



FLOWERS NEWS 11 August 2008



Newsletter by the Secretariat of the Review Committee FFP

Dear readers:

This newsletter is designed to inform you about the latest news in the flower industry around the whole world. Our writers are the members of the Review Committee of FFP and sympathising organisations. Below each article you will find the name of the writer and his/her e-mail address in case you would like to know more about the subject.

Enjoy it and don't hesitate to contact us if you have any comment and/or question about this newsletter.

King Regards,

Editor

C. Betsabé Lugo Rodríguez

Secretariat in Brussels

Rue Fossé-aux-Loups 38

1000 Brussels, Belgium

Telephone: +32 (0) 22260665

Mobiles: +31 (0) 623373221

b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

News from FFP bodies:

Secretariat –Brussels

- **Benchmark application (June 2008)**

In June 2008 the Italian standard FIORI GIUSTO and the certification organisation RINA SpA applied to the Secretariat of the Review Committee of FFP to be benchmarked against the FFP standards.

The benchmark will take place at the end of September during the Review Committee meeting in Brussels.

By Betsabé Lugo: b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

- **Presentation about the FFP audit procedure (July 9th, 2008)**

On July 9th the Secretariat of the Review Committee in Brussels gave a presentation about the FFP audit procedure to Barbara Janssens from Network Bewust Verbruiken (NBV) and coordinator of the Belgium Flower Campaign, and to Ludo Nelen from Vlaams ABVV (Socialist trade union).

The aim of the presentation was to generate interest amongst the Belgium organisations to become a local partner of FFP and participate as observers in FFP audits taking place in Belgium.

By Betsabé Lugo: b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

- **Review Committee meeting (September 2008)**

The Review Committee meeting planned for July in Nairobi, Kenya was postponed due many RC members cancelling their participation

The next Review Committee meeting will take place in Brussels, Belgium from September 29th until October 3rd 2008.

By Betsabé Lugo: b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

- **Intranet application (August 2008)**

The intranet application for Review Committee members is almost ready. The designer is working on the last details and developing a manual to explain how to use the site. The Secretariat of the Review Committee will give a presentation about it in the next Review Committee meeting in Brussels.

By Betsabé Lugo: b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

Secretariat – Nairobi

- **Resignation of the RC Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya**

Sebastian Odanga has resigned as FFP RC secretariat for Africa and Asia with immediate effect. Queries about FFP work in Africa and Asia should be sent for the meantime to sue.longley@iuf.org

Board

- **Board**

The next Board meeting will take place on October 13th 2008 in Aalsmeer, The Netherlands.

By Regina Dinkla: r.dinkla@fairflowersfairplants.com

FFP office – Honselersdijk

- **FFP participants**

From June 1st 2008, 57 cut flower producers and 64 pot plant producers are in the list of participants of FFP. Some of them still have a conditional status.

By Regina Dinkla: r.dinkla@fairflowersfairplants.com

- **FFP in Germany**

In September the German supermarket chain Réwé will start an action week with FFP plants in 2000 of their shops. They will inform consumers through their newspaper which is delivered to peoples' homes and reaches around 16 million people.

By Regina Dinkla: r.dinkla@fairflowersfairplants.com

- **FFP in France**

The French organisation Beautiful World would like to give FFP roses in the Rose Marie-Claire week in 2009. The FFP manager is still talking with the exporter.

By Regina Dinkla: r.dinkla@fairflowersfairplants.com

News from Africa:

East and Southern Africa

- **Global Horticultural Workers' and Environmental Rights Network (GHOWERN) (June 2008)**

A new network for the promotion of horticultural workers' social, labour and environmental rights has been formed by East and Southern African trade unions and NGOs working in the sector. The network is expected to expand throughout Africa and to make links with organisations throughout the world.

The objectives: To promote and fight against violations and abuses of horticulture workers' and environmental rights and freedoms in the horticulture sector by:

- Coordinating members' activities and monitoring the implementation of members' core functions related to the network vision;
- Engaging members through unified lobbying and advocacy strategies;

- To support members to plan network activities into their organisations' strategies and projects;
- To link with other networks, collect and disseminate information to members;
- To ensure improved working relations between NGOs (CSOs) and Trade Unions nationally, regionally and internationally;
- Generally to perform any such duties relating to the above core objective.

For further information please contact the coordinator: Network Coordinator, 3rd Floor Mirage Plaza, Mombasa Road, PO Box 61068 – 00200, Nairobi – Kenya. Email: kewwo@wananchi.com, tel: +254 (0) 20605528/29, Fax: +254 (0) 20605525.

Ethiopia

- **Ethiopia: Cut flower Bonanza: At What Cost? By Tamiru L. Obole | JT Senior Reporter (Jimma Times, Published on February 18th 2008)**

Ethiopia's burgeoning flower industry developed out of the European flower market, which began in the northern hemisphere, and expanded rapidly at the end of 20th century into the southern Africa, until by 2000, one third of traded cut flowers was grown in southern areas, mainly East and South Africa. Ethiopia has now also become one of the places where the industry is booming.

