

Superlist Social 2024

Which supermarkets take responsibility for human rights?

Belgium, edition 1

SUPER
LIST 

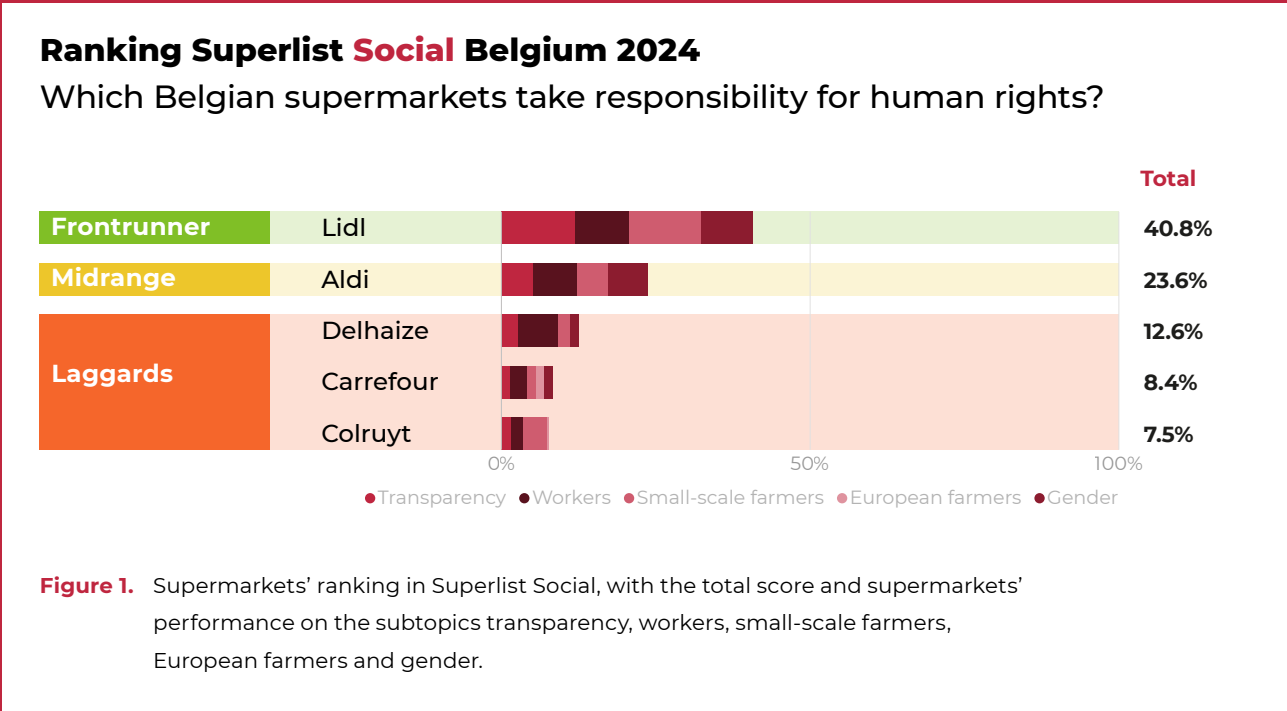
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SUMMARY

Belgian supermarkets take insufficient responsibility for human rights

Belgian supermarkets do not take significant actions and initiatives to tackle human rights violations in the supply chain. Lidl is ahead of other Belgian supermarkets, for example by conducting an annual risk analysis followed by several assessments in those food supply chains with a high risk on human rights violations. Besides, Lidl is most transparent about its suppliers throughout the supply chains and ensures access for workers and small-scale farmers to its grievance mechanism. Overall, none of the supermarkets take sufficient responsibility for human rights in its supply chains, while from 2027 onwards, the EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence will oblige supermarkets to detect, tackle and prevent human rights violations in their supply chains. Lidl leads the way in the Superlist Social rankings, followed by Aldi in the middle. Although Delhaize, Carrefour and Colruyt have some valuable projects and promising precursors for future policies, lack of current policy and reporting result in them being the laggards in this ranking.



SUMMARY

Transparency

Of all supermarkets, only Lidl annually conducts a risk analysis, which includes an inventory of all supply chains with a high risk of human rights violations (high-risk supply chains). Both Aldi and Lidl have committed to conduct three human rights impact assessments (HRIAs) in their specific high-risk supply chains each year. Lidl is the only one to annually publish an overview of their first-tier food suppliers.

Workers

All supermarkets make efforts to engage suppliers in improving working conditions and do not immediately drop suppliers when labour rights have been violated. Lidl is the only supermarket to have published a general action plan to remove barriers to freedom of association in high-risk supply chains. Aldi, Colruyt, Delhaize and Lidl are all committed to providing a living wage for banana workers throughout their international supply chains, though Lidl and Aldi are the only ones to report on their progress on this.

Small-scale farmers

Colruyt is the only supermarket to report on the gap between actual income and living income for cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire. The majority of the supermarkets show some examples of projects where they support small-scale farmers in high-risk supply chains to become resilient and prosperous. These initiatives are now often limited to only a few chains like cocoa and coffee, and are still to be applied in other chains, where such an approach is also urgently needed.

European farmers

Supermarkets do not make company wide commitments to support European farmers. None of the supermarkets make a commitment to ensure fair and long-term sourcing from European farmers. Carrefour does take action to provide long-term agreements and a right price for European farmers. Colruyt forms a partnership with cattle cooperatives in order to provide farmers with stability and financial security.

Gender

Except for Colruyt, all supermarkets have signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEPs). However, none of the supermarkets clearly demonstrate how they encourage their suppliers to sign the UNWEPs. Aldi and Lidl have published a gender policy that is applicable to all supply chains. Both have included the LGBTQIA+ community in their gender policies. Aldi and Lidl have also planned to take action to address gender-based violence in supply chains.

About Superlist Social

Superlist Social assesses what supermarkets are doing to effectively contribute to a fairer food system. Superlist is an initiative by think tank Questionmark. This edition was executed in collaboration with Rikolto and support from Oxfam België and Fairtrade Belgium.

Foreword



Charlotte Linnebank
Director Questionmark
Foundation

This first edition of Superlist Social in Belgium, following Superlist Environment, presents supermarkets' efforts to take responsibility for human rights in their supply chains.

