsletters, websites, film clips, exhibitions and a mass of social media activity and the events have included speaker tours, public actions, gathering petition signatures, organising/contributing to seminars and exhibitions and organising a series of ‘urgent actions’. There were a number of eye-catching activities to encourage people to sign the petitions, such as the use of a bicycle to generate electricity to make a banana smoothie as well as many calls to action via email and social media. The petitions on Unfair Trading Practices, on the conditions at Lidl supplier plantations and to encourage more fair trade products in New Member States were signed by 61,000+, 76,000+ and 5,500+ respectively.

A dozen urgent actions were organised. These ranged from letters expressing solidarity with plantation workers and calling on corporate actors or policy makers to behave responsibly, signed either by organisations or by members of the public, to mini-campaigns such as the one directed at Fyffes calling for a change in policy and practice concerning various labour rights which the company had been violating in Costa Rica and Honduras. This involved a range of campaigning actions, including letter-writing and demonstrations and was well supported by members of the public. The final outcome of this urgent action is not yet known but it achieved the significant interim outcome of having Fyffes suspended from the Ethical Trading Initiative.

MFF decided to focus the bulk of its campaigning work on the discount supermarket Lidl in order to increase the likely impact (as opposed to targeting all supermarkets) partly because it is one of the largest European supermarkets and because it has a poor record in terms of plantation working conditions and was thought to be sensitive to criticism. The campaign was implemented in nearly all of the MFF EU countries and comprised a large number of different, complementary approaches including:

- publication of research into working conditions on plantations supplying Lidl
- many public campaigning activities in many EU countries, such as a ‘telephone hotline action’ in Germany where celebrity chef Ole Plogstedt encouraged the public to ask Lidl about plantation conditions, ‘undercover action’ in Poland where supporters attached labels to bananas in Lidl stores giving information on working conditions and the use of pesticides, protests and petition signing in front of Lidl stores in many countries
- several meetings with Lidl management in Europe and Latin America, (to hand over demands and petition signatures, to discuss research findings and the use of the Rainforest Alliance label) which can also be seen as important outcomes
- the generation of a great deal of media coverage to support the public campaigning and the exertion of further pressure through advocacy work, such as German MPs writing to Lidl to remind them of their social and environmental responsibilities

This multi-pronged campaign garnered very considerable public support:

*“New successful types of action included the Telephone Hotline Action, the Undercover Action in Lidl shops and the European Day of Action. As ‘calls to action’ these were very different to signing a petition or sharing a video.” – Christin Becker, Oxfam Deutschland (Lead Partner), Germany*

More importantly the campaign was successful. There is multiple evidence that Lidl felt under significant pressure and that this prompted a range of responses, including meetings, changes in policy and practice and increased engagement with suppliers, certifiers, workers, trade unions and NGOs. More specifically the key outcomes included:

- some concrete improvements on the ground at the Finca Once and Matías plantations in Costa Rica and Ecuador, relating to the use of sub-contracted workers, re-entry times to the fields after pesticide spraying and the provision of protective clothing
- the Governments of Ecuador and Costa Rica starting to investigate banana and pineapple plantations and the highly toxic pesticide Bromacil being banned in Costa Rica
- Lidl’s improved engagement with Rainforest Alliance in Costa Rica and Ecuador leading to Rainforest Alliance increasing its engagement with some trade unions and reviewing its audit process
- Lidl joining the World Banana Forum in 2017 (prompting Aldi to do likewise), given that this is the major multi-stakeholder sector forum for raising and discussing issues related to the tropical fruit industry
- Lidl introducing Fairtrade bananas as a temporary offer for the first time ever in Poland

Perhaps, over and above these nonetheless impressive achievements, the most important outcome in regard to Lidl is that MFF has shown that it is possible to get a major corporate player to shift its position. This has potentially transformative symbolic and motivational significance.