Nearly 60 flower farms operate in Ethiopia today. More than half of them are owned and run by foreigners. During his recent statement to the media, Minister Girma Birru pledges nearly 2000 hectares of land to attract new investors to the industry. But with local and international bodies' concerns for environmental mismanagement and labour abuses, their time may be running out.

Moreover, the government has given due attention to the flower industry because of growing revenue it collects from export taxes. However, the industry has brought with it much controversy, including allegations of environmental mismanagement, labour abuses and unfair land holding.

Environmental issues

The industry uses pesticides and chemical fertilizers. It uses too much of these elements which damages the environment, environmentalists accuse. It's also accused of using a lot of water. They worry that flower farms let too much inorganic fertilizer into soil so that the soil develops salinity. Saline soil will not grow plants. Moreover, too many chemicals kill useful organisms in the soil. And if too much pesticide gets into water bodies it damages the biodiversity. Moreover, too much use of water leads to conflict with the local community, as was the case in the Naivasha district in Kenya. It may also lead to depletion of water from its natural reservoir.

Labour issues

The cut flower industry employs thousands of workers globally. It has also contributed to foreign exchange earning, rural stability and social services. But the present global trend indicates workers are denied of their basic rights. In Ethiopia none of the flower farms are unionised. They are not allowed to form labour unions, exercise collective bargaining agreements and ask for safe and healthy working conditions. Human rights activists argue that flower growers use an illiterate, underpaid work force. And the workers are bare-armed, with no gloves or face masks to protect themselves from pesticides and thorny rose stems.

The government has secured over 600 million Birr flower export revenue in the last few years. There is a plan to increase it to more than US \$300 million in 2008. The government seems to be turning a blind eye to the alleged damages that flower farms cause to the environment and to unfair labour issues and land acquisition. There is a big inflow of flower industry to Ethiopia despite the continuous local and international concerns about these issues.

To read the whole article visit: <http://jimmatimes.com/article.cfm?articleID=17680>

Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda

No news

News from North America:

United States

- **Dole Food Company announces completion of three asset sale transactions (July 10, 2008)**

Dole Food Company, Inc. announced that it has closed three asset sale transactions within the past three weeks that have generated approximately \$100 million in cash to Dole and that were part of Dole's previously announced asset sale program. The proceeds have been used to pay down Dole's term bank debt (\$34 million) and revolving bank debt (\$66 million). These sales bring Dole's total asset sales for 2008 to date to approximately \$135 million.

The most recent asset sales included approximately 2,000 of Dole's 28,000 acres on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, the Miami headquarters building of Dole's Fresh Flowers division, and approximately 4,300 acres of California orchards that had been owned by entities in which Dole had a combined stake of approximately 65%.

Article provided by Nora Ferm: nora.ferm@ilrf.org

News from Latin America:

Ecuador

- **Freedom of association, Ecuador**

In February 2008 FENACLE conducted an investigation of the floriculture companies in Tabacundo and Cayambe. The study looked at 175 plantations, most of them certified by one or more labels (FLP, Flor del Ecuador, Max Havelaar, Eurogap, Veriflora, etc.),. However there were only 2 unions and a few workers' associations. This clearly indicates that although the companies are certified, the workers still can't join a trade union.

"If you compare the Collective Bargaining Agreement of the company before and after the company has been certified, you can see that some workers' rights have decreased, but the most important thing is that the trade unions don't have the possibility to develop independent activities, " commented Marcelo Arcos of FENACLE.

Original in Spanish by Marcelo Arcos: arcosmarcelo1966@gmail.com

Colombia

- **Floriculture loses its leaves**

Although the flowers have U.S. tariff preferences and entrepreneurs in this sector are determined defenders of FTA, the future of the flower business is unsure and working conditions are extremely precarious. This situation reveals what lies behind the FTA with the U.S.

On December 16th, 2006, 1500 women workers heard that they would lose their jobs because of the "bankruptcy" of the company where they had been working for over ten years. The same day the liquidation of Flores de La Sabana, one of the oldest in the Sabana of Bogota, the main flower-producing region was announced.

The liquidation of Flores de la Sabana, as well as the Flores Mocarí, Acuarela, Floralex and seven more companies nationally, is a reflection of the unprecedented crisis that Colombian floriculture sector is facing and has resulted in the loss of 22,000 jobs in four years, according to Marcos Ossa Ramírez, director of the Antioch chapter of the Association of Colombian flower exporters, Asocolflores.