In the Netherlands, Superlist Social concluded supermarkets are aware of human rights problems but measures to tackle these issues are lacking. However, in Belgium it is unclear if supermarkets are not transparent or actually do not have insight into the problems on human rights in the supply chains. Supermarkets can take first steps by annually analysing chains that are at high risk of human rights violations and making the necessary commitments to secure human rights.

This first edition gives a baseline measurement of supermarkets' current efforts. It will be interesting to evaluate if supermarkets implement adequate policy and measures following the introduction of the new Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive.

Word from the partners: Rikolto, Oxfam, Fairtrade



Thibault Geerardyn
Director Rikolto,
on behalf of Oxfam
Belgium and Fairtrade
Belgium

Businesses should respect human rights (Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, 2011). This responsibility requires them to not only avoid adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, but also to prevent and mitigate infringements that are directly linked to their operations. With the upcoming EU Directive on Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence, this moral responsibility also becomes a legal requirement.

Supermarkets are not only responsible to help safeguard human rights in their supply chains, they have proven to be an effective driver for positive change. Projects on specific commodities, such as living income for cocoa farmers or banana workers, demonstrate this potential impact. We also see promising precursors for integrated policies that put human rights due diligence at the core of their operations.

Nevertheless, supermarkets still have a lot of work to do in order to achieve assortment-wide policies that truly prevent and mitigate human rights infringements. By supporting this Superlist research, we aim to stimulate and inspire supermarkets to greatly increase and speed up their efforts for the rights of small-scale farmers and workers. For without them, supermarkets would not have a business to run.

Introduction

Society is increasingly aware of the importance of ethical and responsible business operations, such as the respect for human rights in the food supply chain as a whole. Human rights are still frequently violated in food production. Violations such as child labour, violence at the workplace, discrimination, and low wages and incomes are still not banned.

Supermarkets are responsible to comply with human rights

Supermarkets carry a responsibility to have a solid policy to make sure that human rights violations in the food supply chains are prevented and tackled. Since 2011, international guidelines from the United Nations (UNGPs) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) prescribe companies must set up a process to map and then prevent, tackle and remediate risks in human rights, labour rights, and environment.

These guidelines provide specific tools for companies to respect the rights of all food producers. With the upcoming human rights due diligence legislation, supermarkets not only have a responsibility but also an obligation to identify and tackle human rights issues.

What is Superlist?

Superlist is a multi-year research programme, initiated by think thank Questionmark in 2020. It is conducted by Questionmark in several European countries in collaboration with local civil society organisations. Alternating on the themes of health, environmental sustainability and human rights, Superlist provides insight into how supermarkets contribute to a healthier, more sustainable and fairer food system.

About Superlist Social

Superlist Social describes how supermarkets contribute to a fair food system. This Superlist Social Belgium is focused on the five largest chains in Belgium, in terms of market share: Aldi, Carrefour, Colruyt, Delhaize, and Lidl.

Together, these supermarkets represent more than 80 per cent of the Belgian market. Superlist Social differentiates five issues: transparency and responsibility, workers, small-scale farmers, gender and European farmers. For these issues, supermarkets' commitments, policies and reporting were researched. The [Comparative Criteria](#) for this research were published in February 2024, after consultation of supermarkets, academic experts, and civil society partners: Rikolto, Oxfam and Fairtrade Belgium. Data for this research was collected by Questionmark between February 2nd and March 15th 2024.

Superlist Social offers supermarkets the opportunity to compare their efforts on human rights with their competitors' efforts and to take notice of good policy and practices. This way, supermarkets can contribute to a fairer, healthier, and more sustainable food system and increase their positive impact.

The underlying data for the ranking can be found [here](#).

Reading guide

Supermarkets that perform well on a specific indicator within the research have been marked with the icon **this counts** in the margin. Not all observed measures are progressive enough to count in this research, but even small steps in the right direction are worth noting. These initiatives have been marked with the icon **good step**.



this counts



good step

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Lidl most transparent about high-risk supply chains

MOST NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Lidl is the only supermarket to conduct an annual analysis of all supply chains with a high risk of human rights violations.
- Aldi and Lidl conduct human rights impact assessments that include action plans to tackle the human rights violations.
- Lidl is most transparent about the origin of their products: Lidl updates the names and addresses of their first-tier food suppliers annually.
- The majority of the supermarkets did not have a grievance mechanism for supply chains. Lidl is the only one to have launched such a grievance mechanism.

How transparent are supermarkets?

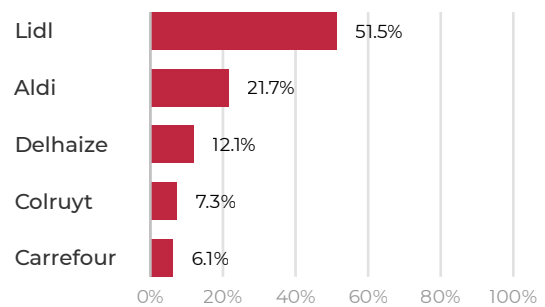


Figure 2. Supermarkets' efforts on transparency and accountability

Supermarket aisles are filled with products from all over the world. Including from countries where there are high risks for violations of human and labour rights. Supermarkets need to be transparent about how they ensure human rights violations in their supply chains are identified, prevented and mitigated.

Only Lidl conducts an annual risk analysis

An annual risk analysis, in which supermarkets identify the supply chains at a high risk of human rights violations, is important to identify the current problems in the chains and to take actions on them. Only **Lidl** demonstrably conducts a risk analysis annually. For **Aldi**, it is unclear how often their risk analysis is updated. Carrefour, Colruyt and Delhaize have not published their high-risk supply chains.¹



Aldi and Lidl assess high-risk supply chains on human rights impacts

In-depth Human Rights Impact Assessments (HRIAs) are important in high-risk supply chains to address the most urgent human rights violations. **Aldi** and **Lidl** pledge to conduct and publish three HRIAs per year.

Delhaize has committed to conduct two HRIAs in 2024, but has not published these at the time of writing.

