⑤ BUILDING AWARENESS & SUPPORT FOR CODES

Who is this paper for?

Individuals in supermarkets, export associations, importing and exporting companies who are responsible for ensuring that a code of practice is implemented.

Purpose of this paper

To provide a strategy and practical tips on how to raise awareness about a code of practice, and how to win and maintain support from those people whose help you need in making the code work.

Executive Summary

Ideally, all key stakeholders should be involved in developing the code, since the *process* of code development is in itself a great tool for building awareness and a sense of ownership amongst those who are involved. If a code has already been developed with little stakeholder involvement, provide flexibility to suppliers (importers, growers) in *how* they interpret and implement the code – this will help to win them onto your side.

In addition, an effective strategy for building stakeholder support for your code needs to cover the following steps:

❶ **Identifying your audience** – whose support do you have to win?

❷ **Developing audience profiles** – what are the implications of codes for each audience?

❸ **Identifying entry points** – how do you introduce the code to each audience?

❹ **Choosing your messenger** – who is best placed to convince your audience and win their support?

❺ **Choosing the language & media** – what is the best way of communicating with your audiences?

❻ **Deciding what to put in the message** – what information do your audiences need to know?

Putting a code into practice and reaching compliance takes time, so you need to find ways of maintaining the support of key stakeholders. This means providing on-going support and incentives for good compliance.

Introduction

Many of the major European supermarkets are now implementing codes of practice in response to growing consumer concern about food production methods and their impact on poor people and the environment. Codes require producers to meet minimum standards on food safety, working conditions, and environmentally friendly production. In all parts of the world, exporters and growers supplying European supermarkets are now being asked to comply with these codes.

A common challenge faced by all those involved in promoting codes is how you actually go about building awareness and support for your code. As the ethical sourcing manager for a UK supermarket, *you* are convinced about the need for a code of conduct. But how do you go about convincing sceptical suppliers? As an exporter in Africa who supplies a number of UK multiples, you recognise the importance of code compliance in order to stay in the market. But how will you make

your outgrowers take it seriously? How do you inform your workforce about the code, without running the risk of unrealistically raising their expectations?

This paper aims to provide a strategy and practical tips on how to got about raising awareness about your code, and how to go about winning support from those people whom you need behind you.

Involving stakeholders in code development

The *process* of developing a code is in itself a great tool for building awareness and a sense of ownership amongst those who are involved. Ideally therefore, all key stakeholders – workers, growers, exporters, importers, and organisations who represent their interests – should be involved in developing the code itself. By discussing and thrashing out the details of the code, growers will start thinking in earnest about why these issues are important, and how they can implement them on their farms. By being involved from the start, they are more likely to feel they have a vested interest in making the code work.

However, we do not live in an ideal world. More often than not, you inherit a code that others have developed. In such a case, providing flexibility to growers in *how* they interpret and implement the code can help win them onto your side. This does *not* mean having to lower standards – it means letting producers and workers find alternative solutions that are appropriate to local economic, social, political and cultural conditions. You give them a fixed destination, but let them choose their own path to reach it.

The strategy described in the rest of this paper assumes that a code has already been developed, and that there has previously been limited consultation with key stakeholders.

Strategy for building support: the building blocks

Developing a strategy for building awareness and support amongst your key audiences involves answering the following questions:

❶ Whose support do you have to win?

❷ What are the implications of code implementation for each audience?

❸ What will be the "entry points" for each audience?

❹ Who will be your messenger?

❺ What communication channels or media will you use? What language?

❻ What do you put in your message?

Each of these questions is addressed in turn below.

❶ Identifying your audience

Whose support do you have to win to make the code work? That is, who are your target audiences? In general terms, your target audiences should include:

➢ Anyone who is supposed to benefit from implementing the code (e.g. workers). Intended beneficiaries need to be informed about what they are entitled to under the code.

➢ Anyone who has direct responsibility for implementing one or more aspects of the code.

➢ Anyone else who can substantially influence the effectiveness or credibility of the code, either positively or negatively.

Obviously, the specific target audiences will depend on your particular circumstances, and where you are in the supply chain. Typical target audiences for an exporter/grower and a supermarket ethical sourcing manager are given below by way of example:

As a…...	You would need to gain the support of…
Exporter/grower:	*Intended beneficiaries:* field and packhouse workers
	Those with direct responsibility: farm & packhouse managers, supervisors, quality controllers, pesticide spray team, union representatives, health & safety officers; any outgrowers.
	Influential players: customers
Supermarket manager of ethical sourcing:	*Intended beneficiaries:* field and packhouse workers
	Those with direct responsibility: importers/category managers, growers and exporters, any supermarket staff responsible for auditing producers (e.g. technical auditors asked to carry out social audits)
	Influential players: Other supermarket departments – buyers, technical department, quality managers, and senior managers; media, NGOs campaigning on codes.

❷ Developing audience profiles

Once you have defined your target audiences, the next step is to identify the likely implications of code implementation from the point of view of each audience. It is useful to develop **audience profiles** which address the following questions:

➢ What are the likely costs and benefits of compliance to each audience group?

