



GLOBAL CUT FLOWERS PRODUCTION NETWORK PROJECT

Summary Report

ABSTRACT

The Global Cut Flowers Production Network Project was launched by Dr Jill Timms and Dr David Bek, Coventry University, in order to investigate how the promotion of ethical flowers can contribute to improving working conditions in supply chains. This is a brief summary report of the launch event, which was held on the 18 July 2017 at CU Coventry Technology Park.

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Participants

Organisers

Dr Jill Timms, Senior Lecturer & Research Associate, Coventry University

Dr David Bek, Research Fellow, Coventry University

Participants

Harold Beek, Global Standards Manager, MPS, the Netherlands

Andy Beveridge, Head of Sustainability, MM Flowers – The Muñoz Group

Angela Coulton, Florist and Owner of Petal & Twig

Samantha Davidson, Flower Supply Chain Expert, MM Flowers - The Muñoz Group

Catherine Dishington, Ethical Trade Officer, Co-operative Supermarket

Caroline Downey, Executive Director, Women Working Worldwide (WWW)

Amy Gray, Horticultural Advisor, National Union of Farmers

Chanel de Kock, Marketing manager United Kingdom, Flower Council of Holland

Alistair Leadbetter, Supply Chain and Business Development Manager, Traidcraft

Isabelle de Lijser, Project Officer Women@Work, HIVOS

Nungari Mwangi, PhD Candidate, Cambridge University

Claudia Pollen, PhD Candidate, University of Leeds

Brian Wills-Pope MBE DL, Chair, British Florist Association (BFA)

Coventry University Support

Annie Bryan, Research Impact Officer, Coventry University

Rebecca Beech, PhD Candidate & Research Assistant, Coventry University

Additional Network Members/Organisations (who were not able to join on the day)

Ian McClellan – FleuroMetze, London

Jen Shepherd – FairTrade Foundation

Emma Coupe – Waitrose Supermarket

FloraHolland Sustainability Team

Helen Evans – New Covent Garden Wholesalers, London

Event Summary

The launch of the Global Cut Flowers Production Network project (GCFPN) took place on the 18 July 2017 with a one day workshop at Coventry University Technology Park. It included 16 participants from academia, industry, and non-governmental organisations, with discussions focused around three interconnected objectives:

- To investigate the promotion of ethical flowers and how this can contribute to improved working conditions in supply chains.
- To understand the role of social certification and its role in practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR).
- To examine how demand for ethical flowers could benefit businesses and promote sustainable improvements for employees and others in flower supply chains.

In order to address these objectives and the full complexity of the global cut flower supply chain, the workshop revolved around three panels, namely (i) a supply end panel, (ii) a retail end panel, and (iii) a wider stakeholder panel in the morning and key question groups in the afternoon.

Supply End Panel

Harold Beek presented the work of **MPS** and highlighted the lack of transparency within the chain as a challenge. Farmers often carry the brunt of pressure from retailers and markets, including pressure on labour cost. A systems approach is needed to involve stakeholders across the chain and distribute those pressures.

Andy Beveridge and **Sam Davidson** then presented **MM flowers – Muñoz Group**, showcasing how they are trying to lift the standard in the flower industry up the one of the food industry. This has been challenging and a big investment, but well worth it to ensure transparency for their customers and brand protection.

Nungari Mwangi highlighted key-findings from her PhD research in the Kenyan flower industry. She discussed the difference between large-scale and small-scale growers and their impact on labour conditions.

Finally, **Claudia Pollen** also presented her PhD research, which focusses on how women workers exercise their agency in the Zambian floriculture industry. She highlighted how women are intent on maintaining their employment contracts rather than organising themselves to advocate for better working conditions.

Retail End Panel

Angela Coulton from **Petal & Twig** underlined how confusing certifications in the flower industry are for florists, and how a lack of transparency is especially challenging. She now buys the bulk of her flowers from British farms where she does not need certification as she can go inspect them herself. Trust is also an important component of her relationships with suppliers.





Brian Wills-Pope from the **British Florist Association** talked about how floristry shops have declined because of profitability challenges. Sustainability has become a more important topic recently, especially in relation to the use of cellophane. An increasing number of florists are using a variety of sustainability messages as a unique selling point to carve out a niche for themselves.

Chanel de Kock discussed the work of the **Flower Council of Holland** which is funded by growers. It is difficult to gauge how much sustainability is on the growers' minds but it is important that growers do transition to sustainability, especially with increased awareness from consumers through social media.