Aldi has published one HRIA, including an action plan, for its tea chain from India in the past year. **Lidl** mentions HRIAs on cashew and meat supply chains that are planned to be published in 2024. **Lidl** has published three action plans in the past year that belong to previous HRIAs for its Colombian banana supply chain, its Italian canned tomato supply chain and the Indian farmed shrimp supply chain.



Then, it is important that supermarkets follow up on an action plan. **Lidl** is the only supermarket to have published a progress report, on its tea chain, that meets the requirements.

Supermarkets, except for Lidl, are not transparent about suppliers

Lidl publishes and annually updates an overview of all its first-tier suppliers. **Lidl** also publishes information on its suppliers from three high-risk chains (bananas, strawberries and tea) and is therefore ahead in terms of supplier transparency. Up until now, **Aldi** has only published first-tier suppliers from high-risk chains, but has pledged to also publish its first-tier suppliers from all supply chains in 2024.



United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs)

In June 2011, the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) ([UN, 2011](#)). The UNGPs sets a global standard for preventing and addressing the risk of adverse human rights impacts associated with business activities.

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) revised the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (OECD Guidelines) in 2011 (OECD, 2011). These OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are recommendations made by governments, including the Dutch government, to multinational companies on international corporate social responsibility. The OECD Guidelines provide guidance for companies to deal with issues such as chain responsibility, human rights, child labour, environment and corruption. The OECD's due diligence process identifies, prevents, mitigates and accounts for how businesses deal with actual and potential adverse impacts in their supply chains ([OECD, 2018](#)).

Supermarkets lack proper grievance mechanisms

Grievance mechanisms are crucial for understanding abuse in the chain. If workers and farmers, especially women, can submit their grievances to the supermarket or another body, the supermarket can take action to help resolve the problems. Most supermarkets have an online grievance mechanism, but this often focuses on internal grievances from supermarket staff. People working in high-risk chains often cannot access this because, for example, they do not have internet access, cannot read, do not know the language or have insufficient guarantee that they can remain anonymous and protected. Especially these people should

¹ The Superlist Social methodology asks for initiatives in high-risk supply chains in line with HREDD requirements to first address the gravest violations. Since there were multiple supermarkets that had not yet structurally identified and assessed their adverse impacts in operations, supply chains and business relationships, their initiatives were still scored if they were existent in supply chains that were identified in the Beyond Food study as being present in high-risk value chains, based on social and environmental impacts in Belgium ([Willett et al., 2019](#)).



have the opportunity to make their grievances known. **Lidl** is the only supermarket to have launched a grievance mechanism specifically for supply chains. However, it is not yet available for all high-risk supply chains. Both **Aldi** and **Lidl** have committed to a grievance mechanism accessible for all high-risk supply chains.

Supermarkets' due diligence aligned with OECD and UNGPs

A robust due diligence² process helps a supermarket address human rights violations in the supply chain. **All supermarkets**, except for Carrefour, have published due diligence policies based on the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and referring to the six steps of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Guidelines.

Stakeholder engagement is an important part of due diligence reporting, because reporting concerns the people whose rights need to be protected or the groups that represent them.

No supermarket provides sufficient evidence of doing so. Supermarkets should involve these groups in determining how to take action to improve their conditions.

None of the supermarkets support producers to have a say in sourcing practices

Food producers, including small-scale farmers, often have little control over sourcing conditions, including price and working conditions. Due to pressure from supermarkets to keep prices low, supermarkets negotiate for low product prices. Workers further down the chain as a result receive lower wages or are not paid overtime because of the low prices, or (small-scale) farmers have to sell their products below cost price. None of the supermarkets can prove that their sourcing practices contribute to a fair distribution of control in the chain.



Transparency and accountability

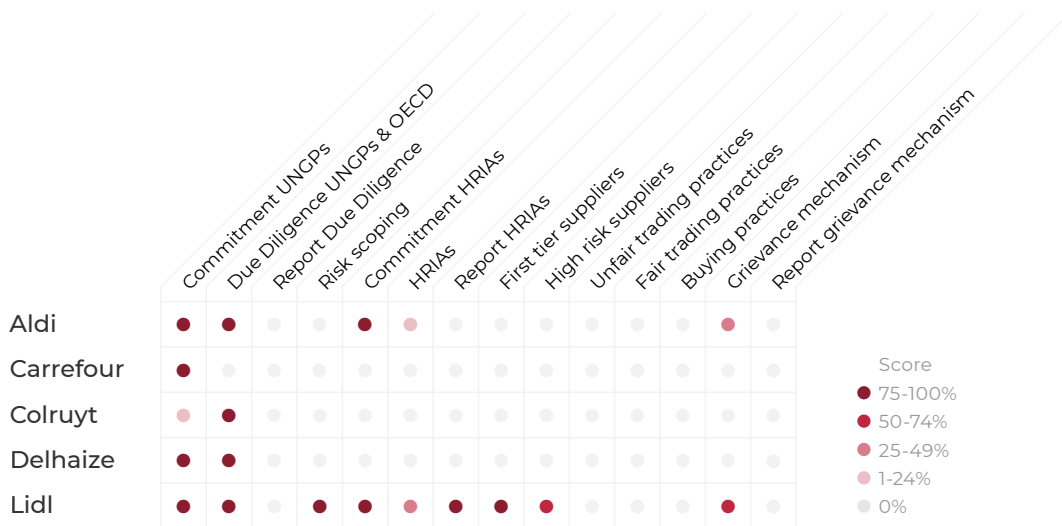


Figure 3. Efforts on transparency and accountability across the different indicators.

2 We use the United Nations (UN) definition of due diligence: "Taking adequate measures to identify, prevent where possible, and mitigate potential adverse human rights impacts, remediate actual impacts, and account for how these adverse human rights impacts are addressed" (UN, 2011).

WORKERS

Supermarkets engage suppliers in improving working conditions

MOST NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Aldi, Colruyt, Delhaize and Lidl are committed to a living wage for banana workers throughout their international supply chains. Aldi and Lidl are the only ones to report on their own progress.
- Aldi, Carrefour, Delhaize and Lidl have published labour rights policies in line with ILO standards.
- All supermarkets make efforts to engage suppliers in improving working conditions and do not immediately drop suppliers when labour rights have been violated.
- Lidl is the only supermarket to have published a general action plan to remove barriers to freedom of association in high-risk supply chains.

