

# M&S

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Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM  
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Globe House  
89 Eccleston Square  
London, SW1V 1PN

Dear Dame Sara Thornton,

Thank you for your letter of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

As mentioned in our correspondence last year, I would like to reiterate that Marks & Spencer is committed to tackling Modern Slavery and we consider any kind of exploitation in our supply chain unacceptable. Modern Slavery is a growing global issue, and we know our customers share our concern. Our commitment to our customers is very clear; we will always treat people in our business and supply chain fairly, this includes playing a leadership role in the global fight against Modern Slavery.

We would firstly like to acknowledge the important role that you have provided as Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner over the last year in engaging with business and identifying best practise and undertaking a review of the learnings from Operation Fort. I know that our team has welcomed dialogue with yourself and your office and found the Operation Fort review useful to help us inform and evolve our approach.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to challenge ourselves to tackle Modern Slavery including:

- Working with Gs' Fresh to convene together a number of retailers and suppliers to pilot an industry-led intelligence sharing group, the Modern Slavery Intelligence Network. We are committed to ensure that this continues to evolve over the next 12 months and can have a significant impact by preventing, deterring and disrupting modern slavery.
- Throughout Covid-19, it has been more important than ever to listen and engage with the people that make our delicious food. From the start of the pandemic, and as the situation has progressed, we have made sure to keep in regular contact with our top 30 food suppliers so that we could understand the impact of what they faced, on how they were guaranteeing the safety of workers during lockdown and how we could respond and support as was necessary. We provided additional resources through the Food Network for Ethical Trade (FNET) and

- We have used worker voice technology so that we could directly hear workers speaking about their experience of working in factories during the pandemic and the questions they had in relation to Covid-19. We were able to pilot this technology to engage with 45 of our sites and were able to connect with over 4,000 workers across the UK and Ireland. Due to this success we will be rolling out worker technology throughout all our UK food suppliers in 2021, enabling us to hear directly from workers.
- We continue to be active members of Unseen's secure Helpline Business Portal, linked to the Modern Slavery Helpline. This continues to enable us to have specified information about possible cases of labour abuse and labour exploitation linked to our supplier sites and business. Over the last 6 months we have seen an uplift in calls and we have worked with Unseen to investigate and address cases and remediate where necessary.
- We sponsored and actively contributed to the [Covid-19 Autumn/Winter 2020 Guidance for Food, Horticulture and Agriculture website](#). This website is specifically designed to provide the latest practical tips, guidance, tools, and case studies to help businesses in the food, agriculture and horticulture industries to better manage risks (including labour exploitation and modern slavery) associated with the COVID-19 pandemic during the autumn and winter period.

We welcome the IASC maturity framework, with its four clearly defined stages, and its broader purpose beyond assessing legal compliance to the Modern Slavery Act, to also support businesses to strive for improvement in tackling modern slavery. The simple and clear framing will ensure that this can be used in our interaction with investors and throughout the business. We have assessed ourselves against the framework and would predominately sit in "Evolving Good Practice" with some activity in "Leading on Human Rights Innovation" and with the ambition to continue to evolve our activity to fully sit in this tier in the next 12 months. We will include our assessment against the IASC framework in our future modern slavery statements to drive transparency and accountability. We have always been willing to be challenged and will continue to engage with external stakeholders on where we can do better within our own operations and supply base.

At Marks & Spencer we take our role in identifying and preventing exploitation very seriously.

The Board have agreed to reflect the Plan's importance in its own governance structures and have agreed to create a formal Board Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) sub-Committee. Tamara Ingram, our Non-Executive Director, will chair the sub-committee with her Board colleague, Sapna Sood also sitting on the committee. Tamara brings a deep understanding of the customer to our deliberations and Sapna has experience of leading complex supply chains and a strong personal passion for sustainability. We are confident they will bring vigour and challenge to our ESG agenda.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Rowe', written over a horizontal line.

**Steve Rowe**  
**Chief Executive**