



Progress Report 2025

on the Project “Towards Living Wages in the Banana Sector”
by the German Retailers Working Group





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Abbreviations

BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung/ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CNV	CNV Internationaal
CSDDD	Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
ETI	Ethical Trade Initiative
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IDH	Initiatief Duurzame Handel/ The Sustainable Trade Initiative
ILO	International Labour Organization
LW	Living Wages
LWPP	Living Wage Piloting Programme
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTSS	Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguro Social/ Costa Rican Ministry of Labour and Social Security
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RPP	Responsible purchasing practices
SAW	Setting Adequate Wages
VC	Voluntary contribution
WG	German Retailers Working Group on Living Incomes and Wages



Picture 2: Worker cleaning bananas (© GIZ)

1. Introduction

The [German Retailers Working Group on Living Wages and Incomes](#) was established in 2019 with the objective of addressing systemic wage gaps in global agricultural supply chains. From the outset, the participating retailers recognised that living wages cannot be achieved through isolated company action, but require coordinated, pre-competitive collaboration.

Today, the Working Group (WG) for banana consists of **ALDI Nord**, **ALDI SOUTH Group**, **Kaufland** and **REWE Group**. These retailers work closely together, relying on pre-competitive collaboration rather than isolated individual solutions. The Working Group is convinced that only joint action can contribute to sustainable structural improvements in banana production and to secure livelihoods in producing communities. Living wages are central to this ambition, and the retailers recognize their responsibility to actively contribute to closing existing wage gaps.

In 2020, the Working Group committed to implementing pilot projects to test practical solutions for promoting living wages and incomes. This led to the launch of the project “*Towards Living Wages in the Banana Sector*” in 2021, focusing on Colombia, Costa Rica, and until 2024 Ecuador.







This report presents progress achieved in 2025, highlighting key milestones, lessons learned, and the transition from pilot implementation towards more scalable and systemic approaches.

2. Strategic Approach

Bananas are among the most widely consumed fruits in Europe and represent a core product for German retailers. At the same time, banana supply chains are characterised by persistent wage gaps, high price pressure, and structural imbalances in value distribution.

In many producing countries, workers' wages remain below living wage benchmarks. Minimum wages are often insufficient to ensure a decent standard of living, while enforcement mechanisms and labour inspection systems vary significantly in effectiveness. In addition, social dialogue structures are not consistently established, and workers' awareness of wage rights remains limited in many contexts.

To address these structural challenges, the WG follows a pre-competitive approach that enables collective action and creates a level playing field among retailers. The strategy is based on the principle of shared responsibility across the value chain and focuses on four interlinked levels:

-  I. Responsible procurement practices of the retail sector create framework conditions for living wages and incomes.
-  II. Strong and active workers' representatives are able to negotiate decent working conditions, including a living wage.
-  III. Use and development of monitoring procedures along a given banana supply chain, ensuring transparent wages and working conditions.
-  IV. Joint agenda setting of retailers with relevant stakeholders promotes the long-term establishment of adequate framework conditions for living wages and incomes in the banana industry.

These elements reinforce each other and form the basis for achieving sustainable improvements in wages and working conditions.

From Piloting to Scale



The project aims to test, refine, and scale mechanisms that enable producers to close living wage gaps in a measurable and sustainable way. To translate this ambition into a concrete benchmark, the WG defined a key target:

By the end of 2025, at least 50% of banana volumes sourced by participating retailers should meet living wage criteria. This milestone serves as a critical step towards scaling the approach and embedding living wage considerations into standard business practices.

3. Key Developments in 2025

Throughout 2025, the German Retailers Working Group pursued a comprehensive approach to advancing living wages in the banana sector. Activities focused on implementing the Living Wage Programme at scale, improving wage transparency and data quality, aligning approaches to voluntary contributions, assessing responsible purchasing practices, and exploring structural solutions to close wage gaps. In parallel, the WG intensified efforts to strengthen social dialogue, worker participation, and institutional cooperation through preparations for partnerships with the ILO and CNV Internationaal. Continuous engagement with retailers, producers, governments, trade unions, and international sector initiatives further supported the development of credible and sustainable pathways towards living wages.

