

Creating positive change for workers in global food chains



A case study of the partnership between an international NGO and a local trade union in the Moroccan tomato supply chain



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Freshly picked tomatoes waiting to be sent to Europe.



Fatima, tomato picker

Credits

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Summary

Tomatoes are Morocco's primary agricultural export product. Research conducted by Fairfood in this sector has shown that the minimum agricultural wage is too low for workers to cover their family's basic needs. Further, freedom of association is restricted in some companies and there are problems of gender discrimination. Poverty wages at the production end of the tomato global food chain are depriving workers of their socio-economic human rights. For example, the right to education, housing, an adequate standard of living and health-care. This particularly affects women, who form the majority of the workforce.

The Souss-Massa region is the main tomato production area in Morocco. This region produces approximately 80% of Moroccan tomatoes and employs 70,000 people, around 70% of whom are women. Yet Souss-Massa has the third highest percentage of people living in poverty and the highest percentage of poverty severity in Morocco. Living conditions in communities in these production areas are often very poor. There is a lack of public infrastructure and many areas are not linked to public sanitation networks. Low wages keep workers in these areas, as they are often unable to afford to move to better housing. This means that there is enormous potential for companies to create significant social value, not only for workers, but also for their families and the communities where companies operate. Social value is created when the operations of a business produce not only economic growth, but also social wellbeing and environmental benefits. The first step in creating social value is ensuring that workers have good labour conditions and sufficient wages.

The challenges facing workers are huge and no single organisation has the expertise and resources to meet them alone. In 2013, a partnership was developed between Fairfood International, an Amsterdam-

based NGO, and the FNSA/UMT (*Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole/Union Marocaine du Travail*), the leading agricultural labour union in Morocco. This partnership had the goal of improving working conditions and wages in the Moroccan tomato sector.

This study reconstructs how the partnership has contributed to significant and concrete improvements. The partners now have access to two detailed field research studies, living wages are now on the agenda of major European retailers, Moroccan companies are considerably more willing to meet with the FNSA and unionists in Morocco are much better equipped to negotiate with companies. Indirectly, the project has contributed to more workers becoming registered for social security, an increase in union membership and improved transport conditions.

There are four building blocks which have been key to these achievements. These are:

- Gathering robust research
- Connecting local issues to global concerns
- Applying leverage at both ends of the value chain
- Skills sharing on negotiation and conflict resolution

These building blocks reinforce one another and all have played an important part in the project's success.

Collaboration between different stakeholders opens the door to many new opportunities to create value for all involved. Both Fairfood and the FNSA have gained a great deal from this partnership and have achieved far more than they could have done alone. They are now looking for ways to further improve workers' conditions at the production end of the tomato global food chain.



A tomato worker sprays tomatoes in a greenhouse in the Souss Massa region, Morocco

Introduction

Since early 2013, the Dutch non-profit organisation Fairfood International has been working with the Souss-Massa branch of the Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole (FNSA) to improve working conditions and wages in the Moroccan tomato sector. Initially research was undertaken to determine the key issues facing agricultural workers in the sector and a dedicated campaign to improve workers' wages was later implemented at both ends of the supply chain. Over the course of the project, both Fairfood and the FNSA have learned a great deal about the inner workings of a partnership between an international NGO and a local trade union.

Goal of this report

This report aims to analyse and share the lessons of the partnership. We would like them to be available to other organisations embarking on similar partnerships involving global supply chains. The report includes an overview of the project and summaries of our successes, challenges and lessons learned.

Fairfood International

Fairfood is an NGO which strives for a food system in which people live and work in dignity, the environment is respected and there is social and economic value for all. We do this by:

- Inspiring business and communities
- Influencing policies and practices
- Connecting ideas and people
- Sharing knowledge and solutions

Fairfood delivers robust research, solution-oriented engagement, effective campaigns and capacity development activities.

Fédération Nationale du Secteur Agricole

The FNSA is the strongest and most representative union in the Moroccan agricultural and forestry sectors. Its main demands include:

- Dignity for agricultural workers
- Respect of trade union rights
- Implementation of the labour law
- Higher wages in line with rising living costs and reduced disparities between high and low wages
- Better social security provision
- Equality for male and female workers

The FNSA recognises the need for both national and international solidarity to achieve its objectives. It engages with its members and with external supporters to support agricultural workers who live and work in very difficult conditions.



A village in the Souss Massa region, Morocco

What is the problem?

Facts and figures

Morocco has a population of 32.52 million, of whom 41% live in rural areas.¹ 75% of the rural poor depend on agriculture for their livelihood.² In fact, the agricultural sector is one of the major industries in Morocco, representing 14% of Gross Domestic Product³ and employing 4 million workers.⁴ Tomatoes represent the main agricultural export product⁵ and account for almost half of Morocco's vegetable exports. In 2014, it exported more than 480,000 tonnes of fresh tomatoes, with a total value of \$481,422,000 (around €444,219,000).⁶ Around 81% of exported tomatoes are sent to the EU, where they are sold in European supermarkets primarily from October to April. In 2012, the European Commission announced that Morocco has become the top non-European supplier of tomatoes to the European Union.⁷

The Souss-Massa region is the main tomato production area in Morocco. This is due to the favourable weather conditions and the availability of relatively cheap land.⁸ This region produces approximately 80% of Moroccan tomatoes⁹ and alone employs 70,000 people,¹⁰ around 70% of whom are women.¹¹ Yet Souss-Massa has the third highest percentage of people living in poverty and the highest percentage of poverty severity in Morocco.¹² Indeed, living conditions in production areas are often very poor: there is a lack of public infrastructure and many areas are not linked to public sanitation networks.¹³ Low wages keep workers in these areas, as they are often unable to afford to move to better and safer housing.

