

Homeworkers Worldwide

Model Homeworking Policy for Brands and Retailers

1. Background

Homeworkers exist in many supply chains working in a wide range of sectors.

Homeworkers lack visibility in supply chains, and are generally employed informally, in a precarious position. Many are underpaid and have no security of employment. The vast majority are women, who are balancing paid work with domestic and family responsibilities, and who have few practical alternatives to homework.

XXX believe that one of the first steps towards reducing the insecurity of these workers is to take an open and positive position towards homeworking.

2. Our Position

XXX believes that homeworking can make a positive contribution to production and openly accepts the presence of homework within its supply chains.

XXX recognises that homeworkers are entitled to equal treatment with other workers as set out in the ILO Convention on Homeworking (1996, C177, Article 4), including pay, health and safety, the right to organise, social security protection and protection against discrimination.

Any work to improve homeworkers' conditions must involve homeworkers themselves in the process, and must not result in homeworkers losing their work.

2.1. Acceptance of Homeworking

Accepting the use of homeworking in our supply chain avoids the danger of:

- sending homeworkers underground and thus preventing any progress on improving their labour conditions;
- triggering unintended consequences whereby workers could have their sole means of income removed.

2.2. Commitment to improving homeworkers' conditions

However, we also acknowledge that labour conditions experienced by homeworkers may not currently meet those set out in the ILO Convention on Homework.

XXX is therefore committed to taking action, together with our suppliers, to improving these conditions, and we will establish a clear timeframe for doing so. The first step in such action is to make our position on homeworking clear.

3. Defining 'homework'

Our definition of homework is based upon the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention (1996, C177, Article 1) which promotes the equality of treatment between homeworkers and other wage earners, and which states:

The term homework means work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homeworker,

- (1) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer;
- (2) for remuneration;
- (3) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used, unless this person has

the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker* under national laws, regulations or court decisions;

** In practice, homeworkers working in global supply chains are producing goods to strict company specifications. They do not have 'the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered a independent worker', and so they are clearly homeworkers covered by the ILO definition.*

4. Our commitments under this policy

We commit:

- to communicate our position on homeworking throughout our company and to those who supply to us;
- to ensure that the presence of homeworkers in the supply chain will not lead to the relocation of work or cancellation of orders;
- to work with our suppliers for the sustainable improvement of labour conditions with homeworkers in our supply chains, to establish a clear timeframe for action, and to involve homeworkers and/ or their representatives in this process.

5. Our suppliers' commitments under this policy

We expect those we are sourcing from to:

- adopt a shared policy of acceptance of homeworking and commitment to improving homeworkers' labour conditions where these do not meet those set out in the ILO Convention on Homeworking (1996, C177, Article 4) [and our code of conduct];
- communicate this policy to all those in the supply chain below them, including homeworkers themselves;
- work with us to identify where homeworking occurs in the supply chains beneath them;
- work with us to develop an action plan for improving labour conditions with homeworkers where these are found to be below those set out in international labour standards [and our code of conduct], and to involve homeworkers and/or their representatives in this process.

NB. This may involve different measures depending on the context, ranging from:

- *direct employment of homeworkers.*
- *systems to guarantee payments to homeworkers, such as pass books and direct payments to prevent deductions from homeworkers' pay.*
- *enrolment in statutory social systems or equivalent private provisions.*
- *information to homeworkers about their rights and entitlements under this policy and an accessible grievance mechanism if these are denied them.*

For further information and advice on adopting a Homeworking Policy please contact Homeworkers Worldwide

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