



Climate Action and Human Rights

Moving to regenerative agriculture

In agricultural supply chains, moving to regenerative agriculture is an important transition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), adapt to a warmer world, and assist in efforts to prevent biodiversity loss. Regenerative agriculture is an approach to farming that seeks to restore and renew natural resources through a range of different agricultural practices. Regenerative agriculture focusses on improving the health of soil, by reducing ploughing of land, rotating crops, and changing animal grazing practices.

Potential human rights risks

Some of the human rights risks associated with the move to regenerative agriculture include:

- hazardous working conditions because of longer hours of farming and less industrialised processes
- child labour, particularly in smallholder farms due to increased yield expectations
- loss of livelihood for smallholder farmers who are replaced by large-scale farms to meet company climate targets
- reduced crop yields, crop failure or vulnerabilities, and low profit margins can impact farmers' incomes and livelihoods
- environmental risks due to continued use of pesticides
- threats against environmental human rights defenders

Challenges to human rights due diligence

Human rights due diligence in the move to regenerative agriculture will need to be particularly focussed on the impacts to vulnerable and marginalised communities. The transition to regenerative agriculture will require significant changes in agricultural systems, which can have major impacts on people, particularly smallholder farmers and agricultural communities. Companies will need to be proactive to identify and mitigate or address the impacts to these communities. Additionally, supply chains may shift or become shorter and more controlled due to changes in agricultural practices or in response to a warmer world. In their human rights due diligence, companies will need to consider the impacts to people of leaving certain geographies and entering new ones.

For one company, substantially reducing its GHG emissions meant working with its supply chain to support a transition to regenerative agriculture. The company identified early on that smallholder farmers were central to the transition.

To promote resilient and fair livelihoods and dignified work for farmers, the company is collaborating and consulting with farmers and other stakeholders in its supply chain to facilitate their transition. The company is also offering financial incentives to farmers who implement regenerative agricultural practices.

The company found that using the Just Transition as a narrative helped to integrate human rights and climate to gain internal buy-in. Additionally, through human rights due diligence on its transition to regenerative agriculture, the company has identified additional potential adverse human rights impacts, including forced labour, child labour, and impacts on Indigenous Peoples' rights.

The company is putting measures in place in line with its existing human rights programme to mitigate and address the adverse human rights impacts on additional stakeholder groups.

Additional insights from business practice

- Impacts to all potentially affected groups should be considered in human rights due diligence, including farmers and agricultural communities, workers along the agricultural supply chain, Indigenous Peoples as stewards of knowledge on biodiversity, and consumers.
- Effective supply chain management may require working closely with suppliers to build their capacity to transition to regenerative agricultural practices and respect human rights.
- Engage with environmental specialists to holistically identify and address the risks to the environment and to human rights associated with regenerative agriculture.
- The poverty levels associated with smallholder farmers may be exacerbated by a transformation to regenerative agriculture, which may require companies to use their influence in communities to explore and address root causes.