The following chapter provides an overview of the key activities implemented in 2025 and highlights the main achievements, lessons learned, and next steps across the different workstreams.

3.1. 50% target achieved with the Living Wage Programme

Commitment Achieved: All participating retailers successfully met the 50% Living Wage Bananas target in 2025. At least 50% of the banana volumes sourced by participating retailers for the German market now originate from farms that meet defined living wage criteria. This milestone reflects not only a quantitative achievement, but the result of a structured and data-driven approach implemented across the supply chain.

To count towards the 50% goal, farms providing “Living Wage Bananas” in 2025 as well as the retailers that sourced from these farms had to comply with defined criteria under the “**Living Wage Programme**”, coordinated by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The programme built on the learnings and structure of the 2024 “[Living Wage Piloting Programme](#)” and followed a comprehensive process involving producers, retailers, and supply chain partners.

The implementation process included the following steps:

- **Producer Enrolment:**
Producers whose bananas were selected to contribute to the 2025 target registered



through an online questionnaire process confirming their participation in the programme.

- **Digital Infrastructure:**

A dedicated website was established to provide participating producers with guidance, timelines, updates, and relevant programme information.

- **Capacity Building on the IDH Salary Matrix:**

As in previous years, the programme used the Salary Matrix developed by the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) for wage data collection. Trainings on the use of the Salary Matrix were coordinated and implemented between January and May with support from IDH Solutions. Training needs were identified based on previous questionnaire responses. Participation in the trainings was voluntary and free of charge.

- **Data Collection:**

Participating producers submitted Salary Matrices via the digital IDH Salary Matrix platform by 31 May 2025. **More than 400 farms** across Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Peru, **covering more than 42,000 workers, submitted their wage data.**

- **Wage Data Verification:**

Submitted Salary Matrices underwent third-party verification conducted by FLOCERT between June and August 2025. Verification sampling was jointly defined by retailers and their supply chain partners. Approximately **20% of all Salary Matrices were verified** through third-party assessment. On average, **53% of the verified Salary Matrices complied with the required data quality standards**, although significant variations between countries were observed. More detailed results can be found under chapter 3.1.1.

- **Payment of Voluntary Contributions (VCs):**

Farms identified with a living wage gap became eligible for voluntary financial contributions from retailers, proportionate to sourcing volumes. Approximately **USD 413,000 in voluntary price premiums** have started to be disbursed to 259 farms where living wage gaps had been identified. The distribution process is expected to be finalized in mid 2026.

- **Ongoing Engagement:**

Throughout the process, GIZ and project partners provided continuous support to participating producers in order to facilitate smooth implementation, respond to emerging questions, and resolve operational challenges.

Next: Living Wage Programme in 2026

In 2026 retailers committed to again source at least 50% of their volumes as Living Wage Bananas. GIZ again provides the structural framework for the implementation of the necessary steps. However, in the next year the retailers will test and start working with new features of the IDH Solutions toolbox: The Salary Matrix Dashboard and the Voluntary Contribution Calculator. The two features shall simplify the processes around the sharing of relevant information around



wage data along the supply chain as well as facilitate the calculation of voluntary contributions in a streamlined manner.

3.1.1. Wage Data Collection and Third-party verification

Using the IDH Salary Matrix, more than **400 farms collected wage data of 2024** and submitted it to the IDH Salary Matrix platform. To increase the reliability of this self-reported data, the working group collaborated with the independent third-party auditor FLOCERT to conduct onsite verifications. By coordinating this effort with the three other European retailer initiatives (coordinated by IDH), **117 Salary Matrices were verified by FLOCERT**. This alignment helped to avoid a duplicated reach-out to producers that supply to several retailers, while generating cost efficiencies for retailers through sharing data whenever producers provided their consent.

As in previous years, the verifications followed [IDH Salary Matrix Auditing Guidelines](#) and verification results were reported in the [IDH Base Report template](#) and categorized as positive or negative:

- “Positive” verification means that the information included in the IDH Salary Matrix has been properly verified, and the calculations reflected in the Salary Matrix report are accurate.
- “Negative” verification means that at least one data point is inaccurate or was unable to be verified following the IDH Guidelines. Hence, the Salary Matrix report calculation could contain a miscalculation of the Living Wage Gap.