Entrepreneurs reacted by asking the government for policies that protect the industry, and got a positive response including many types of aid as an incentive to cover exchange rate of 200 pesos per dollar in 2005 and 10,000 million pesos (5 million USD) to offset losses from low temperatures. In addition, some

150,000 million pesos (7.5 million USD) for flowers, foliage and bananas was announced by Minister of Agriculture Andres Felipe Arias, providing support the proper management of the health of crops and for maintaining employment. FTA.

However, the government support has not resulted in the preservation of jobs or improved working conditions. This shows the limits of insisting on export monocultures as a means of development and in particular of job creation. The success story that is used to defend the virtues of FTA with the United States seems to be falling apart for reasons that go beyond this evaluation.

It is not legitimate, in light of the rights of the Colombian population; the Government and chamber of commerce insist on the ratification of FTA that generates unstable and marginal dividends, at the expense of communities, and against sustainable development for the country.

Original in Spanish by Omaira Páez Sepúlveda from CACTUS: omacactusoz@yahoo.es

- **Unfulfilled promises of Alto de Pacandé**

The workers of Agricultural Alto de Pacandé, a flower company located in Gachancipá Cundinamarca, had the patience that Stella Piñeros, manager of the company, asked of them. For four years the workers worked many extra hours without pay; some of them never complained when they were denied health care because their employer didn't make the payments. Other people worked for three continuous years without taking a vacation.

The manager of the company promised them that once the company recovered economically she would pay all what was owed. But that recovery never came, nor did the manager's promises to pay all debts to the workers. During 6 months the workers made every effort to save the company but on April 30th of this year Alto de Pacandé was closed and as expected the workers didn't receive compensation for dismissal.

Original in Spanish by Omaira Páez Sepúlveda from CACTUS: omacactusoz@yahoo.es

- **Two major victories for workers**

Recently, workers at two Dole flower plantations in Colombia signed the only agreements held by Dole flower workers in Colombia and are only the second and third contracts to be signed by independent unions in the Colombian flower sectors. The union at Splendor El Rosal (owned by Dole) finished negotiations on a contract which includes important improvements in wages and working conditions. The second contract at Fragancia was negotiated by the union Untrafragancia and includes wage increases, and education stipends for the children of flower workers, among other improvements.

For more information visit: <http://www.unionvoice.org/ct/z1SaL-F1xPY1/>

Article provided by Nathalie van Haren: nh@bothends.org

Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras

No news

News from Asia:

India

- **Locusts into Horticulture? PE to Buy into Indian Floriculture, Permalink (July 2nd, 2008)**

Karuturi, India's largest floriculture company and the world's largest rose grower (580 million stems annually, mainly for export to Europe), is seeking to sell a 10-15% stake in its Ethiopian subsidiary to private equity in order to finance further expansion of its food and floriculture operations. Karuturi has acquired 40,000 hectares of farmland in Ethiopia where it plans to expand its food processing operations for export (rice, vegetables, palm oil, sugar cane and gherkins). With

an infusion of PE cash, the company also hopes to expand in Ecuador and Colombia.

Ethiopia, with cheap land and labour, has become a magnet for capital investing in the cut flower industry. Air freight to Europe is approximately half the rate of that from India, where cut flower cultivation has been expanding rapidly. Karuturi became number one globally in roses when it acquired the Dutch floriculture company.

Another Indian flower company, Sher Agencies, recently acquired Mauritius-based Globeagro Holdings, which owns three Ethiopian companies employing some 1,000 workers: Alliance Flowers Plc, Holetta Roses PLC, and Oromia Wonders Plc.

Article provided by Sebastian Odanga: sirsebby@yahoo.com

Sri Lanka, Vietnam

No news

News from Europe:

The Netherlands

- **Dutch Product Board of Horticulture appoints new president, Zoetermeer**

Dutch governmental sources confirm that Mr. Tjibbe Joustra will become the next president of the Dutch Product Board for Horticulture (Productschap Tuinbouw). Mr. Joustra (born in 1951, in Hengelo, the Netherlands) brings to this demanding post a proven ability to manage horticultural affairs in an exemplary manner. In a reaction to Joustra's appointment publisher Jaap Kras from Floriculture International says that Joustra's appointment is the best news ever. "Joustra knows the sector inside out. In 1987 he became the Netherlands' youngest secretary-general at the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture. Joustra brings in a wealth of experience, expertise and community involvement that is difficult to match", Kras said. At this moment Joustra is the Dutch national coordinator for counter-terrorism. Joustra will leave this position on January 1, 2009 to join the Productschap Tuinbouw.

Article provided by Nathalie van Haren: nh@bothends.org

- **Mr. Patricio Sambonino, Consultant of FNV Mondiaal for Latin America visit The Netherlands (June 13th, 2008)**

Kees Hoek from OLAA had a meeting with Patricio Sambonino to talk about the visit of the Flower Dutch Coalition to Latin America in May.