Issues

Moroccan tomato workers face many challenges, in particular:

Low wages

- There are two minimum wages in Morocco, one for agricultural workers (SMAG) and one for industrial workers (SMIG). The one for agricultural workers is much lower. The official minimum wage for agricultural workers is 1,813DH (€167) per month, which is just above the national poverty threshold for rural households of 1,745DH or (€160) per month, set in 2004.¹⁴
- Although Morocco is the leading non-European supplier of tomatoes to the European Union,¹⁵ the majority of workers in the Moroccan tomato sector earn an extremely low wage that is not sufficient to cover their most basic needs. As a result, they often live in poor conditions and cannot afford a nutritious diet for themselves and their family. Fairfood estimates that a living wage¹⁶ would be 1.5 to 3 times the current minimum wage for agricultural workers, and some do not even receive that.

Lack of freedom of association

- There have been many cases of workers being fired for their union membership and it is not unusual for some companies to obstruct union activities. Workers can also be criminally prosecuted for taking certain strike actions.

Gender discrimination

- The majority of workers are women. For example, in rural Morocco 92% of working women are employed in the agricultural sector.¹⁷ They tend to be poorly educated and don't have proper employment contracts. It is not unusual for women to be fired if they become pregnant and sexual harassment is not uncommon. There have been improvements at some companies in recent years, but many women still face significant discrimination.

To sum up

Fairfood found that insufficient income is the most serious issue affecting Moroccan tomato workers, with two cross-cutting concerns of lack of freedom of association and gender discrimination. Improvements in wages are crucial to improving the wellbeing of workers, families and producing communities. Since 80% of exported Moroccan tomatoes are grown in the Souss-Massa region, this area has been the focus of the project.

The international framework

At the international level, workers' rights are protected by binding law such as the ILO Conventions on labour standards and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, implemented by the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political rights.

However, these instruments are binding only for states. More recently there has been an emphasis on the importance of cooperation among private and public actors to solve the human rights issues caused by corporate conduct. In particular, in 2011 the UN Human Rights Council unanimously endorsed the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). The Principles (developed over 6 years by John Ruggie, the Secretary General's Representative on Business and Human Rights) were developed as a 'smart mix' of governance mechanisms. They apply to both states and companies and aim to prevent, manage and mitigate adverse effects on human rights caused by economic activities. The UNGPs implement the previous "Protect, Respect and Remedy Framework" and are based on three integrated pillars:

- The state duty to protect human rights
- The corporate responsibility to respect human rights
- The access to remedy

The UNGPs also influenced other international non-binding multi-stakeholder instruments, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The OECD Guidelines were first adopted in 1976 and have since been amended several times. They are a set of recommendations from states to companies and include employment and industrial relations, consumer interests, environment and combating bribery. In 2011, the Guidelines were amended to include a new chapter on human rights, based on the UNGPs.



Floor van Uhm, formerly Advocacy Manager,
Fairfood International and a Moroccan agricultural worker

Why this partnership?

The project focuses on improving the situation in the Moroccan tomato sector, particularly in relation to wages. An international NGO and a local trade union can help each other to bring about this improvement. They can support one another in conducting research, they can ensure that the local issues are heard on the global stage, they can share skills and capacities and they can apply leverage at both ends of the value chain.

On the one hand, it is necessary to work in Morocco to promote improvements. The best way to achieve sustainable change is to ensure that there are local mechanisms to safeguard workers' rights. This is where the union comes in. A strong, proficient union can support workers and make sure their rights are respected.

At the same time, Fairfood works in Europe, where the vast majority of exported Moroccan tomatoes are sold. Fairfood asks retailers to implement improvements in their supply chains. It has begun by focusing on Dutch supermarkets. While European retailers don't directly employ the workers in Morocco they still have a responsibility to them. This is clearly stated in the UN's 2011 Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. What's more, retailers hold a powerful position in global supply chains. They have a dominant bargaining position and can use this to bring about positive change amongst their suppliers.

The underlying assumption of the project is that by working at both ends of the supply chain, Fairfood and the FNSA can maximise their influence and bring about effective, sustainable change.

