



FLOWERS NEWS 8 February 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,

Editors

C. Betsabé Lugo Rodríguez

Secretariat in Amsterdam
Nieuwe Herengracht 29, 1011 RL
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Telephone: +31 (0) 204 273 986
Mobile: +31 (0) 644730650

b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

Sebastian Odanga

Secretariat in Nairobi
West End Place building
Mai Mahiu rd, off Langata rd
P.O BOX 2378-00100 G.P.O
Nairobi, Kenya
Telephone: +254-203503753
Mobile: +254 720 538 855

iuflantic@lantic.net
sirsebby@yahoo.com

News from FFP bodies:

Secretariat – Amsterdam

🚩 Meeting with MPS-ECAS in Honselersdijk (February 19th 2008)

On February 19th Kees Hoek (OLAA), Rene Kouwenhoven (FNV Bongenoten), Eva Schmitz (Secretariat RC) and Betsabé Lugo (Secretariat RC) had a meeting with Jacques Wolbert (MPS-ECAS) and Ben ter Haar (FFP) to talk about the *uitzendbureaus* in The Netherlands. The *uitzendbureaus* are a kind of outsourcing companies. In The Netherlands there are a lot of workers working in the flower farms employed by the *uitzendbureaus* and not directly by the owner of the farm.

By Betsabé Lugo: b.lugo@fairflowersfairplants.com

Secretariat – Nairobi

No news

Board

🚩 Board meeting in Brussel (February 28th 2008)

Points of discussion:

- Announcements from other meetings
- Approval of minutes Board meeting dated on 25 October 2007

- Documents for information (letters from RC to the Board and minutes of the RC meeting in Sri Lanka (15-18 January 2008)
- Meeting delegation FFP Board – MPS Board
- Appoint Vice-Chair & 8th Board member
- Transition period for conditional growers + necessary audits
- Funding FFP Foundation as from 1st September 2008
- Situation Ecuador
- Report on actual state points from minutes 25 October 2007

Next meeting on 17th June 2008.

By Regina Dinkla: r.dinkla@fairflowersfairplants.com

FFP office – Honselersdijk

🌱 FFP participants

FFP has in total 245 growers registered (until 27th February 2008). Only part of them is active at the moment via the pilots.

By Regina Dinkla: r.dinkla@fairflowersfairplants.com

News from Africa:

Ethiopia

🌱 Flourish industry in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, floriculture is the new star turn of an economy that is 80% agricultural. Land under cultivation for flowers is projected to treble by 2009. Exports were \$12.6m in 2005, compared with \$ 660,000 in 2001. More than 80,000 jobs have been created in around 77 flower farm companies. Government tax and investment incentives, and low labour costs even by African standards, mean Ethiopia is beginning to edge out traditional suppliers such as Kenya.



The greenhouses are giant, temperature-controlled and irrigated. Within are tens of thousands of pristine rosebuds. The varieties include Valentino, Tropical Amazon, Wild Calypso, Viva and Alyssia, all destined for England, Germany and Scandinavia via Dutch importers. Demand is growing in Europe and the middle east, and more environment –friendly greenhouses are planned.

An average flower farm worker earns about 10 Ethiopian Birr a day, or just over \$1. Government officials say Ethiopia has now established a sound model for macroeconomic success, based on so called Agricultural development-led industrialisation strategy. The Government is supportive effectively underwriting startup capital while encouraging profit-driven, free enterprise approach. Infrastructure developments, including road building, fibre-optic networks, and hydroelectric projects that will eventually sell energy to Kenya and Sudan, are points of pride and hope.

SOURCE: Guardian Unlimited, February 11, 2008 1:30 PM

Kenya

🌱 Political crisis in Kenya sends fear in the Industry

Expectations were high that players in the horticultural industry would raise their glasses to toast for remarkable earnings last year, but their expectations and hopes have turned into worry. The sector had an impressive run in 2007, with earnings climbing by 64 per cent to Sh49.5 billion, buoyed by strong demand in key international markets, surprising even analysts who had raised concern over diverse challenges such as the food miles concept, a strengthening shilling against the dollar and expiring trade arrangements with Europe.

