

# Nature's Pride's Nutrition at Work Programmes

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Nature's Pride aims to improve health and wellbeing in its value chain by promoting better nutrition of workers in the horticulture sector, using its expertise in fruit and vegetables, and working through its established in-country networks of growers.



## Scope

Workforce nutrition programs are being rolled out with major suppliers in Peru and South Africa, and smaller projects have been implemented in Côte d'Ivoire and Dominican Republic. In the first phase, 680 people consumed more balanced meals and 1,310 people were reached with awareness campaigns.



## Motivation

Nature's Pride sees the significance of nutrition and feels it is an area where it can make a difference. The company is working to combat the fact that many people who grow, harvest, and pack the fruits and vegetables in the countries of origin do not have knowledge of and access to healthy nutrition. Moreover, there is a business case for growers to engage in workforce nutrition programs: where staff are happy and well, the turnover of skilled staff falls, and this improves the quality of the products picked.



## Timeline

The projects are financed through the Nature's Pride Foundation, which was established in 2014 and has been focusing on improved nutrition in the company's supply chain since 2018, starting in the Dominican Republic. The Foundation and the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) entered into a partnership in 2020 and, as a result of this, the two pilots the projects in Peru and South Africa were implemented in 2020 and 2021.



## Impact

For both pilot projects, the results of both pilot programs are promising and incited continuation and expansion of the project.





## Motivation

Nature Pride's reasons to invest in nutrition are three-fold. Firstly, the company acknowledges nutrition as an important contemporary topic, as the **food we eat affects our health and planet**. Secondly, it recognises the many **inequalities in nutrition**, as not everyone has the same access to nutritious foods. Lastly, Nature's Pride feels that this is an **area where the company and its foundation can make a difference** using its large global network of growers and clients and expertise in fruits and vegetables.

The company also emphasizes the importance of good relationships in the supply chain. Companies have a responsibility to create a socially and environmentally sustainable supply chain. Paradoxically, although consumer health is improved by the sale and consumption of fruit and vegetables, nutrition of workers in the supply chain of these products is often suboptimal.

The business benefits are also evident to the company; **when the staff are happy and healthy, there is less turnover, so workers can build up experience and expertise, increasing the quality of the product.**

## The project

One of Nature's Pride's aims is to improve health through good nutrition, both for consumers of its products and, in recent years, throughout its value chain. The company became aware that many people who grow, harvest, and pack their fruits and vegetables in the countries of origin do not have knowledge of and access to healthy nutrition. Through a partnership with the [Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition](#)<sup>1</sup> (GAIN) and its growers, Nature's Pride set out to better understand the drivers behind this situation and how it could be improved. The Nature's Pride Foundation focuses on living environments (particularly water) and nutrition, building on longstanding trust between company and growers, many of whom have supplied Nature's Pride for many years.

The company has supported the translation of the [Nutrition at Work Handbook](#)<sup>2</sup> into English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. With GAIN, work is now being undertaken with two suppliers to roll out the Handbook's guidance on how to improve the meal/snack offer, manage a workforce nutrition program, and monitor impact. Nature's Pride does not provide suppliers with funding for

## About Nature's Pride

Nature's Pride is a leading European importer of exotic fruits and vegetables based in the Netherlands.



implementation of these programmes; instead, **the company links each supplier to GAIN and covers the costs of GAIN's technical support team**. The programmes aim to raise awareness of good nutrition, improve food offers in on-site canteens, and foster healthier food habits:

- [Dominus](#) is Nature's Pride biggest mango grower in **Peru**. Two initial surveys of the workforce identified gaps in knowledge of nutrition, with more detailed telephone interviews asking follow-up questions about eating habits at and beyond work. Efforts to **improve food in the canteen** are supported by management, and the canteen's cooks were educated about nutrition and encouraged to take ownership of the changes. This led to rapid changes in the menu: food diversity increased (including the addition of salad options), sales of healthy food rose, and sales of unhealthy, sugary food fell. A program was set up in which workers can earn credits and exchange them for healthy foodstuffs such as oats, rice, lentils, tuna and milk. **Awareness-raising about nutrition** has been fostered through, for example, visits from nutritionists from a local university.
- In **South Africa**, the pilot is being run with [ZZZ](#), a major avocado grower, and, as with Dominus, it began with a survey, interviews, and group discussions to inform activities. **Nutrition education** was provided in a 14-week nutrition-awareness campaign, with specially designed visuals. Training sessions were offered that explain the benefits of healthy eating, and employees were reached with messaging through WhatsApp and email. In the canteen at head office, a rolling 10-day menu cycle has been introduced, with **recipes adjusted to include more vegetables, legumes and fortified ingredients, and reduced fats and sugar**. Canteen staff have welcomed the changes as they can be more organized and plan

<sup>1</sup> The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) is a Swiss-based foundation launched at the United Nations to tackle the human suffering caused by malnutrition.

