

Behind the Brands

External Scoping Research of the Next Frontier in Corporate Commitments

Terms of Reference

**Background on Behind the Brands**

In 2013, Oxfam initiated a groundbreaking campaign, [Behind the Brands](http://www.behindthebrands.org/en-us/about), to challenge 10 of the largest food and beverage companies to improve their economic, social, and environmental performance. The campaign ranked the 10 companies[[1]](#footnote-1) on the strength of their policies on transparency, women, agricultural workers, farmers, land, water and climate change. The campaign featured three, thematic communications “spikes,” each targeting specific companies around the issues of gender, climate and land. Over 700,000 support actions were taken, investors rallied and dozens of allies and influentials around the world joined in support. As a result, several companies made notable commitments to improve the social and environmental standards across their vast supply chains, with milestones running into late 2020.

Since then, Oxfam has been engaging with companies to ensure that they follow through on their commitments, through the [Behind the Brands Implementation Initiative](https://oxfam.box.com/s/4jt9ty9xcbzmwxtssnawts9jr76dn4ou) (see annex 1). Both addressing the risks and harnessing opportunities presented in global supply chains requires that the companies make bold, meaningful commitments to climate change, land, and women’s rights and foster economic opportunities in the supply chain and in their business models – and ensure that these commitments extend to their suppliers. Oxfam committed to work with willing companies to implement commitments in order to benefit the farmers, workers and communities in their supply chains, including driving commitments deep into practice, extending commitments to suppliers and developing implementation models in the global South.

The commitments resulting from Oxfam’s Behind the Brands campaign were at the forefront of social and environmental change. However, companies in the F&B sector have since made other social impact commitments, as have companies in the information and communications technology, apparel, finance, retail and other sectors. Today, the private sector has begun to set or is gearing up for a next generation of commitments, tied to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs). Oxfam seeks to better understand the trends, market dynamics and issues influencing this next generation of commitments. We are interested in trends around the Big 10 F&B companies, as globalization of supply chains has had a tremendous impact on the lives and livelihoods of small-scale farmers and plantation workers across the developing world. While work in the agricultural sector may be fueling valuable export and domestic growth, as well as critical commodities for the Big 10, the farmer share of end consumer price is shrinking; women farmers and gender norms are particularly impacted. We are also interested in trends in the enabling industries around the food system, and trends in relevant sectors that F&B companies could learn from. This includes trends in retail, finance, and technology sectors. In addition, are there examples of groundbreaking commitments from other sectors and fields to harness or learn from? We are particularly interested in trends related to a next generation of commitments around climate change, gender, land rights, human rights, inequality, workers and farmer income, and around those with traction in the global South. We are also interested in how these trends are impacted by the wider political economy landscape and shifts in the political and regulatory environment both in the global North and in the global South. Finally, will the COVID-19 pandemic lead to structural changes in how the food system is organized and how can the crisis be leveraged to create more inclusive and resilient value chains in the future?

**Upcoming Behind the Brands 2021 Briefing Paper**

This scoping research will be a key resource informing Oxfam’s Behind the Brands 2021 briefing paper. Nearly five years after the campaign phase closed in 2016, Oxfam will take stock and assess how the companies have progressed against commitments made and if there is evidence of company suppliers having changed their practices in line with commitments made. Oxfam will also reflect on our theory of change and (re)assess if there are any indications of wider systemic change because of campaigns actions taken. We will reflect both on evidence of systemic change and seek examples of good or bad practice alongside learnings which can be shared. Progress will be assessed taking into account the complex supply chains and sourcing environments in which (food) companies implement commitments in practice. We will specifically focus on sourcing practices in the global South and prepare a set of propositional recommendations drawing on emerging good practice. We hope that these recommendations will begin to position Oxfam as a thought leader in our worldwide private sector influencing and with major multinational companies in the run up to 2030. The report may also provide a platform for southern affiliate, countries and partners to launch dedicated private sector influencing work over the next 5-10 years.

