



CALL FOR PROPOSALS

EFFECTS OF SUPPLY CHAIN SUSTAINABILITY APPROACHES ON DECENT WORK OUTCOMES IN THE AGRICULTURE, TEXTILE AND APPAREL SECTORS

A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

ISEAL and partners are looking for an experienced and reputed research team to conduct a systematic evidence review on the effects of supply chain sustainability approaches on decent work outcomes in the agriculture, textile and apparel sectors.

Deadline for expressions of interest: 10th April 2023

Deadline for submitting proposals: 20th April 2023

Background: need for this research study

In the last three decades, a plethora of approaches and tools¹ have emerged to incentivise supply chain action and deliver better outcomes for workers and employees in line with economic and social sustainability goals. These approaches emerged from an acknowledgement of continued worker vulnerabilities experienced in global supply chains across sectors and an inability of local legal frameworks and individual company practices to adequately address them. The very nature of global value chains meant that solutions to issues such as low wages, poor working conditions, systemic human rights abuses, and overall worker empowerment could not be left to national policy alone but needed a more transnational approach that raised standards across the board. Examples of such approaches include third-party voluntary sustainability standards and certification, sector-wide pre-competitive approaches and international normative frameworks such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. More recently, individual companies have come forward to raise the bar for themselves and their peers with public commitments and targeted sustainability programmes within their supply chains on specific decent work issues such as living wages.

As voluntary supply chain actions gain traction and legislation around decent work tightens, there is a need to take stock of the empirical evidence base on (if and) how voluntary tools have delivered better outcomes for workers. Over the years, a good body of research has emerged studying the impacts and effectiveness of such tools and approaches. However, this knowledge base is dispersed, varying in quality and difficult to interpret meaningfully to inform policy and practice. This research study, led by a partnership comprising [ISEAL](#), [IDH – the sustainable trade initiative](#), [Rainforest Alliance](#) and [Evidensia](#), aims to fill this gap.

Research questions and focus

As lead implementing partner for this collaboration, ISEAL is looking to commission a reputed and competent research team to undertake this systematic review study that will assess the current state of knowledge on impacts and effectiveness of supply chain sustainability tools and approaches to deliver better outcomes for workers and employees. It will aim to generate actionable insight and intelligence to inform market action and inform policy developments to advance on decent work goals as set out in SDG 8.

This systematic review will focus on two research questions:

- RQ1: How effective are various supply-chain sustainability approaches at implementing the decent work goals they set? What is the extent and quality of adoption of criteria, standards, codes set by these initiatives across contexts and sectors of interest?
- RQ2: What are the effects of supply chain sustainability initiatives on endpoint decent work outcomes such as worker wages and remuneration; terms of work and working conditions; and worker voice and social dialogue?

¹ In this document, an ‘approach’ refers to broad categories of supply chain sustainability interventions such as the use of sustainability standards, company own codes of conduct, company investment programmes, pre-competitive collaborations or partnerships and so on. In contrast a ‘tool’ refers to individual examples of such approaches such as a specific Standard or Certification system (such as Fairtrade or the RSPO), a specific Code of Conduct (such as the Ethical Trading Initiative) or a specific collaboration such as the IDH Roadmap on Living Wages.

This systematic review with adopt the Evidensia systematic review and synthesis method that has been used in past reviews conducted by Evidensia (see [2018 review](#), [2019 review](#) and [2020 review](#)). Evidensia systematic reviews are designed to include systematic search, mapping, coding and review of results and insights emerging from the available evidence base on key questions of interest. Outputs from the reviews include a detailed review paper with findings, analysis and results as well as data coded into Evidensia's [visual summaries](#) that presents results from quantitative studies and [knowledge matrix](#) that presents knowledge gaps that remain post the review.

Key topics and outcomes of interest

1. Wages & Remuneration:

- Worker wages; living wages; per unit wages
- Quantity and quality of in-kind benefits;
- Gender pay gaps; equal pay for equal work
- Worker productivity

2. Terms of work and working conditions:

- Job security, hours, overtime, contracts, hiring and contracting practices
- Occupational Health and Safety, social protection
- Worker representation, grievance redressal
- Gender based violence at the workplace, gender equality and empowerment, POSH (prevention of sexual harassment), safe workspaces for women
- Elimination of forced and bonded labour, modern slavery and trafficking, hazardous forms of child labour

3. Worker voice and social dialogue:

- Worker voice and representation in governance and supply chains
- Collective bargaining, freedom of association
- Social dialogue and healthy industrial relations

Cross-sectional analysis across the two research questions:

