

# Women as Inclusive Business partners

## Eosta: Social Impact for women integral to organic brand



*“A lot still needs to be done in respecting the rights of workers and women in production of fruit and vegetables. We want to make these things visible and stimulate our growers to take a look at it.”*

Michaël Wilde  
Sustainability & Communication manager  
Eosta



### ENGAGEMENT IN THE VALUE CHAIN



PRODUCERS



PROCESSORS  
MANUFACTURERS



DISTRIBUTORS



CONSUMERS



BUSINESS OWNER  
MICRO-ENTREPRENEUR  
EMPLOYEE

- **Company:** Eosta
- **Business focus:** Eosta is one of the largest importers and distributors of organically grown fresh produce in the Netherlands.
- **Countries:** China, Uganda, Costa Rica, Burkina Faso
- **Started:** in 1990

#### Results for women

Female workers and farmers who work for suppliers benefit in various ways from the fact that their roles in production are recognized and that the focus of Eosta is on equal rights for men and women and support for women 'beyond certification'. E.g. through a trade union, child care center and improved drinking water, sanitation & hygiene, education for women and children.

#### Results for business

Eosta is well able to comply with the increasing focus of certain customers for positive social impact, besides organic aspects. This gives them a strong market position in their segment.

*'Women as Inclusive Business Partners' is an initiative by [BoP Innovation Center](#) and [ICCO Cooperation](#)*







*"The female employee union has helped us in many different ways. It guarantees income, educates us on how to protect ourselves legally. And an additional benefit is that it brings all of us closer."*

*Ms Guo  
Employee in the packing  
station of Weifang Jiage  
China*

### **Increasing market demand for organic products**

Eosta is among the leading importers, packers and distributors of organically grown fresh produce in the Netherlands. They serve major retailers and natural food stores in Europe, North America and the Far East. Eosta buys its products from around 200 producers across the globe. These vary between smallholder farmers and bigger companies, who in turn engage many smallholders. To respond to the growing market demand for organic fresh products Eosta assists its suppliers to move from conventional to organic farming, through technical and financial support.

### **'When consumers buy an organic product, they assume the whole story is right and covered'**

The fruit and vegetable sector employs women largely at the production side of the value chain, especially in quality and selection processes. Eosta is well aware that the role of women is often invisible and that it is common practice that their rights are not respected.

For the company, gender and women's roles and rights are an integral part of the business and they promote non-discrimination practices among their suppliers. E.g. through the certification programs Fair Trade and Fair for Life that include a focus on gender aspects. Eosta considers this to be 'normal' practice, and take a pro-active role in addressing discriminatory labor conditions for women among suppliers. This can be challenging, as many suppliers have been following certain practices for years.

Main drivers for change in the supply chain are the growing demand of customers to pay attention to positive social impact in addition to organic aspects. For Eosta the intrinsic motivation of growers is paramount, for which transparency in the value chain around successes and challenges is essential. The whole story, including the position and role of women has to be correct. As such Eosta shares good practices of frontrunners and stimulates its suppliers to reflect on their practices.

### **Women benefit from actions 'beyond certification'**

Several suppliers have taken measures to strengthen social aspects, with or without certification measures. Many of these initiatives support and/or strengthen the role of female farmers and/ or employees. In certain cases Eosta supports these initiatives with its '1 cent for the future' fund that supports such projects based on fund-generation per product sold.

For example, the Chinese organic ginger producer Weifang Jiahe formed a union, especially for female employees. This union tackles issues such as access to health services, maternity leave, protection against sexual discrimination as well as a clean and safe working environment and accommodation.

Organic fruit and vegetable and spices producer Amfri Farms in Uganda employs many female employees. Women are found to be more reliable and productive in this sector. This is especially the case in plantation work, processing of 'delicate' products (such as peppers) and complex labor intensive process (such as dried vanilla). To meet the specific needs of women employees, Amfri Farms established a childcare center for children of female employees and started a health care project in the Northern region.

The Fair Trade premium of mango exporter Fruiteq in Burkina Faso offered additional resources for school equipment and a training for women on improved sanitation and hygiene. Through the '1 cent for the future' fund, water wells were constructed so that women do not have to walk 4 km any longer for clean and safe drinking water.

*For more information on Eosta visit [the website](#).*