**Purpose of scoping research**

Oxfam is in the early stages of thinking about what the future of Behind the Brands implementation looks like, and how we best pivot the initiative to transform unequal systems. The Behind the Brands campaign phase was about securing commitments, and Behind the Brands 1.1 about implementing commitments in the global South. This is long-term work. We’ll continue to build on our work in the coming years with an even greater focus on inequality. We will challenge and harness the power of food, beverage and agricultural companies to address the prevailing economic model that has facilitated the extreme concentration of wealth and power.

Toward determining our path forward, Oxfam seeks to commission a research report that explores the next frontier of company commitments. This report will update and build off of the corporate sustainability trends Oxfam commissioned from an external consultancy in 2016 at the close of the BtB campaign phase. That report explored trends in the current situation of world hunger; corporate campaigning and activism; food sector sustainability responses, efforts and leadership; ongoing challenges in the agricultural sector; and whether BtB was changing these companies and the broader sector. Lastly, it made recommendations on how Oxfam could improve BtB to drive more change, in companies and in the sector. Many of these recommendations informed the design of the implementation phase. The report helped shape messaging for the BtB campaign phase completion report.

Similarly, the report we currently seek to commission will help inform Oxfam’s long-term vision on where we would like to see private sector leadership in the future. This moment presents an opportunity to tell a bigger story about shifting private sector responsibilities and accountability worldwide. Specifically, it offers an opportunity for Oxfam to speak about the new wave of considerations companies ought to take into account when sourcing in the global South and for us to speak to the kinds of practices we hope to see from leading suppliers in producer countries.

In short, this scoping research has two primary objectives:

1) To inform Oxfam’s strategy around the next phase of this program

2) To inform Oxfam’s 2021 report and help Oxfam situate our analysis of core BtB commitments in a wider landscape of trends on relevant corporate commitments (for example we don’t want to position the big ten as leading gender champions if they are lagging other industries on implementation of the UN Women’s Empowerment Principles)

Oxfam will not publish this trend-spotting scoping research as a stand-alone paper. Oxfam will draw on the research and incorporate relevant findings into the 2021 report.