In the third year of the project six Consortium members from New Member States ran a separate campaign aimed at national and international supermarkets in their countries, calling for a greater volume and wider range of fair trade products to be offered, since lack of availability had been identified as a barrier for consumers. A range of actions, including letter writing, a petition and direct advocacy measures targeting the supermarkets elicited positive responses



from several national and international chains. Some only expressed interest or a willingness to communicate but others, such as Co-op and Spar asked for more information about potential suppliers and shared their own fair trade plans. MFF believes the campaign contributed to a broadening of the fair trade offering in Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The longer term desired outcome for the campaigning work was that “Significant numbers of people take action such that pressure is put on political and corporate decision-makers to take action” and although it not possible to attribute changes with absolute certainty to MFF, we believe that the moves made by Lidl and some other supermarkets and also by policy-makers (see below) and the way that they have engaged with MFF suggests that this outcome was clearly achieved.

### Advocacy

There were two areas of advocacy work, the first aimed at corporates and the second at policy-makers. MFF far outstripped the targets for the immediate and interim corporate outcomes, having contacted 706 corporate actors (target 200) and meaningfully engaged with 488 (target 124). The longer term desired outcome, that “Corporate actors in the tropical fruit sector adopt fair policies and practices in relation to small farmers and workers in the tropical fruit supply chain and respect the environment” was never going to be achieved by one project in the space of three years although it was reasonable that MFF aspired to take on the large and powerful private sector interests in order to create acceptable living and working conditions for workers. And there is convincing evidence that despite the size of the task MFF has made progress.

There was successful corporate advocacy work in a number of countries, targeting different supermarkets, such as the work in New Member States described above along with other examples such as GVC’s collaboration with Co-op in Italy to raise the awareness of both consumers and the supermarket’s own staff on issues in the tropical fruit supply chain. There is also evidence that MFF Partners have engaged constructively with other corporate actors, for example in industry working groups and at the WBF. There is more and better dialogue than there was before and in some cases it is possible to point to additional positive outcomes, such as an increase in the sale of fair trade products or planned changes in certifiers’ procedures.

The main thrust of MFF’s corporate advocacy was targeted at Lidl in conjunction with the popular campaigning. A great deal of work was undertaken, including detailed research and much correspondence with the company, which led to meetings with Lidl at their HQ in Germany and also in Costa Rica as well as with its suppliers in Costa Rica and Ecuador. This work, combined with media coverage and the campaigning led to numerous outcomes, including improvements at two large plantations (in relation to wages, sub-contractors and protection from pesticides), increased engagement with the trade unions and certifiers and other moves such as Lidl joining the WBF.

*“MFF has been really great – the impact and significance in Costa Rica has been considerable; it has led to some actual improvements in conditions but beyond this it has been hugely important from a symbolic point of view - it has brought the issues to life again, raised the profile [in Costa Rica], got a lot of people talking, particularly due to the international dimension and the idea that consumers in the EU care about working conditions on plantations in Costa Rica - so it is a huge shame that MFF is coming to an end.” – Eva Carazo, Research Coordinator, Universidad Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica*

In addition to this there have been other positive outcomes such as the banning of Bromacil in Costa Rica. MFF also identified certification as a significant problem and identified the Rainforest Alliance label as particularly weak, allowing retailers to present apparently strong ethical standards while not being forced to ensure that working conditions were actually monitored or improved. There has been considerable contact between MFF and Rainforest Alliance and initial signs were promising, including more dialogue with trade unions and a revision of standards and procedures. However, the MFF Consortium was disappointed that these encouraging signs had not yet led to a consistent raising of standards on

certified plantations by the end of the project and therefore, just as MFF concluded, a final Urgent Action targeting Rainforest Alliance was planned.