But an outbreak of violence related to the disputed presidential election results, especially around the main growing areas around Naivasha and west of the Rift Valley seems to have spoiled the party for producers, as fear mounts over gangs blocking the shipment of produce from the farms and disrupting labour.

The latest wave of unrest especially around Naivasha and Kericho has raised great concern in the sectors as thousands of people providing casual labour in the flower farms have been displaced from their homes. Analysts warn that the displacements will hit the flower farms that require intensive labour in picking and packaging.

Besides the shortage of manpower, there is also a massive threat to shipment of consignments to Nairobi and Eldoret International airports from where they are transported to markets abroad. Gangs of youth have since the weekend been erecting illegal roadblocks along the main Kericho/ Nairobi highway, paralysing traffic.

For more information contact Sebastian Odanga: sirsebby@yahoo.com

Flower firms sweeten perks to retain workers

The welfare of workers in the horticulture industry has taken a leap for the better as employers cushion their firms against looming loss of sales in the wake of political turmoil, industry players said.

Employers, particularly in the violence hit Naivasha area, are offering the workers free accommodation and 24-hour security to maintain their output levels in the prime February-March season that accounts for 40 per cent of the industry's total annual sales.

The work in the Naivasha flower farms has been paralysed as political unrest spread to central Rift Valley — leading to displacement of thousands of people.

"The growers have agreed to shelter the workers in the farms to ensure their safety during these turbulent times," said Jane Ngige, the chief executive officer of Kenya Flower Council. Industry insiders said the move represents a major breakthrough for the employees who have fought long drawn out battles with their employers over their welfare. Most employees in the farms live away from their workplace and have to commute to their places of work daily.

Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) statistics showed that by category, the flower export farmers earned Sh30.97 billion, vegetable export farmers earned Sh16.97 billion while fruit export farmers bagged Sh 1.57billion, over 2007. (Ksh 69 equivalent to 1 US \$)

For more information contact Sebastian Odanga: sirsebby@yahoo.com

Fair trade gives Kenyan flowers an edge in UK (Report by the Daily Nation Nairobi, February 13th 2008)

Kenyan flower growers are set to reap the benefits of Fairtrade certification this week, as more Valentine's shoppers in Europe opt for ethically grown roses. Sales of Fairtrade flowers in the UK, the second biggest Fairtrade market in Europe, hit an estimated 72 million stems during 2007, according to the Fairtrade Foundation, up from 47 million the prior year. They had already almost trebled between 2005 and 2006.

The rose, the UK's best-selling flower and most popular choice for Valentine's Day, was the first flower to be marketed under the Fairtrade label in 2004 and one supplier estimates that up to a fifth of all roses sold in the UK are now Fairtrade certified. Almost all of these are grown in Kenya, putting the country's Fairtrade farms in a strong position this month. In February, flower sales tend to rise by about five



times the monthly average.

Kenya is considered the largest supplier of Fairtrade flowers to Europe, accounting for between 50-60 per cent of total volumes. It now has 17 Fairtrade certified farms, according to the Fairtrade Labelling Organisations group in Germany, more than any other flower growing country. The rise in popularity of Fairtrade flowers has allowed Kenya to shrug off concerns about environmental damage done when air-freighting flowers to Europe.

For more information contact Sebastian Odanga: sirsebby@yahoo.com

Tanzania, Uganda

No news

News from North America:

United States

🌍 Valentine's Day

On Valentine's Day, ILRF Executive Director Bama Athreya spoke at a Congressional briefing on "Labour Conditions in the Colombian Flower Industry" organized by three Members of the US Congress. The same day, Nora Ferm spoke at a United Nations briefing in New York attended by representatives of approximately 175 international NGOs.

