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trading
initiative

PRESS RELEASE

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UK supermarkets back initiative to help break cycle of poverty for poor farm workers

New guidelines on working with smallholders launched in London last week have received the backing of UK supermarkets and major buyers, including Sainsbury's, Marks & Spencer, Asda, Somerfield, the Co-op and the Ethical Tea Partnership.¹

"Smallholders play a key role in many retailers' and suppliers' supply chains. The sheer spread and complexity of these supply chains represents a significant challenge to their management", says David Meller, a senior manager at Sainsbury's.

Smallholders are amongst the world's poorest, and suffer amongst the worst terms of conditions of work. The ultimate aim of the guidelines – '*ETI smallholder guidelines*'² - is to progressively improve their situation through the implementation of internationally agreed labour standards on smallholdings.

The guidelines have global implications as millions of workers work on smallholdings within the food supply chain, most commonly in producing tea, coffee and vegetables.

Says Meller: "The ETI Smallholder Guidelines go a substantial way to assisting all those concerned with managing their supply chains responsibly. Sainsbury's is committed to using the Guidelines and we expect similar commitment from all in our supply chain."

"The guidelines could help break the cycle of poverty, says Ethical Trading Initiative³ director Dan Rees. "They are hugely significant not only because of the numbers of

Ethical Trading Initiative
Cromwell House
14 Fulwood Place
London WC1V 6HZ
United Kingdom

t +44 (0) 20 7404 1463
f +44 (0) 20 7831 7852
ethicaltrade@eti.org.uk
www.ethicaltrade.org

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¹ The Ethical Tea Partnership is a powerful association of tea packers that includes Unilever, Sara Lee Douwe Egberts, Tetley GB and the Brooke Bond Tea Co.

² *ETI smallholder guidelines: recommendations for working with smallholders* is for use by retailers, purchasers, auditors, NGOs, trade unions and smallholders. It provides detailed guidance and tools for implementing corporate labour codes with smallholders and their workers. Download a free copy of the guidelines in English, Spanish or KiSwahili from www.ethicaltrade.org, or for a hard copy contact the ETI Secretariat, Cromwell House, 14 Fulwood Place, London WC1V 6HZ., telephone +44 20 7404 1463.

³ The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is an alliance of companies, trade union bodies, development and campaigning organisations established in 1998 to improve the lives of workers and their families in global supply chains. ETI believes that companies producing, supplying and selling goods for consumer markets should observe national and international labour laws. ETI purpose is to identify and promote responsible corporate practice that will help make this a reality.

workers involved, but also because of the collaboration across the UK food industry and throughout the entire supply chain needed to produce them – including not only supermarkets and buyers but unions, NGOs, and smallholders and their workers ⁶.

But, says Rees, ‘This is just the beginning – we are looking for the same collaboration from all those involved in the food industry to drive this initiative forward’.

The guidelines were developed over a three-year period in Kenya with smallholders in the tea growing and fresh produce industries.

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For further information contact Julia Hawkins, ETI Media Relations Manager:
press@eti.org.uk 0207 404 1463.

⁶ The ETI group working on this project has unparalleled practical experience of working with and for smallholders. Group members include leading UK supermarkets Asda, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury’s, Somerfield and the Co-op, and major supplier companies including the Ethical Tea Partnership, Premier Foods, Ringtons and Flamingo Holdings. The Transport and General Workers’ Union (TGWU) has also been heavily involved, as have Oxfam, Africa Now, Fairtrade Foundation, Traidcraft and Twin Trading.