Key results include:

- **Verification results:** Although the major part out of the 117 IDH Salary Matrix verifications shows a positive result there is a need of improvement. A significant variance in the verification results exists between the different countries.
- **Most common errors:** The 55 plantations with negative verification results had an average of 5.8 errors on the verification checklist. The most common issues that led to a negative result were missing information, incomplete or inaccurate records, such as unregistered worker categories, unpaid or unrecorded leave and holidays, inaccurate total hours worked, and lack of supporting documentation for payments, benefits, and hours worked, including severance payments (“cesantías”) as bonus and in-kind benefits.

	All verified farms (n=117)	Farms with positive verification result	Farms with negative verification result
Farms with a LW gap in %	73%	58%	42%
For farms with a LW gap: % of workers with LW gap	59%	71%	43%
For farms with a LW gap: average LW gap in % (relative to the reference LW benchmark in the area)	18%	17%	18%



For farms with a LW gap: average annual LW gap per plantation in USD¹	USD 74,716	USD 85,217	USD 60,422 ²
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Post-verification checks were introduced for a sample of farms as a new approach to further improve data quality: Plantations which received a negative result during the onsite verification were offered the opportunity to correct elements of the Salary Matrix after the verification visit, and have these changes checked remotely. **15 plantations took advantage of this option** and were given five days following the onsite verification to update their data. Once the corrections were made in the IDH platform, the auditor and the person responsible for filling in the Salary Matrix had a call to review and verify the changes. Out of the 15 plantations that underwent a post-verification check, **nine (60%) successfully corrected the errors** identified during the onsite Salary Matrix verification and therefore achieved a final positive outcome. The remaining six plantations were unable to fully correct the information required and consequently retained a negative result. The unresolved issues were mainly due to missing or incomplete documentation, including unregistered worker categories, unpaid or unrecorded leave and holidays, inaccurate total hours worked, or missing supporting documents for payments, benefits, hours worked, and in-kind benefits.

Inclusion of severance payments (in Spanish: *cesantias*): As per the [IDH Salary Matrix Auditing Guidelines](#), matrices including severance payments should receive a negative result (please consult the [Salary Matrix E-Learning Site](#) for a more detailed explanation). Due to the lack of an aligned sector position on how to deal with this matter, the **Working Group leaves the decision whether to include severance payments to the individual plantation and does not consider it an error that should lead to a negative verification**. Therefore, to provide additional context and transparency, FLOCERT indicated in the Base Reports whether severance payments have been included or not. Only in one case the overall negative verification result stemmed solely from the inclusion of severance payments.

Onsite checks of voluntary contribution payments piloted: In addition to the verification of 2024 Salary Matrix data, the working group collaborated with FLOCERT to conduct onsite checks of voluntary contributions paid by retailers to 2 producers under the Living Wage Piloting Programme in 2024. A self-assessment template was developed which collected information like the voluntary contribution amount, date of payment, distribution mechanism, and the number of benefiting workers. This template was filled by retailers in collaboration with the involved supply chain partners. FLOCERT auditors used the template during the onsite checks to compare the information provided with onsite inputs from farm management, worker representatives and workers, and to collect evidence. Whenever retailers could not provide certain data points in the self-assessment template, the auditors collected the information onsite. These onsite checks are

¹ Based on USD exchange rate from XE.com as of 27 August 2025.

² If one outlier farm with an over-proportionally high number of workers with a living wage gap is removed from the calculation the average annual Living Wage Gap per plantation varies significantly between positive results (= USD 85,217) and negative results (USD 24,687).



not comparable to proper verification and therefore also do not result in a positive or negative result. Yet, they are a first step to increase transparency on how voluntary contribution payments are received by producers and used for the benefit of workers. Due to the limited sample, representative conclusions on the functioning of this process are not yet available. In 2026, the number of onsite checks will be increased to further test and improve the approach.

3.1.1.1. Key learnings

Inputs gathered from FLOCERT auditors and auditees through a brief survey (answered for 100 out of 117 verifications) show:

- **Farms feel supported and guided in completing the Salary Matrix:** 86% of auditees find the digital platform easy to use. 87% of auditees were able to contact support if needed. 81% of auditees consider the preparation materials to be clear and helpful.
- **Challenges in completing the Salary Matrix remain** including among others: recording and entry of working days and working hours; lack of agreement on how to deal with severance payments (“cesantías”); lack of proper records.
- **Awareness and understanding about Salary Matrices and living wage gaps at worker level remains low** (31%) as reported by auditors.