On the political side, the immediate and interim outcome targets have been largely met. MFF has contacted 2,885 political decision-makers (target 972) and has had meaningful engagement with 581 (target 243). Discussions have taken place in the European Parliament and related institutions and in national political bodies in three countries (target five). One of the longer term desired outcomes, “Political decision-makers introduce policies to improve treatment of small farmers & workers in tropical fruit supply chain, at EU and/or national MS level” has effectively been achieved, given that in April 2018 the EC officially launched a legislative process to agree on a Directive (EU framework legislation) on Unfair Trading Practices (UTPs). The second outcome, “at least 10 MS adopt National Action Plans by the end of year three regarding the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” was also achieved, although, because only three Partners (Oxfam, AAF-PSO and GVC) had the capacity to work on this area, MFF’s claim to have contributed to this must be seen as limited.

The political advocacy work was led by FTAO in Brussels, supported in particular by Oxfam Deutschland while other Consortium members supported the EU level advocacy by lobbying their own MEPs and some carried out their own national advocacy work. The work undertaken included tracking policy processes, carrying out research and creating briefing documents for MEPs, Committees and the EC, maintaining key contacts and lobbying as appropriate and organising a conference in the European Parliament and meetings with MEPs, including speakers from the Global South where possible. The main focus of the EU advocacy work was on legislation to address UTPs and at many stages during the project there were indications, in terms of language used and specific inclusions in EU reports and statements that showed that MFF lobbying was having an effect. The most significant of these are that the EC has now announced a process leading to legislation on Unfair Trading Practices (rather than a voluntary code) to bind companies and that this includes the fact that farmers and workers from outside the EU will also have access to the redress mechanisms. These are very important, concrete achievements where MFF has had clear, direct influence.

*“This is the outcome of more than five years of our advocacy work and would not have been possible without the Make Fruit Fair campaign.” – Peter Möhringer, FTAO (EU Partner), Brussels*

In addition to this, MFF advocacy has led to the possibility that NGOs and trade unions could have a watchdog role in the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Ecuador. The other focus was in the area of competition law and work is ongoing in terms of bringing evidence together from MFF Consortium members and other sources to influence the EU’s thinking. If specific sector agreements could be reached which would allow consumer prices to be raised by agreement (currently forbidden under competition law) in order to secure living wages for producers this could have a major beneficial impact for small farmers and workers in the tropical fruit and other sectors.

At the national level, several Partners did undertake advocacy work, most notably in Germany, France and Italy. Oxfam Deutschland invited MPs to meet Southern partners during the speaker tours in 2016 and successfully lobbied them to write to Lidl and Rainforest Alliance, contributing to behaviour changes by both. Oxfam also collaborated with other German civil society groups to ensure that a human rights due diligence duty was incorporated into the German National Action Plan on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (NAP on UNGPs). In France, AAF-PSO was able to influence the final formulation of national legislation on the duty of care of multi-national companies, adopted in March 2017 by providing examples of how to deal with the violation of workers’ rights in agricultural supply chains based directly on experience gained from MFF. In Italy, GVC joined with other CSOs to create a national network on Business and Human Rights and have started a dialogue with a working group of the Italian Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights, both of which will help to monitor the implementation of the Italian NAP on UNGPs.

## Networking

All of the interim outcomes in this area were achieved, with 21 Member States (target 20) having been represented at EUROBAN meetings, at least 10 EU MFF members (target 7.5) having participated in one or more EUROBAN meetings and at least 10 MFF Consortium members (target 9.5) having attended at least one WBF meeting.

The longer term outcomes of EUROBAN having a “sustainable structure supported by its members” and a “sustainable financial basis supported by its members” were not achieved by the end of the project although there were indications that many Consortium members valued EUROBAN and wanted it to continue. Planning was undertaken towards the end of MFF to maintain a discussion among key organisations, such as BananaLink who have previously provided the secretariat on a voluntary basis and Südwind who expressed an interest in perhaps taking over this role.

Nearly all the Consortium members attended at least one EUROBAN meeting and many attended several. Everyone found this forum to be extremely useful as a way to gain a better understanding of the issues facing workers, trade unions and NGOs from producer countries and to network with organisations from North and South. Consortium members also stated how useful it was to be able, through MFF, to take part in WBF meetings and/or the Conference in 2017 as this gave them access to an even wider range of stakeholders.