By Nora Ferm: nora.ferm@ilrf.org

🌍 Valentine's Day gifts leave a bitter taste (Financial Times, February 13th 2008)

Labour rights campaigners will take some of the romance out of Valentine's Day on Thursday by warning lovers that their traditional gifts of flowers and chocolates are often bought at an intolerable cost to those who produce them.

At a briefing hosted by the United Nations, they plan to highlight the suffering of farm labourers in Africa and Latin America, some of whom work in near slave conditions to supply goods to a -predominantly western market.

"Valentine's Day gifts are about caring and it is important that the companies that supply chocolates and cut flowers know that their customers also care about the workers who are at the end of the supply chain," said Stephen Pursey, director of policy integration at the International Labour Organization, which has a speaker at Thursday's session in New York.

By Harvey Morris at the United Nations. Financial Times. To see the whole article go to: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/7a327afa-da66-11dc-9bb9-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick_c&nclick_check=1

News from Latin America:

Colombia

🌍 Colombia is ready to export 300 million stems of certified Florverde® flowers for the Holiday (Press Release Asocoflores, Bogotá, January 15th 2008)

Sending flowers is certainly one of the most special ways to brighten up someone's day, especially in Valentine's Day. Flowers have the power to convey what can't be done by words. The rose you give your love this Valentine's Day will most likely come from south of the border, from Colombia, South America.

The Colombian floriculture industry represents a stable job opportunity for more than 100.000 women, mostly head of household. Colombia is the second largest exporter of fresh cut flowers and one of the most important suppliers of the United Kingdom, said Augusto Solano, President of the Colombian Association of Flower Exporters (Asocoflores). At the same time, Solano added that "Colombia is blessed with high altitudes, permanent sunlight and predictable weather

patterns, making it an ideal spot to grow different varieties of flowers. Like coffee, our flowers are the finest in the world.”

Colombia exported more than one billion dollars worth of flowers world wide in 2007. Floriculture and related industries in Colombia create near to 200.000 jobs. Including their families, close to one million people depend economically on floriculture. Sixty percent of floral farm workers are single women who are heads of households.

As the size and influence of the Colombian floriculture industry expands, it continues to enhance working standards and make great strides in improving the lives of floral workers. Asocolflores is celebrating eleven years of Florverde®, its unique certification program which was created to improve the lives and living standards of floral farm workers and their families; to preserve and protect the environment for the industry’s farmers for generations to come; and to ensure high-quality, affordable flowers for consumers year-round. Currently 171 Colombian farms, comprising half of the acreage devoted to growing flowers, have qualified for or are in the process of qualifying for, Florverde® certification and it’s estimated they will export almost 300 million stems of certified flowers during the Saint Valentine’s season.

Florverde®-certified farms’ uses of agricultural chemicals are consistent with U.S. regulations. Workers are educated and trained in the safe use of these chemicals and provided appropriate safety equipment. Access to on site medical care, dining areas and hot meals are provided. Some farms go beyond specified worker requirements and offer child care, housing subsidies and literacy education. Certification is verified by an independent third party, SGS, a renowned international audit company headquartered in Switzerland, widely recognized as the global benchmark for quality and integrity. SGS has worked with such companies as Avon, Mc Donald’s, the GAP and Shopko.

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

Florverde®: from a program of continuous improvement to a recognised standard for social and environmental care

Florverde® was initially, in 1996, created to enhance overall performance by providing a systemized approach to improve labour conditions and environmental practices. In response to NGO allegations of poor environmental stewardship and working conditions in the early 90s, Colombian farmers developed a set of standards that became the foundation of Florverde®.

Initial participation in Florverde® is voluntary. Once certified compliance is mandatory to maintain certification. More than 160 farms comprising half of the Colombian floriculture acreage participate in Florverde® today.

Florverde® flowers are grown with 50% less pesticides as compared to 1998. Today Florverde® is a model program for the Ecuadorian flower and Colombian banana industries.