They also talked about the relations of trade unions and NGOs in Ecuador, Colombia and Costa Rica; and about the relations between the flower industry and the social society organisations in several countries.

By Kees Hoek: keeshoek@olaa.nl

- **ABVV from Belgium in The Netherlands (June 26th, 2008)**

Kees Hoek from OLAA and René Kouwenhoven from FNV Bondgenoten spoke with a delegation of the Belgium trade union ABVV. ABVV is interested to support a Colombian trade union initiative in the cut flower sector. Beatriz Fuentes, a representative of the Colombian union UNTRAFLORES was present at the visit as well. They spoke about these initiatives and the situation of union membership in general in the Colombian flower industry.

By Kees Hoek: keeshoek@olaa.nl

- **The export of flowers gets a blow, by Hans Maarsen, (FD Amsterdam, July 29th, 2008)**

The Dutch flower business is severely affected by the decline in consumer confidence in Europe. The exports in June abruptly collapsed. The prices of cut flowers have fallen, while the distribution costs, particularly fuel, have increased. Last month the sector was confronted with a sudden change in exports. While the sales of cut flowers were still up 1% in the first half of the year to €1.8 billion; in June they declined 10%, according to the export statistics of the Trade Organisation Agricultural Wholesale.

Original version in Dutch. Article provided by Eva Schmitz from Both Ends: es@bothends.org

- **Training of observers (August 28th, 2008)**

A training will be held for observers on the changes in the CBA. The experiences of the observers will be also discussed and all observers will receive the manual for observers on this occasion.

By René Kouwenhoven from FNV Bondgenoten: R.Kouwenhoven@bg.fnv.nl

UK

- **Blooming marvellous: How one farmer is leading a revival of the true English rose, by Sophie Morris, (UK Independent, July 17th, 2008)**

The phrase "English rose" is often used to describe a girl with a pale complexion and a bloom to the cheeks. When it comes to flowers, though, so many foreign species are flown in from hotter climes that even many florists don't know what a true English rose looks like. Nor can they recognise their scent, unique to each species, a luxury that is often bred out of other roses.

Danaë Brook discovered this lack of expertise when she decided to start growing and selling her own English roses from the garden of her French-style stone house in the village of Little Horkesley in Essex, which stands in 40 acres of land. "I'm still amazed by how many florists are not used to working with English roses," she says.

Not only are Brook's blowsy blooms an immersive sensory experience, they have solid ecological credentials. While not quite organic (they do spray the aphids), most of the roses are grown in the open air, apart from a few new species in a solar-heated greenhouse. No industrial flower-growing methods are used. This means the roses are only available in season, from May to November, though the greenhouse means some species can now be supplied from April.

As all the flowers are grown and sold in the UK and Ireland, their carbon footprint is kept to a minimum. Consumers are becoming more aware of "flower miles", and how much CO₂ is emitted on the journey from bush to bouquet; they are also keen to support British growers.

Another British company that grows English roses is the Real Flower Company, which opened in Selfridges last week and makes central-London deliveries on a trike to cut back on emissions. Like Country Roses, it was started by a few rose enthusiasts who wanted to reintroduce real, scented English roses to British buyers. They grow on two farms, one in Hampshire and one in Kenya, and say that, because all the blooms are flown to the UK on passenger airlines, their carbon footprint is minimal. A study commissioned by the UK importers World Flowers and Sainsbury's last year found that Kenyan-grown flowers air-freighted to the UK emit less carbon than Dutch roses grown using industrial techniques.

Brook believes that, since we are willing to pay more for organic food, flowers shouldn't be any different. But the prices suggest that English roses are not necessarily much more expensive than foreign-grown flowers, simply more difficult to come by.

For more information: www.countryroses.co.uk www.realflowers.co.uk

Belgium

- **Win a FFP bouquet! (August 15th, 2008)**

The last August 15th, the Assumption of Maria and Mother's Day in Antwerp, the Blije Bloemencampagne launched a game where you could win a fair bouquet, tagged with the label FFP and delivered in collaboration with Arena Flowers.

In total 580 people took part in the contest, 254 of them gave us the correct answer and 4 of them were the lucky winners of an FFP bouquet.

Original in Dutch by Barbara Janssens from NBV: barbara@bewustverbruiken.be

- **More information about the origin of cut flowers**

Half of the florists would take the origin, environmental or social aspects of the cut flowers into account in their purchases. This is the result of an investigation made by 'Blije Bloemencampagne' with Antwerp's florists on August 15th, Mother's Day in Antwerp.

For more information visit:

http://www.blijebloemen.be/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=132

Original in Dutch by Barbara Janssens from NBV: barbara@bewustverbruiken.be

France, Germany, Switzerland

No news

Dear Writers:

The next deadline to send your news is on **October 6th 2008**. Don't forget it, this newsletter is for you!!

Thanks,

Betsabé Lugo