Beyond this it is important to note again that MFF Consortium members were unanimous in stating the value of the project in terms of facilitating networking within the Consortium itself and also in being a catalyst for the creation of many other national and international alliances, many of which are likely to continue and bear fruit beyond the project.

## Sustainability

We believe that the outcomes which are most likely to be sustained include; the strengthened capacity of all MFF Consortium members per se and also through their membership of new and strengthened alliances, improvements in some producer countries (such as raised awareness, the Cost Rican ban on Bromacil, better working conditions on some plantations), increased sales of fair trade tropical fruit in EU markets, corporate awareness of the need to improve policy and practice in this area and the EU legislation on UTPs.

Those outcomes which will be more difficult to sustain now that the project is over include; heightened public awareness in the EU, public and CSO engagement in campaigning activities, actual change in corporate behaviour - turning their awareness of the need to improve into real improvements on the ground.

It is unusual at the end of a three year DEAR project to be talking about clearly attributable outcomes having been achieved and the prospect of a good number of those being potentially sustainable and this achievement should not be underestimated. Many interviewees, both within and beyond the MFF Consortium registered their frustration at the fact that EU DEAR funding is limited to three years, saying that there would have been an exponential increase in impact and sustainability had funding been available for five years.

Consortium members have been discussing how to increase the sustainability of outcomes and to further the work. More than ten of the organisations have pledged to continue working together on the issues and several have promised to support the future of EUROBAN, while there is also a commitment to use the latter as a vehicle to further pursue MFF objectives and also to try and secure further funding.

## **Key Success Factors**

MFF has been a great success and we believe there are a few, clearly identifiable reasons for this, including:

- the wide scope of the project and the holistic approach, with all areas of activity complementing each other and bound together by a solid theory of change and careful planning – in other words, corporate advocacy would not

have worked without the campaigning and the campaign has needed the media coverage, which has been strengthened by the speaker tours and so on

- strong project management from the Lead Partner based on detailed planning and coordination and good systems for communication, document management, monitoring and evaluation and reporting
- a context-sensitive approach which has combined the central provision of strategy, plans and materials with flexibility for Consortium members to adapt and apply to their national contexts
- a commitment to collaboration among Consortium members allowing them to move beyond cultural differences between organisations and nationalities to really work productively together
- the critical mass of the Consortium which has given it the necessary clout to influence public, media, corporate and political audiences - this was based on being pan-European, with a range of organisations (including some which are very well-known) and the involvement of Southern Partners who bring first-hand knowledge and credibility
- the existence of the 'MFF 1' and 'Supermarkets: Time 4 Change!' project led by Traidcraft which both preceded MFF and which laid some very important groundwork

## **Key Learning**

### Efficiency and Project Management

- time to get to know each other, discuss content and strategy, refine plans and set up monitoring and evaluation at the start of a project like this before implementation begins is time well spent
- proper provision is needed for communication with organisations from the Global South (including face to face meetings and professional interpreters) and they may be better suited to a consultant role rather than being full Partners
- sub-granting schemes are time-consuming to manage, direct 'strategic' awards may be more efficient

### Capacity Building

- capacity strengthening happens in multiple directions and various ways, such as formal training, the sharing of materials, advice based on specialist expertise, and (most powerfully) learning by doing – it can be supported through genuine collaboration, face to face meetings, excellent communications and a file sharing facility
- organisational and sectoral capacity is enhanced by the creation or strengthening of alliances
- Southern Partners' capacity can be built through relationships with EU organisations, solidarity from EU organisations and public, awareness-raising in their home countries and enhanced profile in the eyes of their own members and political and corporate decision-makers as well as through learning new skills