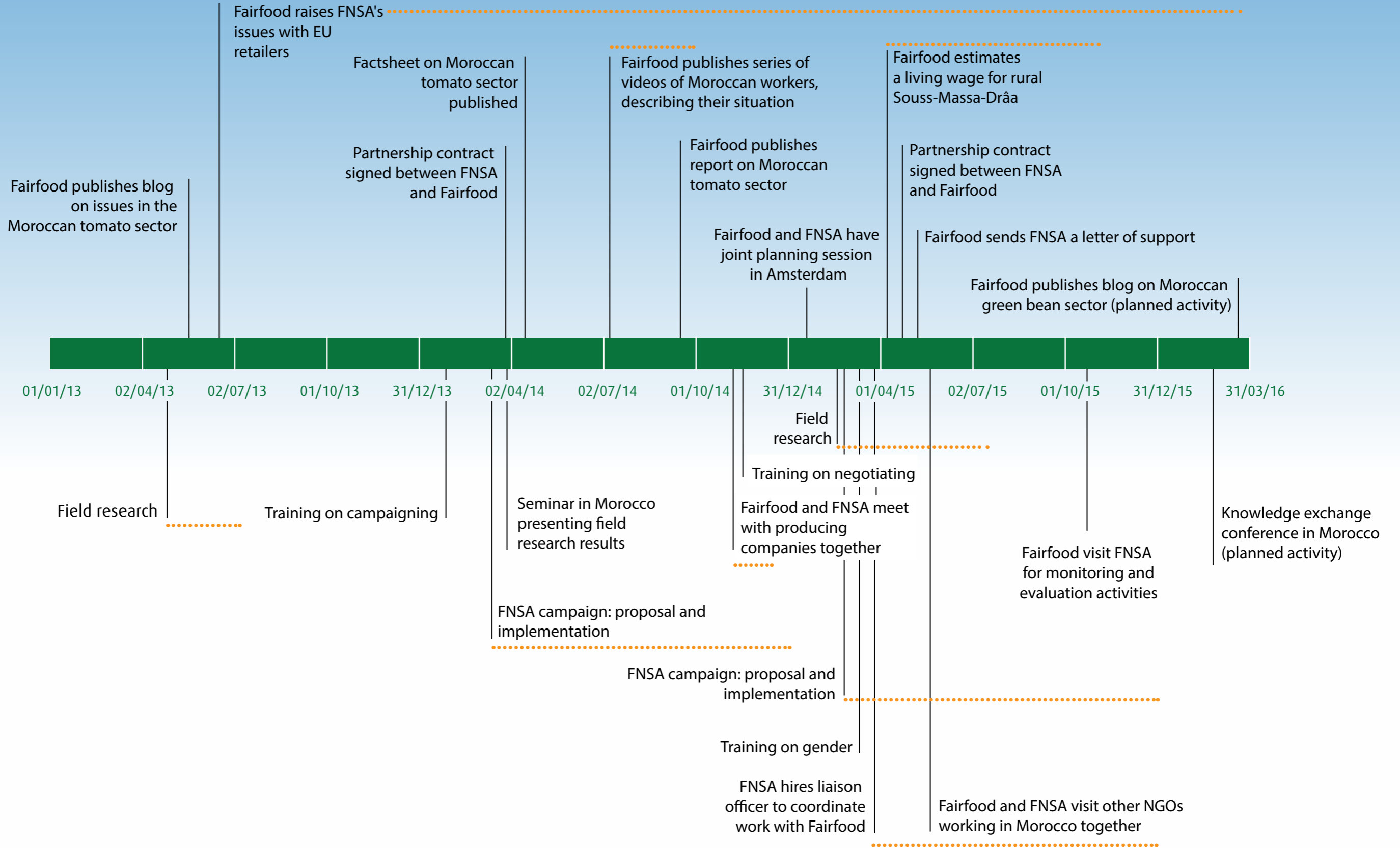
Methodology

To collect information for this study, Fairfood has undertaken both desk and field research. It reviewed the project activity reports and conducted interviews with relevant stakeholders. This involved making a field trip to Morocco to talk to the FNSA, workers and other experts. In addition, Fairfood and the FNSA held a focus group in Morocco. This included several union members who are also agricultural workers and who have been involved closely with the project. It was an opportunity to discuss the main activities, to reflect on what had been achieved and to consider what could have been improved. These workers shared their personal stories and discussed the significant changes in their lives since the start of the project.



Tomatoes growing in a greenhouse

Project timeline





“Last year we asked our company for an annual bonus for the first time. Previously there had been no bonuses at all. We didn’t ask for much, just 100-120 dirhams a year. After the negotiations we got the increase and then this year it was doubled.”

-Zahra, FNSA member

“Since the beginning of the collaboration between the FNSA and Fairfood, there have been considerably fewer provocations at work ... The company takes care of us. Recently one manager fired more than ten workers, but the company interfered and reinstated them. That has never happened before.”

-Hassan, FNSA member

Small stories,
big changes...

Building blocks

This project is based on four key building blocks:

- Gathering robust research
- Connecting local issues to global concerns
- Applying leverage at both ends of the value chain
- Skills sharing on negotiation and conflict resolution

These have been the pivotal components of the project's strategy in order to achieve positive changes for the Moroccan workers. As such they are valuable considerations for any similar future project involving a partnership between an international NGO and a local trade union. These building blocks, and their application to the Moroccan tomato project, are described in more detail in the following pages.



