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**COLES WORKS WITH UNIONS TO SAFEGUARD HUMAN RIGHTS
IN THE HORTICULTURE SUPPLY CHAIN**
TWU, AWU and SDA sign Coles Ethical Retail Supply Chain Accord

Coles has taken another step toward being Australia's most sustainable supermarket by joining with three major unions to promote ethical employment practices and treatment of workers throughout the Australian horticulture supply chain.

In a first for the Australian retail sector, Coles has worked with unions representing workers from every stage of the Australian fresh produce supply chain to develop the Coles Ethical Retail Supply Chain Accord.

The Accord, signed by Coles and the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and the Australian Workers Union (AWU), aims to achieve a safe, sustainable, ethical and fair retail supply chain for all workers regardless of their employment status, citizenship or visa status.

Coles Group CEO Steven Cain said the Accord would enable Coles to partner with unions to improve outcomes for workers within the horticulture supply chain, with a particular focus on labour hire organisations.

"We're committed to winning together by working with all stakeholders right through the horticulture supply chain to better protect human rights," he said.

"Aussie farmers are central to our commitment to helping all Australians lead healthier, happier lives. Around 95% of the fresh produce we sell in Coles supermarkets is grown on Australian farms.

"Our farmers are among the hardest workers in Australia and so are the workers on their farms. It's therefore important that we're working with farmers, labour hire organisations, industry bodies like the National Farmers Federation, the unions, government and the broader industry to ensure the people who have grown, picked, packed, delivered and stacked this food are treated ethically and fairly.

"By working collaboratively with all stakeholders, we aim to improve human rights not just in our own supply chain but across the entire horticultural sector that also serves the export, food service and food processing sectors."

As part of the Accord, representatives from Coles, the TWU, AWU and the SDA will meet regularly to plan collaborative activities and discuss the investigation of complaints. The Accord members will also hold regular town hall meetings to hear from workers and provide information on workplace rights.

SDA National Secretary Gerard Dwyer said the Accord was a long-term commitment to bring about positive and lasting change.

“The SDA stands with the AWU and TWU to work with Coles to lift standards in the horticultural supply chain from farms to customers’ front doors,” he said.

“This is a significant step. An ethical supply chain can benefit everyone – definitely workers along the supply chain, but local communities can also reap the benefits of fairly paid workers spending more in local economies too.”

Coles and the unions will work on initiatives to embed ethical principles in the broader retail supply chain, commissioning research on the social and economic benefits of ethical sourcing as well as liaising on potential regulatory or legislative reforms on workers’ rights, including in relation to labour hire providers.

AWU National Secretary Daniel Walton said the Accord would benefit all Australians, not just directly affected workers.

“Australian customers want to know their fruit and veg was ethically grown and ethically produced,” he said.

“This is the kind of constructive unionism that can genuinely lead to real change on a mass level. Unions need to work cooperatively right along the supply chain if we’re to ensure that workers are getting paid fairly – from our farms all the way through to our supermarket shelves.

“The reach of this MOU stretches right across the nation, deep into our small regional communities. The AWU started in the bush and I’m proud of initiatives like this that reach back into the bush.”

The Accord will also create more opportunities for work education initiatives, such as development and dissemination of worker guidelines, freedom of association, migrant worker arrival training and using technological solutions for greater penetration of education and training materials.

TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine said the Accord was an important step forward for the alliance of the unions working in Coles’ fresh food supply chain.

“It will involve monitoring and co-operation on our parts, and we look forward to increasing our work together to ensure workers in the supply chain have rights and can exercise those rights,” he said.

“From the farm to the transport distribution network and onto the shop floor, we will aim to ensure workers have a voice to protect against abuses and exploitation.”

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