### Media

- it is very effective to put people with direct experience on the ground and journalists in direct contact with each other through journalist trips or speaker tours
- it pays to be proactive and to be as media-friendly as possible: speaker tours, media trips, a celebrity spokesperson, media-friendly campaigning activities, provision of authoritative briefings, photos and videos

### Campaign

- Urgent Actions can mobilise support and can make a real difference on the ground but are very time-consuming to manage
- it is an effective strategy to target one representative of a sector rather than the whole sector

- campaigning against powerful targets is more likely to succeed when it is multi-pronged, combining awareness-raising and media work with corporate and political advocacy

### Advocacy

- a combination of campaigning, media work and advocacy can lead to changes in corporate policy and practice and to concrete improvements on the ground
- sustaining impact is extremely difficult and large corporate players have resources and staying power, so keeping up the pressure is vital, which is difficult when funding is limited to three years
- successful political advocacy requires expertise, planning and a sustained range of activities (e.g. research, tracking political processes, producing briefings, maintaining relationships) to demonstrate public and civil society support, creating the space in which politicians can move

### Networking and Sustainability

- networking and alliances are crucial factors in delivering large DEAR projects and in sustaining impact but are also very hard to find funding for - MFF recognises the importance of EUROBAN as the best forum for continuing collaboration but it is not certain that the necessary funding will be available
- longer funding periods (for example five years) would be likely to exponentially increase the return on investment

### EU Added Value

- EU funding at a scale to support larger pan-European Consortia is a key success factor for DEAR projects targeting powerful corporate or political targets

## **Key Recommendations**

### To funders:

- Size does matter with some projects – the critical mass of MFF enabled it to have the necessary clout to generate the level of media coverage and campaign support needed to influence corporates and politicians. Therefore, continue to fund large, pan-European consortia to deliver multi-pronged DEAR projects.
- Be aware that such projects entail a huge project management challenge and the lead partner must be properly funded to carry out this role.
- Build in a period of around three months immediately after the award of funding which Consortium members should dedicate to reviewing and refining objectives, indicators/targets and M&E processes and discussing and confirming strategy and delivery plans (and in the process getting to know each other better).
- You will get a significantly greater return on your investment if you fund such projects for a longer period, at least five years.

### To MFF Consortium Members:

- Take the time to review the lessons learned, using this evaluation and your own organisation's experience of MFF to inform your future planning and implementation of future projects (everyone says they "have learned so much" – this should be captured and applied within all the organisations).
- Maintain, if at all possible, the relationships with other MFF members, in particular the North-South relationships and also the alliances with other organisations beyond the Consortium which have been formed.
- Pursue the initiative to discuss further funding and collaboration and support the future existence of EUROBAN.

## Conclusion

The overall objective for MFF was that the project should, “contribute to more coherent and sustainable development policies of the EU, its Member States and the private sector, integrating human rights, decent work and trade, thereby ensuring better living and working conditions for small farmers and workers in the tropical fruit sector [and] contribute to establishing the post-MDG agenda aiming at providing a Decent Life for All by 2030.” MFF has definitely contributed to all of these outcomes although there, of course, remains work to be done.

The specific objective was that MFF should, “raise the awareness of 23 million consumers and citizens in at least 20 EU Member States on the interdependencies between the EU and developing countries exporting tropical fruits and mobilize 200,000 of them to take action and urge corporate and political decision makers to ensure fair conditions in the tropical fruit sector”. Again, the project clearly achieved and indeed surpassed these targets.

This report is entitled “Fair Enough? What difference has ‘Make Fruit Fair!’ made to the tropical fruit supply chain to European markets?” So, is the tropical fruit sector now fair enough? No, of course not – there are still many unfair practices to challenge but that was always going to be the case, given that no single three-year project could rectify all the violations of labour rights, human rights and the environment. Has MFF made a difference? Absolutely. We believe it has been remarkably successful and has achieved some very real impact across a range of target areas, with a decent chance that some of those impacts will be sustained – for this, all those involved should be congratulated.