



Sara Thornton  
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By email: [iasc@iasc.independent.gov.uk](mailto:iasc@iasc.independent.gov.uk)

22 March 2021

Dear Sara

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2020, my apologies for the delay in responding to you. Thank you also for your update on actions taken by you and your team following on from Operation Fort. The Co-op is encouraged by the work you are leading to drive best practice amongst UK businesses with regard to supply chains and to protect workers.

I agree with your observation that businesses vary in the level of sophistication to approaching the anti-exploitation agenda. The framework your team have developed provides a useful tool by which to drive best practice amongst businesses. We are cognisant that what we are aiming for is continuous improvement in our approach and strategy as the challenges we face in protecting our supply chains and the workers within them are constantly evolving.

Since our last letter to you we have sought to strengthen further our efforts to tackle Modern Slavery. Full detail will be included in our next Modern Slavery Statement which is due to be published in April 2021 alongside our Annual Results. Actions taken include:

- We have taken steps to provide an increased level of transparency of issues through our Modern Slavery Statement, Sustainability Report and within our website. We have been publishing details of the audits that have taken place in our food supply chain for over 15 years and have published our [salient risks](#) and steps we are taking to mitigate risks in our high-risk supply chains. In our forthcoming [Modern Slavery Statement](#) we will be disclose our tier 1 production sites with worker details and disclosing the grievances that have been raised with us in our food supply chain.
- We have sought to improve our ability to identify issues of Modern Slavery, share intelligence and support victims by becoming founder members of the Modern Slavery Intelligence Network and supporting the [Unseen Modern Slavery Helpline](#).

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- We have responded to increased risk and vulnerability to workers caused by the impact of Covid by taking a lead role in building a coalition of partners to deliver supplier webinars, working collaboratively to develop [guidance](#) and by launching our [Global Wellbeing Charter](#) which sets out how we have supported workers and producers globally.
- As part of our [Future of Food](#) commitment to eliminate illegal and unfair recruitment fees, we provided suppliers and labour providers through-out our global supply base with access to free training courses, tools and guidance through our sponsorship of the Responsible Recruitment Toolkit and are working with key suppliers to identify hotspots and put in place action plans to address.
- We found new ways to hear directly from workers about working conditions, through Direct Worker Reporting, worker surveys and virtual site assessments.
- We have reached a milestone in our campaigning for better victim support with the co-created (with City Hearts) Bright Future survivor employment support programme launched as an independent co-operative in May 2020.

The Co-op is absolutely committed to drive positive change and lead by example within the business community. Next week, 23 March 2021, we will publish a review *'Campaigning for Change: the Co-op's approach to tackling Modern Slavery and supporting victims.'* This review has been undertaken by the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham and will include a series of key 'takeaways' for business seeking to move beyond mere compliance with the Modern Slavery Act and drive positive change. I will ensure that a copy of this report is sent to you when it is published; we will also share the report with our own suppliers and also with other businesses.

We believe that these actions and our commitment to continuous improvement would suggest that the Co-op should be considered a 'mature' business with regard to its response to Modern Slavery but recognise that there is always more a business could do. We believe that the information provided through our modern slavery reporting to date and our forthcoming 2020 Modern Slavery Statement will enable your office and interested NGOs to assess our performance and commitment in terms of the framework you have developed.

I trust this makes the situation clear to you but if you have any further questions please do get in touch.

Yours sincerely



Steve Murrells  
**Chief Executive, Co-op**

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