What do supermarkets do for workers?

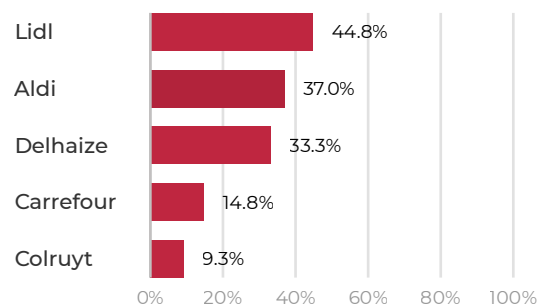


Figure 4. Supermarkets' efforts on workers' rights.

Globally, 1.23 billion people work in food supply chains, 857 million of whom work in primary agricultural production ([FAO, 2022](#)). As a result, the food sector has great potential to contribute to workers' living wages. In reality, workers' conditions in this sector are not always favourable: long hours, little to no pay, forced or child labour, dangerous working conditions and poor living conditions are just some examples of abuse workers face ([ILO, 2022](#)).



Supermarkets committed to living wage in banana sector

Aldi, Colruyt, Delhaize and **Lidl** have committed to providing a living wage for banana workers throughout their international supply chains. These supermarkets aim to close the living wage gap by the end of 2027 for their collective banana volumes sold on the Belgian market. **Aldi** and **Lidl** are the only ones to report on their own progress. While Aldi reports taking initiative on involving trade unions, Lidl has ensured living wages for workers in the banana plantations. Supermarket partnerships on living wage in the banana chains, and the reporting on this, are a good step that is worth following.

Nearly all supermarkets have public labour rights policies

Supermarkets work with many suppliers from all over the world. It is therefore important for supermarkets to check whether workers are treated well in all countries where the supermarkets (in)directly operate and make purchases. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has drawn up standards for this, which supermarkets can use as guidelines.

Living wage

Living wage is the income that workers should earn to achieve a decent standard of living for themselves and their families ([IDH, n.d.](#)).

International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has set up a set of standards since 1919 to help women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity ([ILO, 2024b](#)). The ILO has drafted a declaration setting out the fundamental requirements for organisations to respect labour rights ([ILO, 2024a](#)).

Following the standards in this declaration (or ILO standards) is a way for supermarkets to ensure that labour rights are respected, in all countries where the supermarket (in) directly purchases.

Aldi, Carrefour, Delhaize and **Lidl** have all published labour rights policies that use ILO's fundamental standards. Colruyt's public policy is not fully in line with ILO standards.



Workers

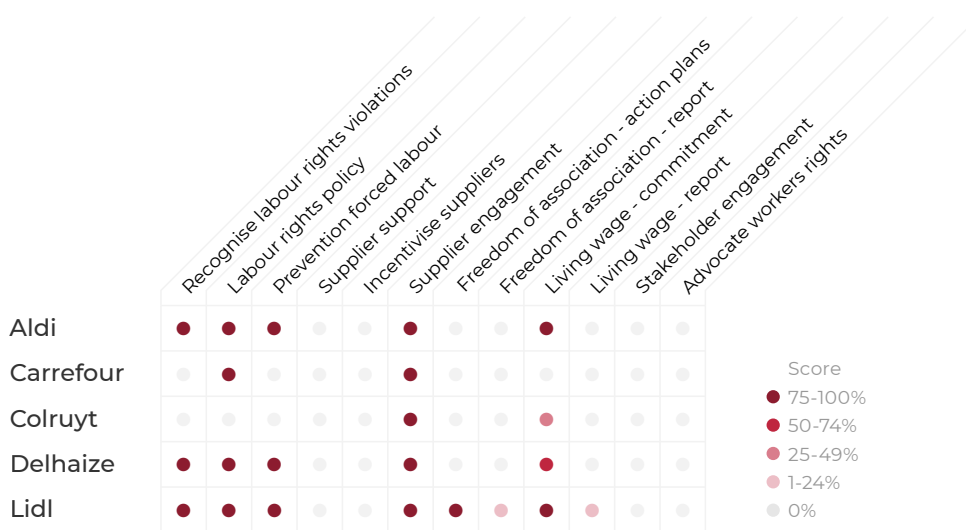


Figure 5. Efforts on workers' rights across the different indicators.

All supermarkets pledge to engage suppliers in improving the conditions

If supermarkets discover very serious labour rights violations and immediately stop buying from a supplier for this reason, this often actually results in a worsening situation for the workers working there. Working with the supplier to improve the situation helps the workers more. **All supermarkets** pledge not to drop suppliers if abuse is found and support suppliers, for example, through training.

Meanwhile, none of the supermarkets explain how they support suppliers in respecting human rights and labour standards. This could include programmes or financial support to train suppliers and workers on human and labour rights for a specific product type.

Lidl is the only supermarket to support collective association in supply chains

Collective association of workers is a fundamental labour and human right. It can help negotiate wages, working conditions and facilities. Supermarkets generally recognise the importance of collective organisation, but **Lidl** is the only supermarket to have formulated a general approach to support collective

organisation of workers. For example, by making the right to collective bargaining a sourcing condition. Lidl has also signed and reports on the Freedom of Association Protocol.

No reporting on stakeholder engagement in supermarkets' policies

While essential, no supermarket sufficiently reports on the involvement of stakeholders, including workers' and farmers' unions, in drafting and implementing labour rights policies.

None of the supermarkets advocate for workers' rights

Workers' rights are often at odds with the strong competition on low prices that characterises supermarkets. Adequate protection of labour rights requires a level playing field in that area. Supermarkets can play an important role here by calling on the government to set clear frameworks. None of the supermarkets have done this in the past two years.



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SMALL-SCALE FARMERS

Supermarkets show some examples of projects to support small-scale farmers

MOST NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Supermarkets show various examples of projects where they support small-scale farmers in high-risk supply chains.
- Lidl annually reports on measures taken to support small-scale farmers and reflects on the progress of its projects.
- Colruyt is the only supermarket that demonstrates how it takes action to improve the distribution of value throughout the supply chain.
- Supermarkets do not publicly advocate for the rights of small-scale farmers.

What do supermarkets do for small-scale farmers?