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

Asocolflores released a new version of the Florverde standard

In 2007, Asocolflores released a new version of the Florverde standard. This new version weakened some of the protections for flower workers on Florverde-certified farms. For example:

- . Discipline: The 2007 version no longer requires companies to keep minutes of disciplinary procedures or to inform workers in writing when sanctions are applied. This increases the risk of firings and sanctions without just cause.

- . Salary policies: Certified companies are no longer required to make efforts to help workers understand their pay slips and deductions, or to put salary policies in writing. If the workers are unable to interpret their pay slips, they will be unable to verify that the company’s internal regulations and Colombian labor law are being complied with.

- . The priority on local hiring was removed.

. Trainings: Companies are no longer required to have adequate training facilities, to keep records on trainings that have been held, or to provide sanitation training for food handling personnel. Trainings for workers on issues of discrimination and harassment have also been eliminated. Workers who are insufficiently trained are at greater risk for occupational health and safety accidents and illnesses.

. Health and safety: Companies are no longer obliged to carry out inspections to ensure that workers and subcontractors use their personal protective equipment.

Persistent weaknesses: The 2006 version of the Florverde standard already provided insufficient or no protection for workers rights in following areas. None of these shortcomings were addressed in the new version of Florverde.

. Freedom of association. The Florverde standard does not give workers the right to form the organization of their choice, nor does it prohibit companies from engaging in anti-union activities.

. Florverde does not guarantee workers' right to collective bargaining.

. Non-discrimination. Florverde's non-discrimination clause does not include a specific ban on discrimination based on union membership.

Furthermore, it does not ban pregnancy, HIV or genetic tests during recruitment, which may be used in a discriminatory way.

. Wages and working hours. Florverde does not require that salaries afford workers decent living conditions, nor does it state that overtime work should be voluntary and paid at a higher rate than normal hours. It also fails to require that workers be given 24 hours consecutive rest every 7 days.

. Florverde does not explicitly ban forced labor.

In February 2008, 25 NGOs and unions from 10 countries sent a letter to Asocolflores expressing concern about the new standard and the fact that consumers are led to believe that the Florverde standard guarantees decent and safe working conditions on certified farms, when in fact the standard is missing key protections for labor and the environment.

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

The cost of a flower (CACTUS Press release No. 1, January 22nd 2008)

Colombia is the second largest exporter of flowers after Holland, and the primary provider of flowers to the US market. According to the Bank of the Republic, in 2006, 55% of flowers sold in the US were from Colombia. According to Asocolflores (2007), there are 98,641 people directly employed by the flower industry, and 83,533 indirectly employed. For them, work in floriculture represents the possibility of a job, in a context of widespread unemployment and informality.

But despite the constant political and economic backing that the exporters receive in times of crisis, the workers share the losses but not the profits: The average salary in the sector is minimum wage, which is insufficient to cover a family's basic survival needs. Job stability is constantly threatened by changes in employer whims, climate, or market demand, which last year left about 6,000 workers from Splendor Flowers and Flores de la Sabana unemployed.

Hiring through cooperatives and other intermediaries is also common, and it allows employers to violate legal norms and repress union organizing. In floriculture, hidden anti-union practices are common, particularly through the formation and promotion of company unions which do not represent workers' rights and which negotiate in favour of employers' interests.

Working days are excessively long, especially around times like Valentine's Day, when they can be up to 20 hours long. Production quotas range from 250-300 stems per hour for harvesters and 1,250 to 1,500 per hour for those who work in the classification and parking department. These demands lead to occupational health risks.

On Valentine's Day, Corporación Cactus, a development NGO, and other local, national, and international organizations, promote this celebration by encouraging the World not only to speak of exports, exchange rates, flowers and bouquets, but also of the faces and realities of the workers that make the industry possible. So, thousands of workers will be honoured on February 14, the International Day of Flower Workers.