Gathering robust research

A solid research base is essential to both partners as it gives them more credibility and adds authority to their claims. The research provides evidence for advocacy purposes. This is invaluable in negotiations with companies and governments. Having a partner on the ground is crucial when it comes to gathering information on the local situation. In addition, an international NGO's adds methodological and conceptual inputs to the research process.

This building block increases the **credibility** of both parties.



Connecting local issues to global concerns

Working with an NGO gives a union the opportunity to raise awareness of their issues at an international level. The NGO is able to link the local project with similar situations in other countries and to present a compelling overview of the issues on a larger scale, with the local examples adding legitimacy to their case. In this way they are able to work with a wide range of stakeholders to achieve global solutions.

This building block adds **legitimacy** to the global message and **promotes awareness** of local issues.



Applying leverage at both ends of the value chain

Improving working conditions in global food chains is likely to involve changes throughout the value chain of a commodity, so it is important to engage with multiple actors throughout the chain. A local union is best placed to negotiate with companies and government in producing countries, while an international NGO can target brands and retailers and engage with consumers at the end of the chain. Each partner is empowered by the other, extending their usual range of influence.

In this building block, both parties are **empowered** by the other's contribution.



The project combined the expertise of an international NGO on the functioning of food value chains with the expertise of a local labour union on social issues. Unions can advise NGOs on how best to work in the local context. This may be in terms of timing, cultural norms, information on what strategies are most effective, etc. NGOs can help local unions to broaden the scope of tools they can use to influence decisions. They can bring a wider view of advocacy, enriching the local union's strategies. For this reason, knowledge exchange and training to improve the negotiation skills of workers have been the cornerstone of the project. This adds sustainability to the project, as the union will retain what it has learned to help with its future work.

This building block provides long-term **sustainability**.

Gathering robust research



Ongoing research has formed an important part of the project. This has involved a number of different activities, the main ones being as follows:

- Fairfood has conducted extensive desk research in order to fully understand the tomato value chain. This included how the chain works, the issues in Morocco, the stakeholders involved, relevant legislation and contextual developments, as well as applicable standards and certifications.
- Together with Professor Mohamed Bouchelkha of the Ibn-Zohr University in Agadir, Fairfood and the FNSA designed two field research studies to investigate working conditions in the tomato and green bean sectors. The idea of also researching the green bean sector came from the FNSA, as they knew the issues were similar but more severe and they felt it would be helpful to their work.
- The field research study on working conditions in the Moroccan tomato sector was conducted in 2013 and the one on the green bean sector in 2015. This second study also included an update on the tomato sector. These studies were led by Professor Mohamed Bouchelkha and facilitated by the FNSA. The research teams also included experts from the regional agricultural development agency and an agricultural research center, as well as other professionals with extensive experience in the agricultural sector. There were also female PhD students on the teams, as many of the interviewees were women and it was felt that they would be more comfortable with a female interviewer given the sensitive nature of some of the questions.

- In March 2014, the FNSA and Fairfood held a seminar in Agadir to share the results of the first field research study. This increased awareness about the issues in the tomato sector.
- In 2015 Fairfood calculated an approximate living wage for rural Souss-Massa. This was done using data gathered by the FNSA as well as input from other NGO's.
- Fairfood gathered stories from workers and collected video footage of them speaking about the challenges they face. This provided materials for Fairfood's awareness-raising and advocacy activities in Europe.

Successes

- The field research studies provide value to all involved. Fairfood gains both academic data and compelling stories to use in its discussions with companies and for its publications and awareness-raising activities. The FNSA gains robust, independent evidence to use in its negotiations and can talk about the broad situation rather than just isolated incidents. The academic community gains new data which can inform future research.
- The ties between the FNSA and local academia have been strengthened. They each have resources they can offer the other and they appreciate the benefits of collaboration. The FNSA receives credible independent reports to support their cause and academics gain access to workers who it would otherwise be difficult to interview.
- The seminar provided an opportunity to share the research results with a wider audience. It was attended by unionists, NGO's, workers, academics, companies and journalists. It also received coverage in local media.



"The contribution of scientific research to labour unions is that it adds a certain credibility to the work which is currently conducted by unions. Unions are already involved in the sector, day in day out, with the suffering of the workers. But when you approach this scientifically it's an added value, it's credibility which is added to the union."

- Professor Mohamed Bouchelkha, Ibn-Zohr University, Agadir



Floor van Uhm, Lahoucine Boulberj, Mohamed Bouchelkha and El Mahdi El Arabi at the research seminar presenting the results of the field research.

Challenges

- When designing the field research studies, it was necessary to consider what both parties needed from the research. Fairfood and the FNSA wanted to use the results in different ways and the studies had to be designed with this in mind, to ensure that both organisations got the information they needed. It was much easier to design the second study, as by this point the partnership was better developed and there was a strong trust-based relationship in place.
- Because the workers who participated in the field research were contacted by the FNSA, it was a lot easier for them to contact unionised workers than non-unionised ones. Also the non-unionised workers were more reluctant to participate as they were afraid of possible repercussions from their company. The research team were able to interview workers who were not union members, but it was harder and took more time.
- The field research was delayed due to the difficulty of conducting interviews during Ramadan and also because workers often either travel or have different jobs during the summer months. This highlighted the need to be aware of the local situation when conducting planning.