➢ Is the audience more likely to find some aspects of the code more sensitive or difficult to implement than others?

➢ What are the types of constraints they are likely to face in implementing the code?

➢ Do you have the power and interest to help overcome some of those constraints?

An example of an audience profile of Zimbabwean horticultural exporter-growers, as might be drawn up by a customer (e.g. importer), is presented below:

EXAMPLE: Audience profile of Zimbabwean horticultural exporter-growers *	
Potential benefits of codes to the audience:	Improved management efficiency, improved relations between management and workers, improved worker productivity, cost savings through implementing environmental efficiency measures (e.g. through reducing pesticide use), chance to stay in export market.
Potential costs of codes:	*Costs of compliance:* Capital costs (e.g. improving worker housing, building toilets, pesticide stores, investing in more environmentally friendly technologies, improving record-keeping systems), increased training and awareness-raising costs (especially training outgrowers), higher wages, increased level of non-wage benefits. Also *auditing costs.*
Sensitive areas:	Higher wages, unionisation, working hours
Constraints:	Political instability and fickle market (which discourage long-term investments), economic constraints (e.g. high interest rates), poor infrastructure (e.g. lack of schools, hospitals), high freight costs, growing numbers of AIDS orphans (should they be given jobs?)
Possible assistance you can offer:	Technical assistance, progressive targets for difficult areas, exceptions to child labour restrictions in the case of AIDS orphans, financial contribution to auditing costs.

* Based on results of NRET field research with Zimbabwean horticultural exporters and growers

❸ Identifying entry points

Once you have developed the audience profiles, you are in a good position to select appropriate entry points for engaging with your audiences. Codes are complex. They have a wide scope (covering social, environmental as well as food safety issues), and often it is difficult for those further down the supply chain to appreciate the drivers or rationale behind the development and implementation of codes.

There is plenty of scope for misunderstanding. For example, growers often perceive codes to be a threat to their business – yet another hurdle they have to jump in order to stay in the export market. So it is important to find a way of introducing your code that is non-threatening, positive, and that makes sense to the audience in question. The emphasis and "pitch" of an introduction may vary considerably from audience to audience. Based on the audience profiles, you need to identify appropriate entry points for each audience, which:

➢ emphasise potential benefits to the audience of code compliance, e.g. by drawing on examples of other producers who have complied, and have seen certain benefits

➢ avoid sensitive areas

➢ acknowledge potential costs and constraints faced by the audience in meeting compliance;

➢ identify potential areas where you can assist in meeting costs etc.

➢ use appropriate language and practical illustrations that make it relevant to the audience

An example of entry points used by the NRET research team to introduce codes to pineapple exporters in Ghana is given below:

EXAMPLE FROM NRET EXPERIENCE: Identifying entry points for Ghanaian pineapple exporters

Before NRET started its research project on codes of practice in Ghana, few people in the export pineapple industry had had much to do with codes. Initially, our researchers were laughed at when they went to farms to talk about social or environmental issues. However, over time, the research team managed to raise awareness and support for the codes after they had developed a better understanding of the aspirations and concerns of pineapple exporters. The key "entry points" used included:

➢ Most exporters in Ghana are supplying the wholesale markets through importers, but all of them aspire to supplying the supermarkets. UK supermarkets are seen in particular as being "top of the pile". The research team therefore emphasised that code compliance was now becoming a prerequisite for supplying UK supermarkets – codes were becoming synonymous with the high end of the market.

➢ Ghanaian exporters look up to the older, successful horticultural export industries in Eastern and Southern Africa. The research team therefore emphasised that growers in these industries e.g. Zimbabwe, Kenya, were already being asked to comply with codes by their supermarket buyers, and that they had been busy developing their own national codes. We also invited the Chairman of the Zimbabwe HPC – a vegetable exporter himself – to make a visit to Ghana (see **Section 4** below).

➢ The research team realised that there was potential for many growers to cut costs by reducing pesticide use, without any negative effects on productivity. So they discussed this aspect of codes with growers. After these discussions, a number of growers reviewed their pesticide use on their own initiative, and ended up reducing pesticide applications even although there was no pressure at that time for them to comply with any code. This initial success made them feel more positively disposed towards other aspects of codes.

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❹ Choosing your messenger

You should think carefully about the most appropriate messenger. The less you know the audience, the more likely you are to benefit from using an intermediary, rather than approaching the audience yourself. Your audience is much more likely to listen to someone whom they trust and respect.

For example, as an ethical sourcing manager for a UK supermarket, you may initially have little contact with overseas growers and exporters. On the other hand, technical managers may have developed good relationships with many long-term suppliers. If you can get them on your side, they can help promote the code to suppliers. If you decide to organise a code awareness-raising workshop in the UK for overseas suppliers, get relevant technical managers, and preferably also buyers, to introduce the workshop. Alternatively, if you have many producers in a country with a strong producer-exporter association, you may wish to invest in convincing an influential individual in the export association to put your case across to the association's members.