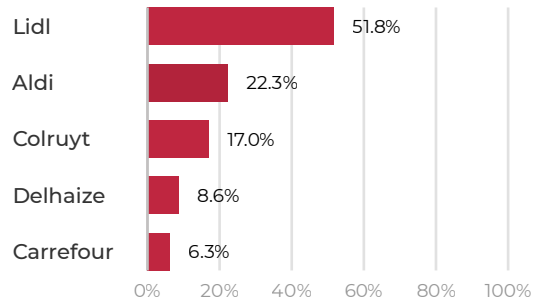


Figure 6. Supermarkets' efforts on small-scale farmers' rights.

Some of the products found in supermarkets, such as chocolate and coffee, come from small-scale farmers. Think of individuals who, alone or as a community, produce food at a small scale for the market and to earn a living. They often make use of family labour. Supermarkets need to properly represent the interests of these small-scale farmers throughout the chain to ensure their resilience and prosperity and to prevent their exploitation.



Supermarkets show various examples of projects to support small-scale farmers

Aldi, Colruyt, Delhaize and **Lidl** show examples of projects where they support small-scale farmers in high-risk supply chains to become resilient and prosperous. Lidl works with Fair-trade and local cooperatives to improve the incomes of small-scale farmers through its own Way to Go cocoa, coffee and cashew chains. Aldi does this by applying the Tony's Open Chain principles to its own brand Choceur Choco Changer chocolate. It must be noted that these projects only cover a marginal part of the supermarkets' total product range. Delhaize also follows the Tony's Open Chain principles for its Delicata chocolate. Colruyt has been working on multiple chain projects, for instance in its own brand Boni cocoa and Graindor coffee chains. These projects aim to give farmers better market access and a better price, improve the quality and sustainability of their product and give them leverage to improve their living conditions.

Colruyt alone reports data on the living income gap

Colruyt is the only supermarket to report measured data on the gap between the actual income and living income for cocoa farmers in Côte d'Ivoire. Colruyt reports on the drivers within the project that can contribute to a living income and describes how certain drivers influence each other.

Only Lidl reports on fair agreements with small-scale farmers

Supermarkets should establish stable sourcing relationships with small-scale farmers wherever possible. Supermarkets should also ensure fair, transparent, stable and long-term agreements with small-scale farmers. **Lidl** is the only supermarket to report on fair agreements, with examples of fair contracts in their Way to Go cocoa, coffee, cashew and orange chains.



Living income

Living income is the income that small-scale farmers should yield to achieve a decent standard of living for themselves and their families ([FAO, 2024](#)).

Small-scale farmers are independent entrepreneurs and are not protected by a statutory minimum wage. Superlist Social therefore speaks of a living income that should constitute a minimum for small-scale farmers in supply chains. Their income should also enable them to build up a buffer, and to make necessary investments.

Aldi, Colruyt and Lidl demonstrate support to organise collectively

Forming farmers' cooperatives can help small-scale farmers take a stronger position in negotiating for better conditions. **Aldi, Colruyt, Delhaize** and **Lidl** provide examples of support to collectively organise small-scale farmers. All of them provide support in the cocoa chain. Both Colruyt, Delhaize and Lidl also support farmers' cooperatives in the coffee chain. Besides, Lidl works with farmers' cooperatives in its cashew and orange chain.

Colruyt demonstrates actions to ensure a fair value distribution for small-scale farmers in the cocoa chain

Producers should receive fair compensation for their sold products, so that at least production costs are covered and labour is rewarded. Moreover, profits on a sold product should be shared fairly along the chain, and not go to one or a few parties. Small-scale producers do not always have the bargaining power and resources to demand fair compensation for their products. Large-scale buyers, such as supermarkets, must ensure that these parties also receive fair compensation and a fair share of the profits.

Transparency about the distribution of value in the chain is essential for this. **Colruyt** is the only supermarket to be transparent about the current price received by the small-scale





farmer and takes action to achieve a fair value distribution for small-scale farmers throughout the cocoa supply chain in Côte d'Ivoire. Other supermarkets are not transparent about the distribution of value in the chain. **Lidl** has made a commitment to ensure fair remuneration in the supply chains.

Stakeholder involvement in developing policies is lacking

Supermarkets do not sufficiently report on the involvement of stakeholders such as small-scale farmers, organisations representing them or NGOs in drafting policies focusing on small-scale farmers' rights. **Lidl** is the only supermarket to have started reporting on stakeholder engagement to improve conditions for small-scale farmers in their yearly Human Right Progress Update.

Supermarkets do not advocate for the rights of small-scale farmers

Supermarkets do post about small-scale farmers via social media, but in doing so they limit themselves to their own chains without a broader call for change, such as through legislation.



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Small-scale farmers

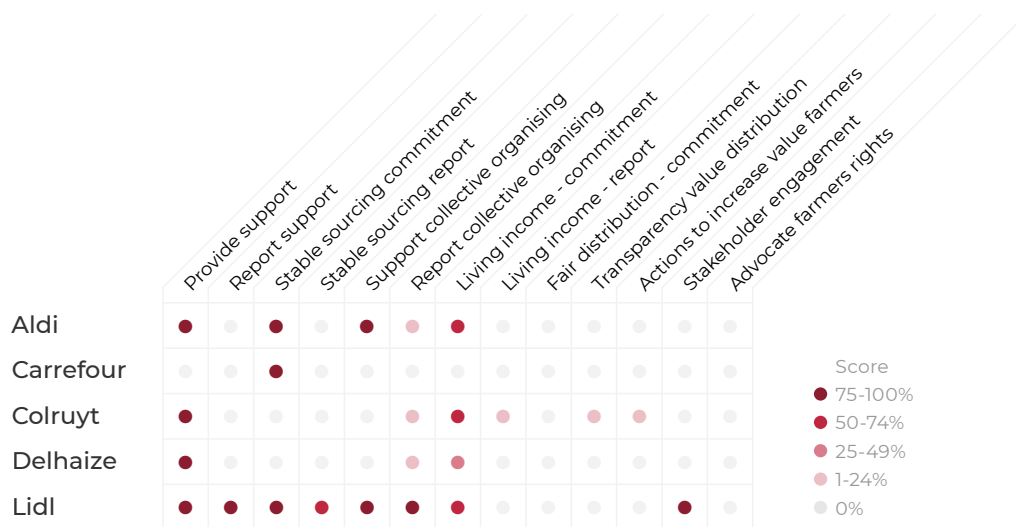


Figure 7. Efforts on small-scale farmers rights across the different indicators.

