



ethical  
trading  
initiative



REPORT ON THE ETI BIENNIAL CONFERENCE 2003

# Key challenges in ethical trade

## About ETI

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) exists to identify and promote good practice in the implementation of codes of labour practice, including the monitoring and independent verification of code provisions. We are an alliance of companies, trade union organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) committed to working together to achieve that aim. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that the working conditions of employees in companies that supply goods to customers in the UK meet or exceed international standards.

The ETI Base Code is founded on International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions and has become a model on which other codes are based. A summary of ETI's Base Code appears below and can be seen in full on our website [www.ethicaltrade.org](http://www.ethicaltrade.org)

ETI was established in 1998 as an independent, not-for-profit organisation. We are funded by member contributions and a grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

## The ETI Base Code

- Employment is freely chosen
- Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected
- Working conditions are safe and hygienic
- Child labour shall not be used
- Living wages are paid
- Working hours are not excessive
- No discrimination is practised
- Regular employment is provided
- No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed

## ETI conferences

ETI organises an international conference every two years to bring together people involved in ethical trade from all around the world. These conferences provide a forum for participants to share experiences, engage in debate and develop their understanding of ethical trade issues.

As well as the biennial conference, we run an extensive programme of seminars focusing on specific issues. Details of forthcoming events, and reports of past seminars, are posted on our website: [www.ethicaltrade.org](http://www.ethicaltrade.org) or can be obtained from ETI (our address is on the reverse of the title page).

# Key challenges in ethical trade

## Report on the ETI Biennial Conference 2003

In May 2003, 320 people from 25 countries and many different walks of life gathered in London to discuss the key challenges to improving working conditions in global supply chains. All of those present were involved in one way or another in promoting and implementing voluntary codes of labour practice, and/or the labour rights they embody. This was the third in a series of international conferences organised by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), conferences which aim to provide a forum for those involved in ethical trade to share experiences, engage in debate and develop their understanding of ethical trade issues.

*Key challenges in ethical trade* is a report of the main issues and debates that arose at this conference, and has been written for all those with an interest in ethical trade, whether or not they were able to take part. The report will be relevant to a wide audience, since the issues it covers make up a core agenda for the future of ethical trade and bring together perspectives from a wide range of stakeholders.

Instead of a conventional account of the conference proceedings, the report is structured around the following 10 key themes:

- Building local multi-stakeholder code initiatives
- Providing workers with confidential complaints mechanisms
- Linking wages, overtime and productivity
- The challenge of code implementation in supply chains that include homeworkers and/or smallholders
- Improving companies' performance on labour issues in China
- Worker education
- Purchasing practices: what impact on labour conditions?
- Women workers: are current practices enough to address discrimination at the workplace?
- What role for the private sector in preventing, identifying and remedying child labour?
- Are codes making a difference to workers?

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**Ethical Trading Initiative**  
Cromwell House  
14 Fulwood Place  
London WC1V 6HZ  
United Kingdom

t +44 (0) 20 7404 1463

f +44 (0) 20 7831 7852

e [eti@eti.org.uk](mailto:eti@eti.org.uk)

[www.ethicaltrade.org](http://www.ethicaltrade.org)