Catherine Dishington presented the **Co-operative Supermarkets** approach to auditing, which is a social audit that is much cheaper. They do not push for certification as it is expensive for growers. Rather they emphasise the importance of good working conditions with direct collaborations, which they aim to extend to different tiers of suppliers.

Wider Stakeholder Panel

Caroline Downey presented the work of **Women Working Worldwide**, which focuses on advising trade unions and lobbying government to ensure gender equity. In the flower industry, they specifically address issues of harassment, living wage, and women's rights in collaboration with trade unions and farms in Eastern Africa.

Alistair Leadbetter from **Tradecraft** discussed certification more broadly. While schemes like Fairtrade have increased consumer awareness, the plethora of ethical standards has led to a lack of clarity and has weakened labels as they become more mainstream. He also highlighted the high costs associated with ethical schemes, leading some organisations to develop their own (e.g. Sainsbury's Fairly Traded).

Isabelle de Lijser from **HIVOs** focused on the organisation's **women@work** programme that aims to improve working conditions for women in East and Southern Africa. She highlighted the pressures from the upstream supply chain on living wages and the role supermarkets could play to alleviate those.

Amy Gray represents 200-250 cut flower growers at the **National Union of Farmers**. In recent years there has been an increased demand for British grown flowers. NUF aims to ensure a fair supply chain for UK growers. Their lobby and policy work also focuses on securing an adequate supply of seasonal labour, provenance labelling, and the impact of Brexit.

Event Feedback

Overall the first event was a great success. Indeed, **75% of all participants** indicated that the event **exceeded their expectations**. They particularly appreciated the opportunity to **network** with a variety of stakeholders (92% of all participants) and gain new perspectives as well as share ideas. For the next workshop, more time and space for **informal discussions** should be planned in, as these have been invaluable.

92% of all participants valued the networking opportunities created by the workshop.

After the event, 58% of participants felt motivated and 42% felt fired up!

Participants were keen to **stay involved** after the first workshop (**83%**), with 58% feeling motivated after the event and 42% feeling fired up.

They were especially interested in hearing about research outputs from the Global Cut Flower Production Network project, as well as from other participants. **75% of all participants** gained **new research insights** during the day and **67%** particularly valued the **presentations** during the different panels. However, it was the **key question groups** in the afternoon from which participants gained most (75%).

75% of all participants gained most from the key question groups.

Key themes that emerged during the day included the **complexity of certification** and labels across the supply chain.

Many certification schemes are confusing across the board and labels do not necessarily stand for quality but describe a process. This raises questions about the **responsibility of different labels/certifications** and what they actually stand for.

In that sense, participants highlighted that certification needs to be more than just ticking a box somewhere. It needs to address sustainability in a comprehensive manner, highlighting the **shared responsibility** of different actors along the supply chain. The importance of **trust** was emphasised by many participants, this included trust by consumers in the certification process as well as the importance of trust between actors involved in the certification process.

In order to **address sustainability comprehensively** and effectively, the conversation around certification needs to include a **wider range of stakeholders**, something participants will aim to incorporate into their own work. This is also an aspect they would like to see reflected in future research of the Global Cut Flower Production Network project through the inclusion of voices of the people concerned, i.e. farmers, picker, packers. Further future research needs to focus on having a **tangible impact: how can we make progress and deliver change?** This requires an in-depth understanding of the larger sustainability issues along the supply chain and is an area where academia is uniquely positioned to contribute in collaboration with practitioners.



Annexe 1: 2017 Workshop Programme

As a reminder, this was the programme for 2017 workshop. We would welcome your input on how we can structure the programme for the upcoming 2018 workshop to suit your interests.

9.30 - 10am	Registration, coffee and breakfast pastries
10 – 11am	Welcome and Introductions
	Our research project and network development Jill Timms and David Bek
11 – 11.30	Supply end panel Harold Beek, Andy Beveridge/Sam Davidson, Nungari Mwangi and Claudia Pollen
11.30 – 11.45 Refreshments	
11.45 – 12.15	Retail end panel Angela Coulton, Brian Wills-Pope, Chanel de Kock and Catherine Dishington
12.15 – 12.40	Wider stakeholder panel Caroline Downey, Alistair Leadbetter, Isobelle de Lijser and Amy Gray
12.40 – 1pm	Garden conversations
1-2pm	Lunch in the Techno Centre
2 – 2.45pm	Key Question Groups
2.45 – 3pm	Refreshments
3 - 3.45pm	Plenary and our research project future
3.45 – 4pm	Final round up and thank you
4pm	Close