<sup>2</sup> The Nutrition at Work Handbook was developed by the Global Alliance for Nutrition, Eat Well Global and the SUN Business Network to support employers and businesses looking to provide healthy meals and snacks to their employees. The Nutrition at Work Handbook provides step-by-step guidance for employers.



further ahead. These logistical changes meant that greater quantities of specific items could be purchased at lower prices, and reduced waste balanced out the cost of more expensive ingredients. Finally, fruit and vegetables were put on sale for the first time at the shop at ZZ2's head office.

In addition to these initiatives, Nature's Pride invests in nutrition in several other ways, such as providing **cooking classes** and **nutritious lunches** for mango farmers in Côte d'Ivoire, and providing **workshops, canteen menu changes**, and **nutritious food baskets** to employees in Peru and Dominican Republic.

## Impact

Feedback on the Dominus (Peru) programme is reported as having been very positive, with workers feeling that the company cares about their wellbeing. Impact was assessed through KPIs and targets:

- 410 people (out of a target of 480) were reached with messages about nutrition, with the slight shortfall attributed to a slightly shorter growing season than usual, which meant that the campaign ended earlier than it might have done in other years. Initially, only 3.6% of workers obtained a score of 8/10 or more on a questionnaire about healthy nutrition but, **following the awareness-raising efforts, this increased to 83%**.
- On average, almost a **quarter of the workforce reported improved nutrition habits** at work and at home: compared to baseline, 22% increased fruit consumption, 10% increased vegetable consumption and 40% increased legume consumption.
- A target of **95% of workers to be eating nutritionally improved lunch and dinner** was achieved. There was initial nervousness about whether changes to the canteen would be acceptable to workers, but 97% of those using the canteen felt that the new meal offers were good or very good, and 96% approved of the variety of food available.

The ZZ2 programme has also demonstrated positive impacts:

- Changes to the canteen were particularly successful, with a **264% increase in purchases of vegetables** and a **30% decrease in purchases of unhealthy food** – and the canteen staff welcomed the changes enthusiastically.

- The awareness-raising efforts reached 900 employees through WhatsApp and email. 150 employees took part in the training sessions on nutrition and healthy eating.
- Anecdotal evidence indicated that kitchen staff were happy with having set days on which the menu and planning were discussed. The structure prevented buying unnecessary products, and they learned how much food to prepare, unlike in the past.

## Challenges and lessons learned

Several challenges were encountered while implementing the initiatives:

- Nutrition programmes **require commitment and input of resources from the supplier company**, but there may be limited human resource capacity. This was particularly the case during the COVID-19 crisis, which further stretched resources.
- Changing nutrition behaviour depends on the **affordability and accessibility of healthy foods**, and this **remains a significant barrier** in many settings. However, the work in Peru and South Africa has provided insights into the barriers faced by farmers in accessing healthy food and has provided the company with the motivation to explore options in the future to address these further.
- The **majority of workers do not eat in the work-site canteen**: of the 1,250 workers at Dominus, only around 500 eat in the canteen and at ZZ2 only the canteen in the head office was included. An important future challenge is how best to improve the nutritional quality of food consumed by those who bring their own meals or who work on other sites.
- Unfortunately, the aim to improve the healthiness of food in the ZZ2 onsite shop was not achieved. There are logistical challenges to stocking the shop with fresh produce, and it may have had the **unintended consequence** of taking business away from local street vendors. The company is still working to address these challenges.
- Language may be a barrier to awareness-raising about good nutrition, so translation of materials may be required.



## Next steps

The results of both pilots are promising, and have incited the continuation. and expansion of the project.

- Dominus will continue with menu improvements and nutrition awareness training for the 480 employees in the two factories at least until 2022. The company also aims to include workers in the field who were not included in the pilot, monitor health impact, and extend the range of its program to focus on obesity, chronic diseases, and physical activity.
- ZZ2 will continue its improvements in the canteen and awareness campaign. In addition, it will improve the menu of the aftercare and creche for children of ZZ2 staf.

### More information and tools

GAIN, 'Workforce nutrition webinar: lessons learned from piloting of the GAIN Nutrition at Work Handbook' (October 2021)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j2XsZpwOVg0>

GAIN, Eat Well Global and the SUN Business Network, Nutrition at Work: Providing Healthy Meals and Snacks for a Thriving Workforce (the Nutrition at Work Handbook) (2020) <https://nutritionconnect.org/nutrition-at-work>

Nature's Pride, 'Workforce nutrition in the fruit and veg sector: a natural match' (Nutrition Connect blog, January 2021)  
<https://nutritionconnect.org/news-events/workforce-nutrition-fruit-and-veg-sector-natural-match>

Nature's Pride, 'Ivory Coast: nutritious meals for employees' (undated)  
<https://www.naturespride.eu/en/sustainability/projects/ivory-coast-nutritious-meals-for-employees>