Lessons learned

The experience confirmed the value of investing time and resources in producing robust pieces of research. This proved to be important in two ways: firstly, because the research delivered abundant evidence of the poor working conditions workers in the region are facing. This has been used to initiate the engagement process with companies and governments. Proper evidence makes it harder for the responsible stakeholders to deny the issues. Secondly, the research delivered compelling testimonies. Not only statistics, but also stories were collected. The workers explained what it feels like to be a tomato picker under the current working conditions. These stories have been widely used to raise awareness of the problems in the Moroccan tomato sector among a global audience.

"Using academic evidence is a new way of thinking for the FNSA. Previously if they had a problem they went on strike. Now the companies take them more seriously and are more willing to negotiate, because the union has solid evidence."

- Floor van Uhm, formerly Advocacy Manager, Fairfood International

Connecting local issues to global concerns

“Managers have become more conscious about their company’s image, not only in the local market but also in Europe. Before the problem was just internal. If they had a problem with a worker they could exploit them and no-one would know about it. Now it’s different. If they don’t respect workers’ rights then maybe the consumers will hear about it and they will have problems.”

– Houijeb Hassan, Secretary General FNSA, Ouled Teima



Fairfood staff meet with FNSA members to discuss what the project has achieved, November 2015, Agadir, Morocco

This building block relates to making tomato workers’ issues known at a global level, as well as working to bring about more widespread changes. For this purpose, the case of Moroccan tomatoes has been used as an example in policy discussions with retailers in order to create momentum for the implementation of living wages in all global food chains. This has involved the following activities:

- Fairfood went with the FNSA to meet several producing companies. This demonstrated to the companies that the FNSA has international support and that there is interest in Europe in their working practices.
- In May 2015, Fairfood facilitated meetings between the FNSA and the international organisations Oxfam and Solidarity Center. This gave them the opportunity to share their experiences and to explore opportunities for further collaboration. Five unionised workers also attended the meeting with Oxfam and discussed the issues they face and their impacts on their daily lives.
- In October 2015, Fairfood organised a competition. The winner travelled to Morocco with Fairfood and a food blogger (ChicksLoveFood) to learn about the realities of daily life for tomato workers. This was facilitated by the FNSA. After the trip both the winner and the blogger wrote several articles about their experiences and the challenges facing tomato workers. These were published as part of Fairfood’s activities for Global Food Week.
- Fairfood has provided input for the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands’ report on implementing living wages¹⁸ and was invited to lead a workshop at the OECD’s (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) conference on living wages, held in the Netherlands in October 2015. In both cases, the Morocco project was used as an example to inform the debate.
- Fairfood has raised the issue of living wages with major European retailers

and explored opportunities to work together towards solutions. It used the Moroccan tomato project as an example of workers’ need for a decent income.

- Fairfood published several videos and blog posts about the situation in Morocco. This included a blog written by the FNSA. This helped to raise awareness about the issue of living wages and to make known the daily reality of the workers producing tomatoes consumed in Europe.

Successes

- From the joint meetings with the producing companies, Fairfood learned more about the challenges facing these companies and their position in the value chain.
- The meetings with international organisations were very empowering for the workers who attended. They got to share their personal stories with large international organisations for the first time. Similarly, seeing videos of themselves online talking about their working conditions as part of Fairfood’s campaign had the same effect.
- The European retailers Fairfood has spoken with are now aware of the issues in their own supply chains on the ground in Morocco.
- Dutch retailers are now looking to include living wages as one of the priority items in the upcoming International CSR covenant for the food industry. This process is being led by the industry associations CBL (Centraal Bureau Levensmiddelenhandel) and FNLI (Federatie Nederlandse Levensmiddelen Industrie).
- The close partnership between Fairfood and the FNSA means that Fairfood always has access to up-to-date information and is immediately aware of any developments. For example, at one time a Moroccan tomato company fired several workers and the FNSA informed Fairfood about it. A few days later Fairfood met with one of the

company’s European buyers and was able to give them all the details of what was happening on their suppliers’ farms. They later checked up on the situation with their suppliers.

Challenges

- The FNSA was focused on raising the minimum wage for agricultural workers (SMAG) to the level of that for industrial workers (SMIG), whereas at the global level Fairfood was concentrating on ‘living wages’. These different approaches to improving wages were extensively discussed and affected the beginning of the process. A final solution was achieved when Fairfood acknowledged the realities of the local context and a common understanding was achieved, in which the equalisation of the SMIG and SMAG was considered the first step towards achieving a living wage.
- At first it was difficult to initiate discussions with European retailers, however this improved after Fairfood published a report in September 2014. The report gave Fairfood more legitimacy. It was based on the results of the first field research study and it gave a worker’s perspective of the issues involved. It proved that Fairfood was fully aware of the situation on the ground and that the problems were real.

Lessons learned

Time must be allowed for partners to gain common ground on the basic ideas. This includes understanding the local context and processes and the shared meaning given to key concepts. Ideas that may appear acceptable to everybody (such as ‘living wage’) may negatively interfere with the local partner’s activities (in this case the equalisation of the SMIG and SMAG). International organisations need to remain open and flexible in their approach in order to accommodate local realities in their global work.