EUROPEAN FARMERS

Very limited commitment and action to support European farmers

MOST NOTABLE FINDINGS

- None of the supermarkets make a general commitment to ensuring fair and long-term sourcing from European farmers.
- Carrefour is the only supermarket to demonstrate actions to provide long-term agreements and a right price for European farmers.
- Colruyt forms a partnership with cattle cooperatives in order to provide farmers stability and financial security.

What do supermarkets do for European farmers?

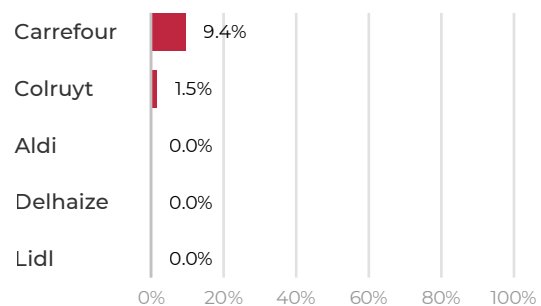


Figure 8. Supermarkets' efforts on European farmers' rights.

While the labour conditions of European farmers³ are generally different from those of farmers in the Global South, they do seem to face similar challenges (e.g. lack of bargaining power, prices that do not cover their production costs, etc.). Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that supermarkets pay a right price to European farmers including costs of (sustainable) production, labour and investments. It is important for European farmers that their relationships with supermarkets are long-term, based on mutual trust and transparency, and with a correct distribution of profits and risks among all chain actors.

³ Farmers in Europe for whom the following qualities apply: 1) in control of main resources of production, not formally a part of bigger chains; 2) in control of business operations; 3) in control of the market, both input and output; 4) in control of the labour by their household, where input of paid employment is limited; 5) producing for the market, in a diversified way; 6) living in farming communities, who organise forms of mutual exchange, support and credit.

No general commitment in support of European farmers

Supermarkets everywhere can enter into fair, transparent, stable and long-term agreements with farmers, in which risks are equally spread amongst supply chain actors. In addition, supermarkets can support their suppliers to do the same.

None of the supermarkets have made a company-wide commitment to ensure long-term agreements with European farmers and a right price for their produce.

Carrefour offers long-term agreements and right prices for European farmers

Carrefour Quality Lines is a tool for agro-ecological development, in which its partner producers have to meet strict requirements in terms of traceability, quality and flavour. Through its Carrefour Quality Lines, Carrefour establishes multi-year partnerships with local producers, including guarantees on volume over several years, and fairer compensation through a jointly agreed purchasing price taking into account production costs and fluctuating market prices.

Other supermarkets intentionally purchase certain products from Belgian farmers, however they do not show multiple examples of implementing policies on long-term agreements and right prices.

Collective organisation of European farmers not supported by supermarkets

Collective organisation in farmers' unions is a fundamental labour and human right. It can help negotiate wages, working conditions and facilities. Colruyt is the only supermarket to report on intentionally purchasing from cattle farmers' cooperatives. None of the other supermarkets have formulated an approach to support collective organisation of European farmers.

Stakeholder engagement unclear in development of policies on European farmers' rights

Supermarkets do not report on the involvement of stakeholders as part of their strategy to improve conditions for European farmers. Stakeholders might include farmers' cooperatives, farmers' unions or civil society organisations.



European farmers

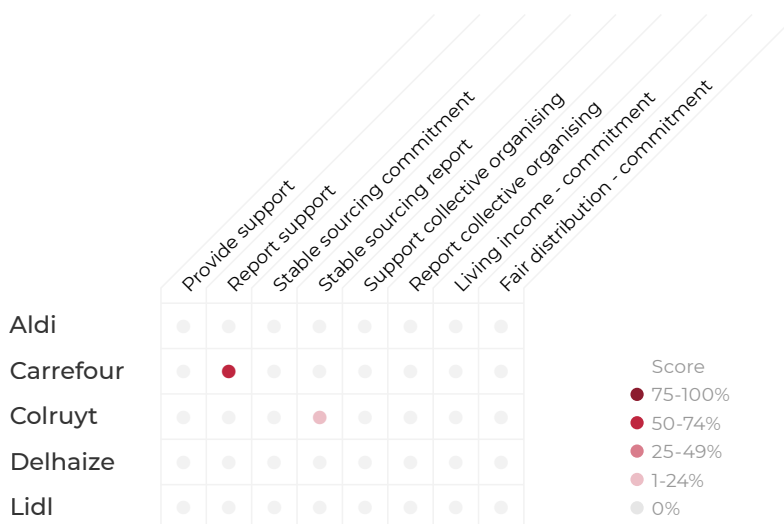


Figure 9. Efforts on European farmers' rights across the different indicators.

Supermarkets do not publicly stand up for European farmers' rights

No supermarket publicly stands up for European farmers' rights. Supermarkets limit themselves to describing what they are doing themselves to support European farmers, whereas it is important to also engage in broader safeguarding of the farmers' rights by addressing governments, for example.



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GENDER

Aldi and Lidl show commitment to address gender-based issues

MOST NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Except for Colruyt, all supermarkets have signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEPs). Although, none of the supermarkets clearly demonstrates how it encourages suppliers to sign the UNWEPs.
- Aldi and Lidl are the only supermarkets to have published a gender policy that is applicable to all supply chains. Both have included the LGBTQIA+ community in their gender policies.
- Lidl is the only one to show how it supports its suppliers to respect women's rights.

What do supermarkets do for gender rights?

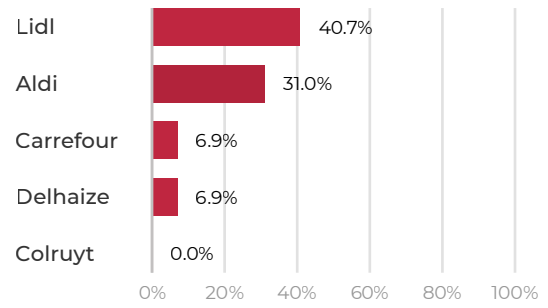


Figure 10. Supermarkets' efforts on gender rights.

