



# Ethical Auditing Across Africa

## Introduction

Africa Now is an innovative international development agency specialising in helping Africa increase productivity in the global marketplace.

Africa Now offers services auditing producers in the horticultural and manufacturing sector in Africa against codes of conduct and standards involving social, labour, and environmental issues. We have built experience and skills in the field through a combination of professional audit training and the application of tried and tested participatory appraisal techniques effective in community development work.

Africa Now also offers bespoke training in compliance issues and procedures to UK and internationally based corporate staff to improve labour standards and to mutually benefit both suppliers and retailers in both continents, from introduction, to training auditors and assessors to implementing corrective action plans.

Africa Now works with local organisations to increase capacity to respond to workers' issues at factories and farms, to improve communication channels between management and workers.

Africa Now is a non-profit, value-driven organisation committed to improving lives in Africa through better market and employment opportunities. Africa Now's activities are primarily focused on developing sustainable individual economic activity.

Africa Now has established an Ethical Business Services unit to create income to fund our project work on the ground. All profits are ploughed back into projects and so your investment in Africa Now's services has added value, helping Africans to lift themselves out of poverty through enterprising business solutions.

## Audit Principles

Africa Now audits strive for high levels of integrity and accuracy through a commitment to the following principles:

- **Transparency.** All parties involved are informed of the purpose, scope and limitations of the audit in a timely manner. The relationship between Africa Now, the producer and the buyer are made clear to all.
- **Inclusion.** At the pre-briefing and closing feedback meeting, management and workers or worker representatives are present.
- **Participation.** Workers are encouraged to give their views in an open and candid way through participation in small groups of colleagues doing similar work, usually with an auditor of the same gender.

- **Qualitative information.** Auditing techniques attempt to identify previously hidden problems and issues through the use of narrative appraisal techniques, which avoid tick-boxes or leading questions.
- **Cross checks and baselines.** Africa Now seeks to cross-check information using triangulation and longitudinal appraisals, and an iterative process of checking of information received, in order that baselines can be established and trends observed.
- **General recommendations:** Through Africa Now's experience with a variety of codes of conduct and other corporate standards, our audit staff are able to highlight and make recommendations about additional social and environmental issues of significance revealed during the audit but not necessarily covered in the code or standard being applied. Alerts about potential problems and areas of concern leave the client free to decide if any action is required or if the Codes or standards would be usefully expanded to take account of these issues.
- **Confidentiality:** Africa Now audit staff enter into confidentiality agreements to protect both the organizations and the individuals involved in an audit process.

## **Background**

Since 2003, Africa Now has audited over 120 factories and farms, worked on smallholder training programmes for export compliance, assisted producers gain fair trade accreditation, worked on multi-stakeholder programmes supporting locally-appropriate industry codes and participated in joint initiatives to link independent ethical auditors across Africa. In both Africa and Europe, Africa Now is engaged with companies and business groups, ethical and fair trade organisations, NGOs and practitioners working on corporate social responsibility.

Africa Now has conducted ethical audits on factories and farms across Africa, for a number of international companies, including Sears, Gap, Co-operative Retail, Marks & Spencer, and Flamingo Holdings, with positive results and increasing recognition for the consistency and thoroughness of the audit process.

Africa Now's specific competencies include:

- Audit experience and local capacity in Kenya, Namibia, Egypt, Nigeria, Swaziland, Lesotho, South Africa, Madagascar, Mauritius and contracted work for Morocco.
- Experience in a range of sectors including horticulture and floriculture farms, garment and home ware factories
- Establishing and implementing Corrective Action Programmes and links to appropriate organisations
- Bespoke training programmes for international horticulture suppliers
- Training on fair trade accreditation
- Work with small scale producers supplying into global supply chains
- Training of smallholders in financial management, good working practices, efficiency practices and market knowledge and access

Africa Now possesses a unique and powerful set of attributes combining authority with grassroots knowledge, relevance and accuracy, objectivity with intimacy, locally-appropriate techniques with professionalism and international standards.

### **Creating Africa-wide audit capacity**

In order to have effective audits at a reasonable cost, Africa Now is developing a network of fully trained associate auditors across the continent, who undertake audits as part of a team led by a lead auditor from Africa Now Kenya, Zimbabwe or UK. This way we can be sure that the thoroughness and participatory methodology of our audits is maintained for buyers throughout Africa, whilst utilising local knowledge and understanding, and keeping costs to a minimum. Also, local people understand the local language, context and customs, can interpret local law, and know who to turn to for clarification when needed.

Once there is sufficient business demand in a country, Africa Now recruit and train associates, and expose them as shadow auditors before they become a full part of the audit team.

In target countries, potential associate auditors are identified through local contacts or local press advertisements. For any first visit to a new country, senior staff from Africa Now will travel, some days prior to the planned audit date, and meet with the potential associate auditors on arrival. Those who meet our criteria undergo an initial training course. They take part in the round of audits in country as shadow auditors, where they observe the process, or by acting as translators where needed. Africa Now will meet the extra days stay in country and the related training costs.

Once the capacity of the local team is developed, an Africa Now staff member will travel as a lead auditor and two of the qualified local associate auditors will be called upon to take part in the audit.

For further information and a specific quote, please contact:

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