Applying leverage at both ends of the value chain

Fairfood is active in the EU and the FNSA conducts activities in Morocco. This means that both organisations are working within their fields of expertise and have ownership over their part of the project. By applying leverage at both ends of the value chain, it is hoped that there will be enough demand to bring about change. The following activities have been conducted:

- The FNSA has organised two campaigns, one in 2014 and one in 2015. These have involved large events to promote the equalisation of the two minimum wages and providing training to their members.
- The FNSA has held talks with producing

companies in Morocco to negotiate for higher wages and better working conditions.

- In 2014, Fairfood launched its living wage campaign, calling on supermarkets to ensure that living wages are paid in all their supply chains by 2020. This involved analysing retailers' purchasing policies, publishing reports on the situation in different sectors and working with supermarkets to find ways of implementing living wages in their supply chains. The Morocco case provided an example of why a living wage should be paid and made the arguments more concrete.

- Fairfood published a report in 2014 highlighting the issues in the Moroccan tomato sector. It asked European retailers to take steps to ensure that living wages are paid throughout their supply chains. The report allowed Fairfood to use the local knowledge gained from the FNSA to apply pressure at the end of the chain.
- Fairfood released factsheets, videos, blogs and social media posts about the challenges faced by Moroccan tomato workers. This was used as a way of raising public interest in the issues and putting pressure on retailers to take action. The videos were also shared in meetings with retailers.

“We managed to put living wage as a topic on the agenda of many supermarkets. The Morocco project provided a concrete example”

- Floor van Uhm, formerly Advocacy Manager, Fairfood International

Successes

- The events organised by the FNSA in Morocco were attended by record numbers of workers, over 1000 in some cases. They were also able to get representatives from the local authorities and from other local NGOs to give speeches. These events were organised entirely by workers. It was very empowering for them as the events demonstrated what they can achieve when they work together and organise themselves.
- The FNSA have built on their existing negotiation skills. They use more and more direct negotiations with companies instead of relying on the use of force or strikes as their primary strategy. They prepare their discussion points in advance and try to use flexible tactics. They no longer only have official meetings with company management, instead they also talk on the phone or meet informally. The companies have responded well to this. They can usually reach an agreement on specific issues raised in this type of dialogue.
- The FNSA has reported that producing companies are now a lot more willing to meet with them. They are aware of the partnership. They have seen Fairfood's publications and there have been joint meetings between some producing companies, the FNSA and Fairfood. It may be the case that the increased

attention in Europe has encouraged the producers to be more open towards the FNSA.

- The FNSA representatives have achieved several successes in their negotiations with companies. In certain enterprises workers now receive bonuses. They are also permitted to attend training sessions, transport conditions have improved and there is less harassment of union members.
- Fairfood's report on the Moroccan tomato sector generated a large amount of media coverage. It also stimulated discussions with several major European retailers and Fairfood is currently exploring options for working together with these retailers to implement solutions. The retailers hold a lot of power in the value chain, so if they can be persuaded to take action then there is the potential for significant improvements in workers' lives.

Challenges

- While the FNSA has enjoyed record number of participants at their events, this could still be improved. Many workers live in remote areas and cannot afford to travel. The FNSA is investigating possibilities for providing both transport and refreshments for participants as a way of promoting attendance.
- More alignment was needed between

the global and the local campaigns.

At one point in the project Fairfood wanted to organise a campaign encouraging a European retailer to implement living wages in their supply chains. But the FNSA were at a crucial point in their negotiations with the retailers' supplier and did not want to risk any disruption to that process. Eventually the global campaign was cancelled so as not to jeopardise the local process.

- Another example of this mis-alignment related to Fairfood's public communications. The FNSA felt that some of Fairfood's public communications focused too much on the problems in Morocco. While the information was accurate, it failed to mention the improvements that have taken place at certain companies. This was seen as having a disruptive influence on the FNSA's negotiations with producing companies and they felt there was a risk that European retailers would switch to buying from a different country or that consumers would boycott Moroccan tomatoes.

Lessons learned

It is vitally important for each partner to ensure that their activities are aligned with what the other is doing. Otherwise there may be negative impacts, instead of the reinforcing effect intended by the 'two points of leverage' approach. Good planning and continuous open communication are key to avoiding potential pitfalls.

Another lesson learned was that when writing public materials, each organisation needs to consider how they will impact the other party. Sending all documents to your partner before publication or having a shared messaging strategy means that such problems are avoided. It is also important to make sure that publishing names and images of workers will not cause problems for those workers.