**AUDIENCE FOR RESEARCH OUTPUTS**

Oxfam will integrate research and analysis from this scoping research into the 2021 Oxfam briefing paper. The primary audience for the 2021 Oxfam briefing paper is thought-leaders, companies, investors, allies and the media. We expect that companies will read the paper, and will therefore ensure that the tone is balanced, intelligent and factual.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The report will provide an expert analysis and trend-spotting of the next frontier of company commitments in the food sector and beyond, to help inform Oxfam’s long-term vision. Oxfam has a particular interest in sustainability trends driven by sourcing from the Global South. The scoping research should 1) explore stand out examples of progress and shortcomings around implementation of previous 2020 commitments (please see below); 2) analyze wider industry trends and ongoing challenges within the food and beverage sector relevant to the key topics of climate change, gender, land rights, human rights, inequality, workers (farm and plantation) and small scale producers/farmers; 3) highlight key expectations for the food sector and broader areas of leadership needed around corporate responsibility and accountability and supply chain disclosure; and 4) comment on how lasting change can be achieved within the food and beverage sector.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Looking back on previous commitments** | **Approximate expected word count by section**  **1,600 words** |
| 1. | Wider **best practice** around implementing corporate commitments: Are there implementation examples and models from other food and beverage companies or from other industries (apparel, electronics, etc) that we can learn from? Are there other implementation models driving corporate commitments through core business practice that have been useful? Do these examples of best practice include implementation of commitments at the country level in the Global South? |  |
| 2. | **Failure:** Are there examples of companies failing to meet or adhere to existing corporate sustainability and responsible sourcing commitments that Oxfam should acknowledge in this report? Why did companies fail?  In particular, what lessons should NGOs and Oxfam take away from the failure of companies to meet their deforestation-free supply chains commitments on a 2020 timeline? Are their particular recommendations Oxfam should make to companies in light of this experience? (Oxfam has actively engaged on the deforestation commitments but will not commission separate evaluation given failure is widely documented by other NGOs and acknowledged by companies)  What general conclusions can we draw from past failures? |  |
| 3. | **UNGPS**: Oxfam has found that since 2016 more companies are using human rights frameworks and the United Nations Guiding Principles in particular. Can this be validated and how much progress have we truly seen these last four years? |  |
|  | **Current trends and challenges** | **3,300 words** |
| 4. | What are the global trends for food sector sustainability related to topics of climate change, gender, land rights, human rights (including support of human rights defenders), inequality, workers (farm and plantation) and small scale producer/farmers?  As relevant, how do the trends on the topics above fit into wider shifts in the political economy which companies operate in – such as government regulation in the global north and global south, progress or lack of progress through multi-stakeholder initiatives, the political influence of companies on these issues and corporate concentration of agricultural supply chains?  How has COVID-19 changed or informed these trends? |  |
| 5. | What are the barriers to implementation of corporate commitments and ongoing challenges in agricultural supply chains? How might COVID 19 impact the ability of companies to deliver on sustainability commitments? |  |
| 6. | What are current trends impacting small holder farmers and producers in Behind the Brands companies and wider food supply chains? Please include trends related to living income in particular. |  |
| 7. | How is the role of women in the food sector evolving in terms of employment, participation, and power? What progress are we seeing around the world in terms of legal rights, women-led innovation, social norms, resource access/ownership vs. the areas where we are seeing the gap widening? |  |
| 8. | Are there sustainability trends related specifically to Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala, India, and Malawi, countries where Behind the Brands has focused our implementation efforts. What is motivating the private sector in these countries? Are there trends among consumers in the global South? |  |
|  | **Expectations moving toward 2030** | **1,600 words** |
| **9.** | 2025-2030 commitments: What commitments toward 2025 and 2030 have already been set by the BtB companies and other companies in food value chains relevant to the key topics of climate change, gender, land rights, human rights, inequality, farm and plantation workers (including living wage) and small scale producer/farmers (including living income)? How ambitious are these commitments? Among those released to date, which companies are emerging as leading and which as laggards on level of ambition and credibility of plans to reach them? Are there trends already emerging about how these forward looking commitments from food and beverage companies compare to other sectors? What companies are emerging as leaders on human rights and social impact? Are they the 10 companies we are focused on in BtB or are they other companies?  So far what is missing in these forward looking commitments? Where are the biggest gaps? |  |
| **10.** | How can lasting change be achieved within the food and beverage sector? How can Oxfam add the most value going forward in driving this change? |  |
| **11.** | COVID: How should COVID 19 inform future planning and commitments – environmental and social sustainability, responsible sourcing, human rights and inequality?  In light of COVID, which has had disproportionate impacts on women, migrants and the most vulnerable stakeholders in food supply chains, what practical solutions can be developed to better address 'risk-sharing' in supply chains? |  |

**Scope**

This scoping research will capture trends since the last independent report that Oxfam commissioned from Forum for the Future (in January 2016). It will cover the issue areas outlined above. It should include, but not be limited by, trends and commitments related to the Behind the Brands campaign phase companies.

**Relationship to independent evaluations commissioned by Oxfam**

Oxfam is also commissioning independent evaluations on progress against the gender, climate and land rights commitments made following the Behind the Brands campaign. These evaluations are how Oxfam will assess progress on the company commitments on gender, land and climate resulting from the campaign. In other words, these evaluations will be released publicly and will underpin Oxfam’s analysis of implementation efforts in the 2021 report, to be released in early 2021. While reflections may emerge about these three landmark commitment areas in interviews for this research report, we are not looking for an assessment of commitment implementation in this work. Our intension is that this scoping research on trends will help us situate the progress or lack of progress on these commitments in the wider landscape of corporate commitments relevant to the food and beverage sector. In addition, and as above, it is not intended that the trend-spotting report be published as a stand alone report, by Oxfam or independently.