- Cross-sectional analysis on specific worker groups or vulnerable groups (women workers, migrant workers)
- Analysis of enabling conditions, barriers that enhance or reduce the effectiveness of supply chain sustainability approach (s)

Sectors of focus:

- Agriculture (smallholder farms and large plantation farms)
- Textiles and Apparel

Key approaches of interest:

- Voluntary sustainability standards (VSS) also referred to as Multistakeholder Initiatives (MSIs)
- Specific global or regional implementation norms for responsible supply chains (UN Charter on Business and Human Rights)
- Sustainable sourcing codes (such as the Ethical Trading Initiative or Partnership for Sustainable Textiles and the codes from companies)
- Supply-chain investment programmes (Ethical Tea Partnership, Coffee made Happy (Mondelez), Fair Wear Foundation, Sustainable Fisheries Partnership; Own company programmes)

Researchers should note that a draft systematic review protocol has been developed and can be shared with interested teams upon submission of a formal expression of interest in response to the RFP. This should also be considered for timelines of completion of the study.

The researcher / team

ISEAL is looking for a research team with the following qualifications and experience:

- Proven research background, experience and track record of working on decent work issues in the context of sustainability
- Expertise and experience in carrying out systematic reviews and synthesis research in the field of social sciences and international development or sustainability
- Strong knowledge of the sustainability landscape, especially supply chain led or market-based sustainability tools and their functioning
- Domain knowledge of at least one of the two sectors of focus for this research review (agriculture; textile & apparel)
- Publishing record of research in the field of sustainability and decent work (academic publications or grey literature)
- Clear and compelling writing that can be easily digestible and engaging to a range of audiences
- Extremely good project management skills and an ability to bring together and manage a research team to deliver this on time
- Working knowledge of Spanish and French (in addition to English) in order to capture literature published in these languages

Outputs, timeline and budget

The outputs from this effort will be a high quality, coherent and easy to interpret research report that summarises results and insights from the evidence on key outcomes of interest. We also expect data from the review to be coded into the Evidensia database and platform as well as a full list of literature identified and references. Additional outputs such as briefing notes, a summary document, a slide deck may also be expected from the research team.

1. A high-quality, well-written research report accompanied by a standalone summary report and accompanying slide deck.
2. Data to populate Evidensia's visual summaries, knowledge map, geographic map features (guidance will be provided).
3. Shorter case studies or briefing notes on key supply chain actions, especially aimed at the private sector.
4. Systematic mapping and review sheet (supplementary material) eg: the details of evidence mapped against key interventions and outcomes and filterable by sector and product.

The timeline for the project is from March – August 2023. We appreciate that this is a tight timeline and only teams that have confidence of being able to complete the research in this time should apply for this consultancy.

The total budget available for the search, synthesis, writing of the report and participation in learning and outreach activities is Euros 65,000 (inclusive of any taxes).

To Apply

Step 1: Researchers or teams interested in this opportunity should submit a formal expression of interest by April 10th 2023 to Vidya Rangan (vidya@isealalliance.org)

Step 2: Teams should submit a proposal no later than April 20th, 2023, that includes the following:

- A detailed research proposal (no longer than 8 pages, excluding CVs) based on a clear understanding of the ToR and research questions, clearly detailing the proposed systematic review methodology, building off the draft protocol shared and detailing it further.
- A detailed CV of lead researcher(s) or resume outlining relevant research experience, qualifications, publication record and two recent references.
- Two recent research reports authored by the lead researcher(s) (preferably with relevant subject matter focus).
- Detailed budget for the work, including details of daily rates for consultancy and number of days required to do this work.
- A detailed timeline for this project with key milestones identified.
- Researchers should declare all potential conflicts of interest.
- A research ethics policy or approach to be followed for this study

The total budget should include researchers' time and incidentals such as telephone expenses and any taxes (including VAT). The budget should not include travel costs. Any travel needed for this project must be approved in advance by ISEAL and will be reimbursed based on agreed guidelines. Teams should account for time to complete the study and at least 2 days of time to support / participate in learning and outreach activities upon completion of the study.

All information exchanged during the contract will be confidential, unless otherwise indicated, and the consultant will be expected to sign a confidentiality agreement with ISEAL at the outset.

A researcher/research team will be selected based on their experience and expertise in conducting such research, understanding of the questions and approach suggested, ability to work to the timeline, resource efficiency and quality of previous research work. Interviews will be conducted by the partners with shortlisted teams after which a final selection will be made.

Interested researchers should contact Vidya Rangan, Senior Manager, Impacts and Innovations at ISEAL (vidya@isealalliance.org) with any queries regarding this opportunity.

Closing date for submissions is April 20th 2023 and should be sent to vidya@isealalliance.org with a copy to vi@isealalliance.org.