“The strength of the 2014 campaign was the significant worker participation. I've been involved in the union for more than twenty years and that was the biggest event ever”

-Abdenbi, FNSA member, Chtouka



Meeting held by the FNSA, May 2015, Ait Amira, Morocco

Skills sharing on negotiation and conflict resolution

Fairfood and the FNSA have shared knowledge and skills on how to become more influential when conducting advocacy and campaigning activities. This has been done in the following ways:

- Fairfood provided advice on how to design effective campaigns. They also provided feedback and on-going support to the FNSA while they wrote the proposals for their two campaigns.
- Fairfood has provided three training sessions to FNSA members. Two of these were delivered together with the Dutch trade union FNV-Bondgenoten, who have been providing training in Morocco since 2009. They were very interactive, with discussions and role-playing. These were:
 - Campaigning - January 2014. Participants became more familiar with basic campaign concepts and how to design and implement a campaign.
 - Negotiating - October 2014 (with FNV). Participants discussed the issues they wanted to improve and how to raise these with their companies' management. They became better equipped to conduct successful negotiations.
 - Gender issues - March 2015 (with FNV). Participants mapped the issues in their daily lives and discussed how to create more awareness of gender dynamics. Participants were empowered to effectively explain and address their issues at home and at work.
- In November 2015, Fairfood delivered a training session to the local FNSA leadership on monitoring and evaluation. This covered the importance of these activities and how they can best be conducted.
- The FNSA has helped Fairfood by providing advice on how to work in the Moroccan context and what strategies are most effective. The FNSA also advised Fairfood on what type of training would be the most useful.

- The FNSA now employs a liaison officer, funded by Fairfood. This officer helps to organise the Morocco-based activities and is also responsible for meeting the FNSA's reporting requirements to Fairfood. This relieves the burden on the FNSA of implementing the project activities, in addition to its usual events.

Successes

- Capacities have been built up within the FNSA. It has improved the way it designs campaigns and can now write a detailed proposal. This was very apparent in the second campaign proposal prepared in 2015, which was a huge improvement over the first from 2014. It was clear that they had embraced this new way of working and that they were thinking more strategically.
- Workers who attended the training now feel more able to stand up for their rights. They express feeling more confident in the negotiation techniques
- In 2013 there was one person in the FNSA who had to be present in every meeting, because he was the only one qualified to lead negotiations. Now they have ten people who can negotiate with companies, and another ten who are well on their way. These include several women, which would not have been possible a few years ago.
- Fairfood has learned a great deal about the challenges workers in Morocco face and about the cultural and economic situation in the country. Listening to workers in the training sessions provided

practiced during the training. They are better prepared for the negotiations with the company managers and are more confident putting issues on the table. Several female workers have reported that they have used the negotiation techniques they've learned in their home-life. They are now better able to manage their relationships with their husbands, in-laws and children.



“One of the things we have learned is the idea of creating a strategy instead of working randomly. We set specific objectives and we work to attain them”

- Lahoucine Boulberj, Regional Secretary of the FNSA, Souss-Massa

- ed a valuable opportunity to hear about issues which might not necessarily be uncovered by a formal research study, but which are nevertheless essential to understanding the local situation.
- Fairfood successfully collaborated with the Dutch labour union FNV-Bondgenoten. The two organisations have a positive working relationship and are able to support each other to deliver high-quality training which meets the local needs.
- Thanks to the liaison officer and the training on monitoring and evaluation, the FNSA is now better able to reflect and improve on their activities. They have detailed reports of everything they do and can easily assess what they have achieved.

Challenges

- It can be difficult for workers to attend the training sessions, particularly at certain times of year.
- Female workers can face barriers to participating in training sessions. This may be for a number of reasons, for example they can't travel alone, their husband is against their participation, they have childcare responsibilities or it's not safe to go out after dark. However, this is improving as increasingly more women are receiving training and others see the advantages. It would also be worth considering how to support women who want to attend, for

example by providing childcare facilities or transport.

- At the moment only unionised workers have received training. A possibility for upscaling the project would be to also provide training to non-unionised workers.
- There were no formal follow-up activities to the training sessions. This made it hard to know exactly how workers were using what they'd learned and precisely what the training had achieved. Fairfood is planning to develop a system with the FNSA to accomplish this.

Lessons learned

Future training must take place at times of year when it is easy for workers to leave their work places. Harvest season and the summer break are not good times to offer training. Even if the timing is perfect, the number of workers who can directly benefit from training is limited. A good approach in the future would be to develop materials and a methodology to train trainers, with a proper implementation plan. In this way the impact will be maximised. Most importantly, unions should retain local ownership over the training sessions. They know where the gaps in their knowledge are and what training would be most useful.

“[The FNSA] were used to working in a particular way, someone would give orders and the rest would follow them. But since the start of the project there's been a big change. People have learned to discuss things with each other and that they can achieve more together ... People had a hunger for a different way of working. We work there together with people, you don't have the teacher-pupil relationship. We're partners, we learn from each other.”

- Mohamed Dahmani, FNV-Bondgenoten

“I can't write, I can't read. But thanks to the training and Fairfood's support I can express myself ... If you want to fight for your rights it's not necessary to be literate or to have gone to school. It's a matter of awareness and we get that from the training.”

- Fatiha, FNSA member

Small stories, big changes...



“Before the union was active, but no-one knew about it, because it was so limited. Now we have this partnership everyone knows about it. The work is getting broader and broader, it has more impact.”

