

Ethical training for produce Freshinfo

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The programme started this week and is being backed by the Department for International Development. Salads supplier Stubbins Marketing and Windwards Bananas are among 12 firms including Tesco that have registered for the eight days of training. "As a banana trader owned by the banana farmers of the Windward Islands and the leading trader of Fairtrade bananas in the United Kingdom, we take our responsibilities to the workers growing our products very seriously," said a Windwards Bananas spokesperson. "The ETI Training Programme will be invaluable in making sure we are at the leading edge of good practice in ethical trade."

The first module, a beginners' guide to ethical trading, introduces ETI's base code – an internationally-recognised code of practice for working conditions in company supply chains - and looks at how UK firms who outsource their production can work constructively with their suppliers to make lasting improvements to workers' conditions.

Other two-day modules running in March, April and May 2006, feature advice on how firms can deal with some of the typical labour problems found in key sourcing countries and product categories, be aware of some of the unintended consequences of implementing ethical trade strategies, e.g. double book-keeping, and different approaches to dealing with them, overcome the challenges often faced when looking to engage with NGOs and pressure groups.

International development minister Gareth Thomas said: "The new training programme will help move ethical trading principles further into the business mainstream. This can only benefit some of the world's poorest people whilst also helping UK firms stabilise their supply chains."

The training programme is primarily designed for staff working in large retail or supplier companies that outsource some or most of their production. Rather than focusing solely on workplace audits it emphasises the need for businesses to take a more strategic approach to change. Course content has been developed by ETI members including Marks & Spencer and Levi Strauss working alongside experienced trainers from the Manchester-based Co-Operative College.

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