By Cooperation Cactus: www.cactus.org.co

 **Dole Fresh Flowers receives the Florverde Certification for all its farm and bouquet operations in Colombia (Business Wire, Westlake Village, California, January 4th 2008)**

Dole Food Company announced today that Dole Fresh Flowers has received the Florverde Certification at its farm operations in Colombia, South America. The Florverde Certification represents that its certified members grow their flowers in compliance with environmental, social, labour and occupational health and safety standards. In order to receive the Florverde® certification, participating farms must comply with all compulsory standards and codes of conduct, including operational and social guidelines. Certification is verified by an independent third party, SGS, a renowned international audit company based in Switzerland as stated by Florverde.

About Dole Food Company: Dole is committed to the quality of our products, sustainable environmental practices and the wellbeing of our 75,000 employees worldwide. Dole contributes generously to the communities where it operates around the world, promoting nutrition and health education as well as a healthier, more sustainable environment.

Dole Food Company, Inc., with 2006 revenues of \$6.2 billion, is the world's largest producer and marketer of high-quality fresh fruit, fresh vegetables and fresh-cut flowers. Dole markets a growing line of packaged and frozen foods and is a produce industry leader in nutrition education and research.

SOURCE: Dole Food Company, Inc. Friday, Jan. 4 2008 Copyright Business Wire 2008

Ecuador

 **A Rose Is [Not] a Rose (Audobon magazine)**

Between rows of tall, pale pink roses, he came at me like Darth Vader in a billowing cloud of vapours, his identity cloaked beneath a black face mask, hood, and plastic clothes. But the material coming out of the worker's hose was a fog of agricultural chemicals.

"Venenos," explained my guide, César Estacio. Poisons. Once a labourer on a rose farm like this, Estacio is now director of a support organization for workers in Cayambe, 50 miles north of Quito, Ecuador, a town rooted in agriculture, cattle ranching, and now roses.

The worker's ominous outfit might have given the impression that safety measures were being taken here to shield both the man behind the sprayer and the people labouring in the greenhouse. But the action was likely inadequate. None of the other workers were wearing protective gear. And when I followed one of the farm's canals carrying irrigation runoff to a catch-water lagoon, I found another telltale sign of the rose's toxic toll here in Ecuador: dead fish floating belly-up in pesticide-laced waters. "The chemicals wind up in the rivers," Estacio said. "By the time the rivers pass through the farms, they're all polluted."

By Charles Bergman, Audobon Magazine. To see the whole article go to: <http://audubonmagazine.org/features0801/organics.html>

Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras

No news

News from Asia:

Sri Lanka, India, Vietnam

No news

News from Europe:

Netherlands

No news

Italy

🌍 Festival dei fiori (San Remo Italy, January 25th 2008)

On January 25th the annual exhibition "Festival dei fiori" took place in Sanremo, in the courtly frame of Palafiori, , probably the most important meeting for flowers retailers in Italy, with special contests and presentments at national and international level.

Association "Fiore Giusto" the new multistakeholders organisation with focus on environmental and social right in flowers production, engaged the festival with an informative stand where people interested in sustainable flower had found information on this topic and had chance to sustain with a signature, the introduction of the ICC in Italy.



🌍 Interview of Cristiano Calvi by the Italian television (29th January 2008)

On January 29th , Rai2, a public national television station has interviewed Mr Cristiano Calvi, President of "Fiore Giusto" and head of "Movimento Fiori e Diritti" for the television program "Un mondo a colori". Topics of the interview was the production situation of cut flowers industry in Ecuador and Kenya, the global need for a certification ensuring basic social need for workers at every latitudes and the establishment of "Fiore Giusto" association.

By Cristiano Calvi: direzione@fioriediritti.org , informazioni@fioriediritti.org

UK, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium

No news

Dear Writers:

The next deadline to send your news is on **April 7th 2008**. Don't forget it, this newsletter is for you!!

Thanks,

Betsabé Lugo and Sebastian Odanga
Editors