- Mohamed Moutaouakel, FNSA liaison officer

“Learning these communications skills has made a big difference to my life. It’s the key to success. Now I can communicate well with the other workers. Sometimes they’re angry with me because I’m the worker delegate and they have lots of problems and are under a lot of pressure. But I’ve learned to manage that conflict and also to negotiate with the company. It’s been a success, in my life in general and at work in particular.”

- Halima, FNSA member

Results in numbers



There have also been outcomes which, while not under direct control of the project, can be linked to the continued support the FNSA has received.

- Workers registered for social security has increased from 25% to 50%. This especially helps women as they gain access to maternity allowances and other health benefits.
- Now 30% of workers are transported by bus (previously very few). This is particularly good for women who sometimes experience harassment in the crowded trucks.
- The issue of equalising the two minimum wages has been actively maintained on the national agenda.

Negotiations between labour unions and the government led to a 10% increase in the national minimum wage for agricultural workers (SMAG). This policy change was spread across 2014 and 2015.

Conclusions and outlook

To summarise, it can be said that the partnership has paved the way for significant improvements for agricultural workers in the Souss Massa region. There have been many concrete achievements in terms of outputs, i.e direct results of the research, training and advocacy activities carried out by the partners. The FNSA has received international support for their cause and Fairfood has detailed, up-to-date knowledge of the issues on the ground. There is also an increased awareness, both in Morocco and in the EU, of the challenges faced by workers in the Moroccan tomato sector. European retailers are now beginning to consider how living wages could be implemented in their supply chains and Moroccan workers have reported that companies are treating them with more respect. Female workers now feel more confident during negotiations with company management and they have expressed that their dignity has been restored. There are also indications of positive outcomes, i.e changes that are not under the direct control of the project, but can reasonably be linked to the sustained support and capacity development the FNSA has received. In particular, transport conditions and the number of workers registered for social security are reported to have improved. Also, the issue of equalising SMIG and SMAG has been actively maintained on the policy agenda, with a 10% increase in the minimum wages over the last two years.

Two main features emerged as success factors: The first is the strong relationship that has developed between Fairfood and the FNSA, based on mutual trust and respect. Establishing a good relationship has been essential. Face-to-face meetings, complemented by online communication, proved to be useful for planning and monitoring purposes, as well as for aligning strategies when conflicting priorities arose.

The second success factor is the common framework based on integrated building blocks. On a conceptual level, this provided the structure for the partnership, while on a practical level, it has produced concrete activities which have supported the project's goals. For example, the training

"It's moving to see workers enjoying their rights and standing up for their rights and expressing themselves. I'm proud to say I'm one of the agents of change. I'm proud because I did something within the union to help my colleagues and improve their working conditions."

– Hassan, FNSA member

activities from the 'skills sharing' building block proved to be necessary for applying increased 'leverage at both ends of the value chain'. In a similar way, the 'gathering of robust research' was vital to the engagement and negotiation activities. This reinforcing aspect played an important role in the success of the partnership.

However, there are still problems in the sector and these need to be addressed. The agricultural minimum wage is still below that for industrial workers, and both are far below a living wage. Many workers are still transported to work in unsafe trucks, childcare conditions are generally poor, the majority of women remain illiterate and workers can still be imprisoned and fined for taking certain strike actions. The challenges are large and no single actor has all the knowledge and resources required to solve them alone. For this reason, the partnership should strive for a more encompassing multi-stakeholder regional dialogue in the future, focusing on concrete actions that buyers in the north and producers in the south can take to protect workers' rights. The Moroccan government recently launched a social dialogue process. This presents a good opportunity to work on strengthening the role of FNSA/UMT in the dialogue. In the buying countries, there is political momentum to advance good practices on due diligence in the implementation of the Business

and Human Rights Framework, as well as to further promote the inclusion of living wages in the International CSR Covenant for the food industry between companies and the Dutch government. Promising possibilities for future collaboration could be applied research on possible solutions and company programs to implement and monitor due diligence.

Workers very much appreciated gaining knowledge and developing skills that enable them to negotiate with confidence. However, the number of workers benefiting from the training remains limited. This could be scaled-up in the next phase, using train-the-trainer activities in order to connect with more workers. Training should focus on strengthening workers' leadership skills and preparing them to participate in national social dialogue. Another future area to consider is how to reduce the extremely low literacy rate among female agricultural workers in the region. This will have a significant impact in terms of increasing productivity, but also in terms of positive impacts at the household and community level, because of the many activities in which women are involved.

Overall, both partners foresee strong possibilities for generating positive change for Moroccan agricultural workers in the near future and are willing to build on the lessons learned from this partnership process.

“We couldn’t have done anything here at Fairfood, in the public domain or in our lobbying without the FNSA. They have become the crucial element of every aspect of the project.”

– Floor van Uhm, formerly Advocacy Manager, Fairfood International



FNSA representatives and Fairfood staff at Fairfood headquarters, January 2015, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Notes

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List of experts consulted

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 Hassan Houijeb, General Secretary of FNSA, Ouled Teima
 El Mahdi El Arabi, Chief Engineer at the Regional Office for Agricultural Development
 Mohamed Dahmani, FNV-Bondgenoten
 Professor Mohamed Bouchelkha, Ibn-Zohr University, Agadir
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