Women working in food supply chains, comprising 40 per cent of the global agriculture workforce ([IFC, 2024](#)), often have the lowest-paid jobs and often have to fear for their safety. Workplace violence, discrimination and lower wages are examples of abuse women face worldwide. In addition to women, people from the LGBTQIA+ community disproportionately face discrimination in food supply chains.

Nearly all supermarkets have signed the UNWEPs

Every company should treat all workers equally. The UN has set out seven principles for companies to support women in the workplace, marketplace and community. These principles should be high on every company's, and thus every supermarket's, agenda and they should take action to comply with them. **Aldi, Carrefour, Delhaize** and **Lidl** have signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEP).



Aldi and Lidl have action plans to tackle gender-based issues

Supermarkets can take several steps to promote gender equality⁴. Actions to promote gender equality include closing the gender pay gap, countering gender-based violence, and promoting women's membership in farmers' unions and farmers' cooperatives.

Aldi and **Lidl** have made a commitment to close the gender pay gap. Lidl has also published an action plan to reduce this gap. Moreover, both **Aldi** and **Lidl** have action plans to address gender inequality and gender-based



United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEP)

The United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles (UNWEP) are designed for companies to support women in the workplace, labour market and community (UN, 2022). Companies sign the UNWEP to confirm that they respect and want to implement these principles.

violence in supply chains. These action plans are not developed specifically for each chain and are therefore insufficient. However, these action plans do form a good basis for expansion to specific high-risk chains.

Specific data on gender by Lidl

Lidl has published gender-specific data for its cocoa supply chain in Ghana. For instance, it discloses the difference in income and profit and the difference in productivity between male and female farmers in the cocoa chain. **Aldi** and **Lidl** both made the commitment to disclose gender-specific data for three



Gender



Figure 11. Efforts on gender rights across the different indicators.

4 By gender equality, Superlist Social means the equal rights of women and girls, LGBTQIA+ and non-binary people to be free from gender-based discrimination and violence.

high-risk supply chains by the end of 2023. For Aldi, this data has not been found yet. So far, Lidl has published this gender-specific data for only one high-risk supply chain.

Lidl shows how it supports specific suppliers in respecting women's rights

Besides actions in their own operations to promote women's rights, supermarkets also have a responsibility to work in partnership with suppliers to respect women's rights and encourage them to continuously improve. Only Lidl shows examples of mechanisms through which suppliers are supported to respect women's rights. For example, **Lidl** works with farmers' cooperative COMSA aimed at strengthening the role of women in coffee production in Guatemala and Honduras.

Insufficient involvement of stakeholders in developing women's rights policies

No supermarket adequately reports on stakeholder engagement. Reporting, for example,

does not reveal whether supermarkets structurally engage with female workers and small-scale farmers, women's organisations or NGOs, and in what way stakeholder input is integrated into policy and practice. For the development and implementation of gender policies, input from these stakeholders is essential.

Supermarkets do not publicly stand up for women's rights

No supermarket publicly stands up for women's rights. Supermarkets do post about women or gender equality via social media, but in doing so, they limit themselves to describing what they are doing themselves, whereas it is important to also engage in broader safeguarding of women's rights by, for instance, addressing governments.



Recommendations

Superlist Social aims to provide insight into which supermarkets take efforts to respect and protect human rights in their food supply chains. Besides, Superlist Social aims to make Belgian supermarkets aware of their responsibility to respect and protect human rights in their chains, and give supermarkets insight into their position and which steps they could take. After an extensive analysis of supermarkets' performances on human rights, we formulated some recommendations for all supermarkets and some supermarket specific recommendations. These can help supermarkets improve their food supply chains and contribute to a fairer and more sustainable food system.

Below, some recommendations of important steps that all supermarkets can take to improve their human rights policies and implementation are made.

Recommendations for all supermarkets

TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

→ **Execute and publish a risk analysis that contains a substantiated inventory of all supply chains with a high risk of human rights violations, followed by at least three human rights impact assessments annually.**

- In preparation of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive that will oblige supermarkets to conduct human rights and environmental due diligence in their global supply chains, it is expected of supermarkets that their efforts on human rights are linked to a substantiated inventory of supply chains with a high risk of human rights violations that is publicly available.
- Update this risk analysis at least once a year. It is important that the prioritisation

of risks the supermarket will address is substantiated in line with the UNGPs and the OECD Guidelines.

- Then, execute and publish at least three human rights impact assessments annually. Human Rights Impact Assessments must cover all relevant human rights impacts in the supply chain. Also include an action plan to address risks and meaningful stakeholder engagement during all phases of research.
- **Involve stakeholders meaningfully in policy formulation and implementation, and report on it.**
- None of the supermarkets evidently report on the involvement of stakeholders, such as trade unions, farmers' cooperatives and or society organisations, in policy formulation.

Meaningful stakeholders engagement means active, regular and constructive communication with stakeholders, including clear feedback to action plans. Clearly indicate in the action plans how stakeholder input has been dealt with. Write down which issue was discussed when and with which organisation.

→ **Ensure that all people in all supply chains have access to a grievance mechanism that complies with the UNGPs, including workers and small-scale farmers in high-risk supply chains.**

WORKERS & FARMERS

→ **Ensure that workers receive a living wage and that small-scale farmers receive a living income.**

- Commit to working with stakeholders to achieve a living wage for workers and a living income for small-scale farmers. Take action to close the living wage gap and living income gap in specific supply chains and report about the progress on this.

→ **Ensure fair, transparent, stable and long-term deals with small-scale farmers.**

- Demonstrate how fair, transparent, stable and long-term sourcing from small-scale farmers is ensured. This includes at least long-term agreements with stable and secure order volumes, and prices that allow farmers to achieve at least a living income and cover the costs of production.

→ **Integrate the learnings of sustainable purchasing practices into general purchasing policy.**

- Expand existing projects and collaborations to other high-risk chains. Projects in the banana and cocoa chains show that progress on living wages and incomes is feasible.
- Upscale sustainable purchasing practices that are now in place for only a limited number of products in a certain product type to the whole assortment.
- Integrate the learnings of sustainable practices from projects into the general purchasing policy, in the way in which purchases are arranged in a standardised way (e.g. conditions on living income).