If you are an export association trying to promote your own national code, it is worth spending time on getting a couple of the leaders in the industry on board, and then enlist them to sell the benefits of the code to other growers and exporters in the industry. With some industries, the simple fact that respected industry leaders are following the code may be enough to encourage others to follow suit

You may also consider inviting respected producers from a neighbouring horticultural exporting country to talk about how they have implemented, and benefited from, a code.

EXAMPLE FROM NRET EXPERIENCE

As a side-activity to the NRET research project, we invited the then-Chairman of the Horticultural Promotion Council (HPC) of Zimbabwe to meet the Horticultural Association of Ghana and key fruit and vegetable growers in Ghana. The Zimbabwean export horticulture industry is seen as a "leading African light" by the Ghanaian industry, and the HPC have also been active in developing and promoting their own national code of practice. The visit of the HPC Chairman had a significant effect on the industry, in terms of encouraging them to improve organisation of the industry, and to take codes more seriously.

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❺ Choosing the language and media

People learn things in different ways. Most people working in a supermarket, importing company or NGO in the UK will have been to secondary school, possibly to university, so will know how to read. Many will have access to a computer, and be able to find information on the Internet. In contrast, many workers on a Ghanaian export pineapple farm will not be able to read very well – neither in English, nor in their own local languages. Much of what they learn will be from face-to-face contact with colleagues, relatives, neighbours, or from the radio. Clearly, the language and means of communication used for raising awareness amongst Ghanaian farm workers will look quite different from those used for supermarket managers.

Finding answers to the following questions will help you come up with an effective awareness-raising approach for each of your target audiences:

➤ How does the target audience normally get new information and new ideas i.e. through what communication channels? (e.g. colleagues, radio farming programmes, journals)

➤ What makes them choose one information source over another? E.g. why do they attend Conference A, but not Conference B?

➤ In what format (style, length, level of detail) would they like to receive new information? (e.g. face-to-face interactive discussions, database on the Internet, on-farm practical training sessions)

➤ How much time will the audience realistically devote to reading about code issues, or to attending awareness-raising events?

EXAMPLE: Preferred communication channels and media for different audiences *

TARGET AUDIENCE	THEIR PREFERRED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS & MEDIA
Farm workers:	Meetings/face-to-face briefings, practical training; simple language, with use of familiar, practical examples rather than abstract concepts.
Growers and exporters:	Thematic workshops (half-day), in-house training and advice, **brief** papers (a single page is best!), local press, as part of professional meetings/conferences, Internet. *Channels:* via export associations.
UK importers:	Briefing sheets/flyers, Internet, thematic workshops (half-day), FPC Annual Conference, Fresh Produce Journal.
UK supermarkets:	Briefing sheets/flyers, Internet, thematic workshops, company newsletters, in-house training sessions

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* *Based on results of NRET research on preferred communication channels for information on codes of practice, and on EU Pesticide Maximum Residue Level (MRL) legislation*

❻ Deciding what to put in the message

As discussed above, choosing the right entry points is critical in winning over your audience. But it is also important to get the rest of the message right. Whatever you have chosen as your entry point, you need to cover the following areas with each target audience:

➢ **Why:** why a code has been developed in the first place. Who is driving the process. Where does the target audience fit in, why should they be concerned about the code.

➢ **About the code itself:** what's in the code, what issues does it cover.

➢ **Progress/stage in implementing the code:** What is the current status – is it a pilot stage, or are all suppliers being asked to comply?

➢ **The code process/cycle:** induction/period for getting up to speed, first audits, subsequent audits, what happens in between audits, who audits.

➢ **What you expect from the target audience:** what are their responsibilities in the process, and the time-scale for achieving obligations.

➢ **What they can expect from you:** what obligations/responsibilities you have to them, what support you can offer them, what support they will *not* be entitled to.

➢ **Implications of compliance/non-compliance:** how do you decide whether a producer is compliant or not, what happens if producers do comply, what happens if they don't comply.

➢ **Confidentiality of information provided:** Re-assuring the target audience about the confidentiality of any information provided (e.g. this is important in the case of workers providing information on working conditions for an audit), and the procedures for ensuring confidentiality.

➢ **Any other specific implications for the target audience.**

Maintaining support

So far, some basic building blocks for building awareness and support on codes have been described. However, putting a code into practice – whether you are a category manager, exporter or grower – takes time, because it involves changing attitudes and practice, developing new skills and knowledge, and making capital investments. To maintain the morale and support of your target audiences, you need to provide them with on-going encouragement and support, and provide them with clear incentives and rewards for compliance. Examples of possible types of support and incentives for growers, and for farm supervisory staff, are given below:

FOR…	POSSIBLE TYPES OF SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES
Producers:	*Support:* financial assistance with capital investments (e.g. pesticide stores, improving worker accommodation); technical assistance (e.g. for integrated pest management, training on information systems/record-keeping); assistance with securing donor funding for above. *Incentives:* price related to code performance ; more secure markets for good compliers.
Farm supervisory staff:	*Support:* provision of training on code, and management training *Incentives:* performance-related pay, where "code performance" criteria (e.g. performance on health & safety, treatment of workers) are incorporated into staff assessments

For further information…

Please see **Theme Paper 8: Where to Find Further Information**