

Tesco 'breaking promise' to South African fruit pickers

Anti-poverty campaigners have accused Tesco of breaking a pledge to improve the pay and working conditions of South African fruit pickers who have helped the retail giant to record annual profits of more than £3bn.

5 Three years ago the company agreed to look at the plight of the workers – predominantly women – who are at the bottom of Tesco's lengthy but highly profitable fruit supply chain, after embarrassing scrutiny of its overseas labour practices.

But interviews by the Guardian with female workers on Tesco supplier farms near Cape Town reveal they are still only being paid South Africa's "minimum" rather than a "living" wage – which they complain leaves them barely enough to feed and clothe their
10 children. Those interviewed are receiving just 1,231 rand, equivalent to £97.90, per month.

Under the UK's Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), which Tesco is signed up to, the supermarket agreed to ensure that "living wages are paid" and "wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income".

15 The fruit farms in the Cape area of South Africa supply some of Britain's leading supermarkets, including Tesco, and employ both women and men. But two out of three insecure seasonal workers are women often lacking the same benefits as men, who are more likely to be on permanent contracts. Tesco is one of the biggest customers of the farms and is also the UK's largest buyer of South African fruit. (...)

20 In 2006, in an unusual act of defiance, a female fruit picker from South Africa condemned Tesco's labour practices in person at the company's annual general meeting, claiming that workers such as herself were receiving "breadline" wages.

Last month Tesco announced record-breaking global sales of more than £1bn a week and better than expected annual profits of more than £3bn despite the impact of the
25 global downturn.

A recent report from the charity ActionAid revealed the daunting scale of the fruit-picking industry. More than 104,000 workers are employed permanently on approximately 3,000 fruit farms in South Africa while tens of thousands of women are increasingly employed as a "reserve army" of part-time labourers to do contract and
30 informal work, picking and packing the fruit for export. (...)

A Tesco spokesperson said it sourced fruit from around 790 farms in South Africa, "representing a sizeable investment in jobs for thousands of workers, although it is up to individual suppliers to decide how many employees they take on depending on factors such as seasonal demand".

35 Tesco said it believed its ethical trade programme in South Africa went beyond "anything currently attempted by other large supermarkets." All its South African suppliers were committed to a model "base code" within the ETI, as well as local South African codes and laws. "These include clear guidance on wages, accommodation and working hours. Tesco uses independent auditors to assess progress."

40 But the company said it did not think it was "appropriate" for a non-South African organisation to dictate specific pay levels. "While there remain important challenges, we believe that the South African fruit industry with its partners, including Tesco, is making real progress on improving worker conditions.

45 "Our responsibility on wages is to ensure that suppliers are following guidance in the ETI base code and national laws. We do not believe it would be appropriate for a non-South African organisation to dictate specific sums – particularly as the national government retains close links with unions and worker organisations."

Adapted from *Guardian.co.uk*, May 15, 2009

CILVEAB AGL

I - COMPRÉHENSION DE L'ÉCRIT (20 points)

Après avoir lu attentivement le texte ci-dessus, vous en rendrez compte en français, en faisant apparaître les idées essentielles. (220 mots maximum, ± 10 %).

II - EXPRESSION ÉCRITE (20 points)

Répondre en anglais.

SUJET À TRAITER PAR LES CANDIDATS DE LANGUE A

What weapons do countries and companies have to stay competitive? (300 mots)

SUJET À TRAITER PAR LES CANDIDATS DE LANGUE B

- a. Explain why and how companies should control their suppliers? (150 mots)
- b. Can trade be fair? (150 mots)

III - INTERACTION ÉCRITE (20 points)

LETTRE COMMERCIALE à élaborer et à rédiger en anglais selon l'usage commercial courant

Date : 10 mai 2010

Expéditeur : Mr Peter REGER, directeur des achats de Casual Wear Ltd, 1 – 6 Clay Street, Cape Town, South Africa.

Destinataire : Mr John GLORY, directeur des ventes de On The Run, W 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001, U.S.A.

Contenu de la lettre :

- vous accusez réception du nouveau catalogue, des nouveaux tarifs, des propositions et des échantillons de T-shirts et survêtements ;
- vous trouvez les produits très intéressants et estimez qu'ils devraient bien se vendre en cette période de Coupe du Monde de Football ;
- ces produits conviendront parfaitement à votre type de clientèle et arrivent au bon moment ;
- vous rappelez que vous fournissez ce type de produits à des chaînes de grands magasins dans le monde entier depuis plusieurs années ;
- une remise plus importante (7% au lieu des 3% proposés) vous permettrait de passer une commande plus substantielle compte tenu de l'importance de l'événement sportif ;
- conclusion appropriée.

Formules et présentations d'usage.