Building on the lessons learnt, FLOCERT shared the following recommendations to further improve data quality and verification processes:

- **Advance planning & pre-checks:** Plan sampling and verification process early with all stakeholders involved to avoid delays and misunderstandings. Conduct remote quality checks ahead of onsite verification to allow timely corrections.
- **Strengthen alignment:** Align on verification process (e.g. to include pre-checks and/or post-verification) and on how to deal with severance payments in the context of Salary Matrix verifications.
- **Increase support:** Explore the possibility of providing ad hoc support to producers to help clarify doubts about using the Salary Matrix whenever needed.
- **Continuous improvement of Salary Matrix:** IDH to update Salary Matrix based on feedback, automate plantations’ payroll data extraction, and combine audit/verification services for efficiency.
- **Engaging workers:** Increase awareness and capacities of workers in regard to Salary Matrix and living wage topic overall.

3.1.1.2. Next steps

- In the context of the Living Wage Program 2026 the working group will **continue to collect wage data and conduct onsite verifications.**



- **Additional in-person and virtual training opportunities** will be made available to strengthen support for producers. The option of providing **onsite assistance for producers** while filling in Salary Matrices is explored.
- IDH is working on implementing **automated remote pre-checks** of Salary Matrix data to allow for timely corrections before onsite verifications take place. Whenever possible and relevant, **post-verification checks** will be offered to more producers.
- The WG will try to develop a **risk-based approach** for wage data collection and verification in order to reduce the burden for supply chain partners and recognize local and national approaches for promoting and securing living wages.

3.1.2. Aligning on the Implementation of Voluntary Contributions

In 2025, the Working Group not only started paying voluntary contributions (VC) at scale in the context of the Living Wage Programme but also aligned with other European retailers and supply chain partners on [central questions around the calculation and distribution of voluntary contributions](#) in the banana sector.

VC have proven to be an effective short- to medium-term mechanism to address existing living wage gaps. However, early pilot phases revealed significant challenges, including high administrative complexity, lack of standardisation, and limited transparency.

The 2025 alignment marks a decisive shift towards a more coordinated and systematised model. Developed under the “Better Together” collaboration of European retail initiatives working with GIZ and IDH on living wages in the banana sector, the approach aims to streamline financial flows, reduce administrative burden for producers, and ensure that contributions effectively reach workers. The agreed responses to open implementation questions clarify roles and responsibilities across the value chain and promotes the integration of VC payments into existing supply chain structures rather than creating parallel systems. It also strengthens coordination among retailers to avoid duplication and enhance consistency. The aligned approaches shall become effective for implementation from 2026 onwards and cover the following areas:

- **Data quality/ verification results** (e.g.: Should VC be paid to farms that fail Salary Matrix verification?),
- **Calculating voluntary contributions** (e.g.: Shall the VC be calculated based on previous year volumes or current year volumes?),
- **Payment and distribution of voluntary contributions** (e.g.: Can we align on the means of distribution of VC from farm management to workers?) and
- **Assurance** (e.g.: What assurance is required to validate that retailers' buying proportions used to calculate the VC are correct?).

Regarding the mechanism in general, the Working Group recognises that voluntary contributions alone cannot anchor living wages sustainably. They are therefore positioned as a complementary instrument that must be accompanied by structural changes, particularly in purchasing practices and pricing mechanisms.