EUROPEAN FARMERS

→ **Formulate and pursue ambitions for the conditions of European farmers, including a long-term sourcing relationship and a right price.**

- Guarantee long-term agreements for European farmers which allows them to invest in quality and to make their business more sustainable.
- Guarantee contracts that provide safeguards to protect farmers from unforeseen (external) circumstances, such as failed harvest, war or increased inflation or costs.

- Guarantee prices that allow farmers to achieve at least a living income and cover the costs of production.
- Support and stimulate European farmers to organise collectively, for example by purchasing directly from farmers' cooperatives.
- Engage stakeholders as part of the strategy to improve conditions for European farmers and report on the lessons learned and next steps.

GENDER

→ **Publish gender-specific data, starting with high-risk chains.**

- Publishing gender-specific information and understanding the barriers and human rights violations women face in supply chains helps in making the problem of gender inequality more transparent.

→ **Implement action plans to improve gender-based issues.**

- Publish action plans that include time-bound targets to address gender-based violence and to improve the position of women in at least three specific high-risk supply chains. The actions and targets are linked to a timeframe of up to five years and apply to at least three specific high-risk supply chains.

Supermarket specific recommendations

Aldi - midrange



In addition to the above recommendations for all supermarkets, the further recommendations for Aldi are:

- **Report annually on the follow-up of human rights assessments already carried out.**
 - The action plan of the HRIA on tea is in order, but in the future it is important to know whether these actions are actually implemented and to what extent they contribute to improving working conditions in these chains. This can be done, for instance, through a due diligence report, separate from the sustainability reports.
- **After committing to track and disclose the results of gender-specific data for three high-risk supply chains by the end of 2023, report on its progress and publish the results.**
 - Making a commitment is the first step. When making such a commitment it is

important to report on the progress and publish the results when they are known. Publishing gender-specific information and understanding the barriers and human rights violations women face in supply chains helps in making the problem of gender inequality more transparent.

- **Increase transparency on suppliers in high-risk supply chains.**
 - When all first-tier suppliers are published and updated annually, the next step is to make a commitment to publish all levels of suppliers of high-risk chains within two years. The commitment of publishing six high-risk chains by 2026 is too far in the future.

Carrefour - laggard



In addition to the above recommendations for all supermarkets, the further recommendations for Carrefour are:

- **Increase transparency on suppliers in high-risk supply chains.**
 - Start by publishing all first-tier suppliers and update this list annually. In addition, make a commitment to publish all levels of suppliers of high-risk chains within two years.
- **Make commitments and set up initiatives to ensure a living wage for workers and a living income for small-scale farmers in the supply chain.**
 - It is important that the supermarket ensures

that everyone in the supply chain receives a living wage or income. Commit to working with stakeholders to achieve a living wage / income. This could, for instance, include either workers and trade unions, or small-scale farmers and farmers' cooperatives.

- **Publish a gender policy for supply chains.**
 - An adequate gender policy applies for a supermarket's own operations and all supply chains. Involve stakeholders, such as women's rights organisations, in this policy and validate it with them.

Colruyt - laggard



In addition to the above recommendations for all supermarkets, the further recommendations for Colruyt are:

→ **Sign the UNWEPs.**

- Colruyt is the only supermarket that has not signed the UNWEPs. The UN has set out seven principles for companies to support women in the workplace, marketplace and community. Put these principles high on the agenda and take action to comply with them.

→ **Make commitments to tackle forced labour and to remove barriers to freedom of association in supply chains.**

- Publish policy that commits to combat forced labour in supply chains, including the

recruitment of workers. Publish action plans to remove barriers to freedom of association in high-risk supply chains. The action plan should include time-bound milestones, less than two years in the future.

→ **Increase transparency on suppliers in high-risk supply chains.**

- Start by publishing all first-tier suppliers and update this list annually. In addition, make a commitment to publish all levels of suppliers of high-risk chains within two years.

Delhaize - laggard



In addition to the above recommendations for all supermarkets, the further recommendations for Delhaize are:

→ **Publish figures on the gap between actual income and living income.**

- Delhaize shows initiatives to support small-scale farmers in the cocoa and coffee chain. It is important to also publish measured data on the gap between actual income and living income in these supply chains. Report on the progress in closing the living income gap and show how stakeholders are involved.

→ **Publish a gender policy for supply chains with the involvement of stakeholders.**

- An adequate gender policy applies for a supermarket's own operations and all supply chains. Involve stakeholders, such as women's rights organisations, in this policy and validate it with them.

→ **Commit to ensuring fair, transparent, stable and long-term sourcing from farmers.**

- Supermarkets everywhere can enter into fair, transparent, stable and long-term agreements with small-scale farmers and European farmers. In addition, supermarkets can support their suppliers to do the same. Fair, transparency, stable and long-term sourcing includes at least long-term agreements with farmers and/or farmers' cooperatives, and prices that allow farmers to achieve at least a living income and cover the costs of production.

Lidl - frontrunner



In addition to the above recommendations for all supermarkets, the further recommendations for Lidl are:

→ **Publish the gender-specific data for the additional two high-risk supply chains.**

- The published data on the cocoa chain in Ghana are relevant to understand the barriers women face in supply chains. It is important that this gender-specific data is also published for additional high-risk supply chains.

→ **Positively incentivise suppliers that demonstrate continuous improvement in labour conditions.**

- It is important that the supermarket reports on examples of continuous improvements in working conditions and labour standards in supply chains based on dialogue, cooperation and trust between the supermarket and its supplier(s). The supermarket can reward

suppliers who show progress through, for instance, long-term contracts incorporating mutual expectations on improving labour standards.

→ **Publish concrete figures on living wage and income.**

- Lidl speaks of an additional premium on its Way to Go products, which supplements to a living wage or income. It is important that Lidl also publishes the living wage/income benchmark for relevant regions calculated according to a recognised standard. Without precise information on the price Lidl pays and how this price compares to living wage or income, it is difficult to ascertain whether this price is truly fair.

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Colophon

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