3.1.2.1. Key Learnings

- **Alignment is critical to reduce complexity:** Fragmented approaches created inefficiencies for supply chain actors, highlighting the need for harmonized processes among the supply chain partners.
- **Inclusive processes enable practical solutions:** Engaging retailers, traders, and producers was key to developing feasible and widely accepted guidelines.
- **Anchoring VCs in contractual agreements:** Implementation of Voluntary Contributions needs a formal process on all stages of the supply chain. Additional contractual agreements had to be set up by retailers with their suppliers in order to have a legal basis for the payment of the VC.
- **Per-box on-cost vs. lumpsum payment of VCs:** Payment of voluntary contributions as a per-box add-on has the advantage that the extra cost is essentially built into the actual price and the producer receives the additional amount on a regular basis. However, monitoring this and distributing the sum of the VC to the actual boxes sourced in the year resulted in being very difficult. Therefore, the tendency is strongly towards paying the VC as a lumpsum.
- **Overall small VC amount vs. high administrative costs:** Producers in some cases in which the overall amount of the VC to be paid by the retailer to a producer was small, declined the receipt of the VC in order to avoid the administrative costs associated with the distribution to workers that exceeded the benefit it would have had. In some cases, the VC was then not paid. In others the retailer and producer agreed to distribute the calculated amounts to alternative farms or to invest it in farm-specific services for workers, e.g. health services, that can be accessed by all workers.

3.1.3. Next Steps

- **Developing voluntary contribution guidelines:** While many core questions around the implementation of voluntary contributions were aligned in 2025, more detailed guidance on the “how” is needed. In 2026, IDH and GIZ are joining forces to develop voluntary contribution guidelines in consultation with relevant stakeholders in the banana sector, based on lessons learnt and with the support of technical expert feedback (e.g. on tax-related questions). These guidelines shall also provide first orientation for the implementation questions that did not reach alignment among the stakeholders in 2025 (e.g. What level / type of assurance is required to ensure the voluntary contribution is received by the workers?) The aim is to reach alignment on a final document by autumn 2026 that can be used by retailers and their supply chain partners for implementing voluntary contribution payments in 2026.

3.2. Transforming Market Conditions: Responsible Purchasing Practices and Prices



3.2.1. Assessment of Current Retail Purchasing Practices

Responsible Purchasing Practices (RPP) are considered a central lever for achieving sustainable improvements in wages and working conditions within global supply chains. Commercial decisions made by retailers – including pricing structures, forecasting practices, lead times, and payment terms – directly influence suppliers’ ability to ensure decent work and progress towards living wages. Without addressing these structural drivers, long-term improvements remain limited.

Against this background, the working group continued its [overall engagement on RPP in 2025](#) and initiated a collaboration with the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) to conduct assessments of the retailers’ current purchasing practices in the banana sector. These assessments are based on ETI’s “[Common Framework for Responsible Purchasing Practices in Food](#)” and examined areas such as forecasting, payment terms, internal alignment between departments, and pricing strategies. To ensure a holistic understanding of purchasing dynamics and related human rights risks, the process combines several perspectives and methodologies.

Retail buying teams as well as sustainability teams conducted self-assessments of their own purchasing practices. In parallel, Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers were invited to evaluate the current purchasing practices of retailers in their supply chains based on a comprehensive survey. In addition, ETI conducted key informant interviews with a sample of the participating stakeholders.

In addition to the German Working Group, several retailers participating in IDH-led retail initiatives are involved in this workstream including Albert Heijn, Asda, Coop, Delhaize, Jumbo, Morrisons, Sainsbury’s, and Tesco.

The onboarding of all stakeholders to this process as well as first assessments started in 2025, with aggregated results expected to be shared publicly in summer 2026.

3.2.1.1. Key Learnings

- Self-assessments on purchasing practices by retailers alone are insufficient. **Integrating suppliers’ perspectives is essential** to obtain a realistic picture of purchasing practices, identify systemic issues, and drive meaningful improvement across the supply chain
- **Trust, strict anonymity, and robust confidentiality mechanisms** are essential for obtaining credible and open feedback, as suppliers may fear damaging commercial relationships when giving honest criticism
- **Extensive onboarding, communication, and relationship-building** are needed to convince supply chain partners that participation is safe and worthwhile
- **Long-term credibility** depends on transparent processes, visible follow-up actions, and demonstrating that feedback leads to improvement rather than punishment

3.2.1.2. Next steps



- **Publishing results:** In 2026, assessments will continue with results being expected by summer 2026. Each retailer will receive an individual report with their performance overview and tailored recommendations. A sector report with the individual, but anonymized scores per retailer as well as aggregated insights and recommendations will be published in summer 2026.
- **Individual action plans:** Building on the assessment results, each retail members of the German working group will develop individual action plans with the support of ETI. These action plans are intended to support retailers in improving their purchasing practices and addressing identified gaps and risks in a structured manner.
- **RPP sector guidance:** Insights from the assessments will also inform the development of a guidance document on responsible purchasing practices in the banana sector which will be published as sector-specific addendum to ETI’s [Common Framework for Responsible Purchasing Practices in Food](#)”

3.2.2. Living Wage Reference Price

In 2025, the Working Group took an important additional step regarding Responsible Purchasing Practices by formally requesting permission from the German anti-trust authority (*Bundeskartellamt*) to jointly agree on establishing Fairtrade Living Wage Reference Prices (LWRPs) as minimum prices for banana producers.


The idea behind the request is to move from a premium-based mechanism (voluntary contributions) toward integrating living wage considerations directly into the base price of bananas with the LWRP. Instead of calculating and transferring separate voluntary contributions, paying a reference price that reflects sustainable production costs, including living wages, could significantly simplify processes and create more predictable, long-term structural impact.

This request represents a first-of-its-kind initiative in sustainability cooperation among retailers. It pushes the boundaries of what is currently possible under competition law in order to strengthen responsible purchasing practices. At the time of publication of this report, the authority’s final decision on this request is still pending.

3.2.2.1. Key Learnings

- **Pricing remains the key constraint:** Although widely recognised as a critical lever, direct coordination on prices is highly sensitive and cannot be addressed without thorough legal assessment.
- **Exploring LWRPs is already a milestone:** The joint assessment of collaboration on Living Wage Reference Prices marks a significant step forward in expanding the scope of collective action.

3.2.2.2. Next Steps

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- **Awaiting regulatory clarity:** A decision by the German Federal Cartel Office (*Bundeskartellamt*) is expected in the first half of 2026, providing guidance on the scope for joint action on LWRPs.
 - **Concept development and design:** Based on the outcome, the Working Group will further develop the LWRP model, including its structure, calculation logic, and integration into existing sourcing practices.

3.3. Strengthening Social Dialogue and Workers Representatives

Sustainable wage improvements require strong local institutions and effective social dialogue between workers, employers, and governments. These processes enable locally owned solutions and ensure long-term sustainability.

3.3.1. Laying the Groundwork for Cooperation with the ILO: Strengthen Social Dialogue

In 2025, preparatory discussions were initiated with the International Labour Organization (ILO) regarding a collaboration in the banana sectors of Colombia and Costa Rica starting in 2026. These exchanges focused on identifying possible areas of cooperation related to Decent Work, social dialogue, and Living Wages, while also exploring how existing institutional approaches and private-sector due diligence efforts could be linked more effectively.

The discussions further included an exchange on existing and planned activities under different “Setting Adequate Wages” (SAW) projects by ILO in order to identify synergies, avoid duplication of efforts, and strengthen overall coherence between the various initiatives implemented in the sector. The ILO’s SAW projects aim to promote adequate wages and Decent Work in global supply chains by strengthening wage-setting mechanisms, social dialogue, and collaboration between governments, employers, workers’ organisations, and international buyers.

Special emphasis was placed on transparency, coherence, and alignment with international frameworks, particularly the principles of the ILO and the requirements of the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD). At the same time, the cooperation shall systematically integrate gender considerations across all activities to ensure that structural inequalities and gender-specific challenges within the banana sector are adequately addressed.

3.3.2. Preparing a collaboration with CNV Internationaal: Empowering Trade Unions for Data-Driven Collective Bargaining

In 2025, the project initiated preparatory exchanges with the Dutch organisation CNV Internationaal regarding a potential future collaboration aimed at strengthening worker participation and evidence-based approaches within the banana sector.



The discussions focused on possible approaches to enhance the capacities of trade union representatives on topics related to Living Wages, wage data analysis, and collective bargaining. In addition, initial reflections took place regarding the potential future use of worker-led monitoring tools, including the [Fair Work Monitor by CNV](#), to strengthen transparency on wages and working conditions in the banana sector.

The preparatory discussions also explored possible linkages between worker-generated data, existing Salary Matrix approaches, and broader sector dialogue processes in order to strengthen evidence-based discussions on wage gaps and working conditions.

3.3.3. Next Steps ILO

- **Formal launch of the cooperation with the ILO** in 2026 to strengthen Decent Work, social dialogue, and Living Wage approaches in Colombia and Costa Rica.
- Implementation of joint **activities with the ILO**, including capacity building for labour inspectors, strengthening wage monitoring systems, awareness-raising on labour rights, and the further development of Living Wage-related transparency tools.
- **MoU between GIZ and Costa Rica's Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MTSS)**: further develop sustainable and transparent approaches that combine social dialogue, institutional capacity development, and wage transparency; planned activities will be closely linked to the MTSS cooperation agenda, including capacity building for labour inspectors, the strengthening of wage monitoring systems such as SIDNI, the development of a Living Wage Calculator, and awareness-raising activities on labour rights.
- In **Colombia focus on strengthening understanding and transparency** regarding the different systems of worker representation, particularly in the regions of Magdalena and Urabá, while also supporting institutional capacities for social dialogue.

3.3.4. Next Steps CNV

- **Launch of the collaboration with CNV** International in the second quarter of 2026.
- **Roll-out of the Fair Work Monitor** in the Colombian banana sector to collect worker-led data on wages and working conditions.
- **Capacity building** for trade unions on Living Wages, collective bargaining, and the use of wage-related data.
- Development of **evidence-based wage gap analyses** to support social dialogue and collective bargaining processes.
- Further **strengthening of multi-stakeholder dialogue** and exchange across the banana supply chain in Colombia and Costa Rica.



3.4. Stakeholder Engagement and Sector Alignment

Continuous engagement with stakeholders remains essential for advancing living wage approaches in complex supply chains. Project experience shows that processes such as wage data collection and the implementation of voluntary contributions require ongoing alignment and joint problem-solving across the value chain.

In 2025, the Working Group strengthened its engagement at both sector and country level. **Active participation in the World Banana Forum** provided a platform to exchange on methodologies, align with international initiatives, and integrate broader decent work dimensions into the project approach.

At country level, **stakeholder dialogues** were deepened through workshops and bilateral exchanges with public institutions, social partners, and private sector actors. In [Colombia](#) and [Costa Rica](#), multi-stakeholder workshops brought together key partners, while in Costa Rica, engagement focused on operationalising the cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and aligning next steps under the Memorandum of Understanding.

Engagement was further reinforced through **international trade fairs** such as Fruit Logistica and [Fruit Attraction](#), enabling direct exchange with producers, exporters, importers and civil society organisations and providing valuable feedback on implementation challenges and sector developments.

Across all formats, the active involvement of retailers played a key role in building trust and credibility. At the same time, close collaboration with producers and traders supported continuous learning and helped ensure that project approaches remain practical, credible, and adapted to local contexts.

4. Final conclusions and outlook

Over the past years, the project has generated valuable insights, tested practical mechanisms, and built strong partnerships across the value chain. The next step is to ensure that these achievements are not limited to a project context but are embedded in durable systems, processes, and strategies. This includes anchoring key approaches within existing sector platforms, strengthening the role of national institutions, and enabling retailers and other market actors to take ownership of implementation going forward.

In this context, several priorities will guide the transition. These include finalising the responsible purchasing practices assessments and translating their results into concrete implementation roadmaps, possibly advancing discussions on Living Wage Reference Prices as a potential structural pricing mechanism, and further strengthening social dialogue and institutional frameworks



in producing countries through collaboration with the ILO and the Costa Rican Ministry of Labour. At the same time, efforts will focus on enhancing worker participation and improving data systems to ensure transparency, credibility, and long-term monitoring of progress.

Ultimately, the objective is to move from a time-bound project towards a self-sustaining system in which key actors – including retailers, producers, workers’ organisations, and public institutions – continue to jointly drive progress on living wages. Establishing such an institutionalised approach is essential to ensure that the momentum generated by the project translates into lasting, systemic change across the banana sector and beyond.



Imprint

Report Title: Progress Report 2025 on the Project “Towards Living Wages” by the German Retailers Working Group

Published by: Sustainable Agricultural Supply Chain Initiative (SASI), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Authors: Deckers, Johanna; Kuppetz, Nina; Willms, Björn

Copyright: 2026 GIZ

Date of Publication: May 2026

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