**Methodology**

* Inception meeting with Oxfam
* Desk research, following the scope above
* Expert/stakeholder interviews: Interview BtB companies, other front running companies as well as leading sustainability experts and skeptics to ground the brief [[2]](#footnote-2)
* Assess results, compile report
* Review with Oxfam experts

**External interviewees**

Oxfam will provide a list of suggested interviewees for the report, though the researcher can also reach out to their own contacts. Oxfam will provide guidelines for interviews, including an introduction letter to explain the purpose of the interviews and how the information will be used by Oxfam. This is particularly important for interviews with the ten companies included within BtB, as it will be important to ensure consistency across interviews with all 10 companies. Remote interviews by skype or telephone are fine.

**Key literature and sources[[3]](#footnote-3)**

* **Oxfam report:** Behind the Brands Journey to Sustainable Food:

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/journey-sustainable-food>

* **Oxfam report**: Pathways to Deforestation-Free Food

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/pathways-deforestation-free-food>

* **Oxfam report:** Companies spoke: did their suppliers listen?

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/companies-spoke-did-their-suppliers-listen>

* **Oxfam Report:** A living income for small scale farmers

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/living-income-small-scale-farmers>

* **Oxfam Report:** The Human Cost of Sugar – Living and Working Conditions of Migrant-Cane Cutters in Maharashtra[**https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/%23Human%20Cost%20of%20Sugar\_Maharashtra%20Case.pdf**](https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/%23Human%20Cost%20of%20Sugar_Maharashtra%20Case.pdf)
* **Oxfam Report:** Sweet and Sour – An investigation of conditions on tropical fruit farms in North-East Brazil

**https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620875/bp-investigation-conditions-tropical-fruit-supply-chains-north-east-brazil-101019-en.pdf**

**Deliverables**

***Phase One: June 1- June 31, 2020***

**Deliverable 1: Inception Meeting. Host meeting with Oxfam leads to refine terms and scope.**

**Deliverable 2: Research review and interviews. Research and analysis of trends outlined above, including desk research and interviews with Oxfam experts.**

**Deliverable 3: Draft Research Review Summary**

***Phase Two: July 1-August 31, 2020***

**Deliverable 4: Interviews. With external stakeholders**

**Deliverable 4: Draft Report. To include visioning section (including reactions to options identified through Oxfam process).**

**Deliverable 5: Final Consultancy Report. This is a report prepared by the consultant.**

**REPORT FORMAT**

Background report – word document. To be incorporated into an Oxfam briefing paper.

**Report length:**

Approximately 6,500 words

**Budget Guidelines**

A budget of USD $23,700 is available to support this evaluation – inclusive of VAT.

**Schedule**

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| --- | --- |
| By May 2020 | Consultant recruited, contract finalized |
| June 2020 | Kick off, research, interview Oxfam experts |
| June 31, 2020 | Draft Research and Interview Summary delivered |
| July 2020 | External interviews, report drafted including visioning piece |
| July 31, 2020 | Draft report shared with Oxfam; meeting |
| August 2020 | Review by Oxfam staff, revisions |
| August 31, 2020 | Final Report submitted |

**Proposal submissions**

Kindly submit expressions of interest (maximum of eight pages) to Suzanne Zweben, [Suzanne.zweben@oxfam.org](mailto:Suzanne.zweben@oxfam.org) copying Nnenne Moneke, [Nnenne.moneke@oxfam.org](mailto:Nnenne.moneke@oxfam.org) by Monday, June1st at 5pm Boston time. Please include examples of prior work on visioning and trend analysis.

Annex 1

Oxfam’s Behind the Brands Implementation Initiative

Oxfam’s Behind the Brands campaign challenged ten of the largest food and beverage companies to improve their social and environmental policies. The campaign drew over 700,000 actions and spurred new corporate commitments on women’s empowerment, land rights, and climate change. In addition, companies made commitments on topics including smallholder farmers, workers, water, and transparency.

Making commitments is only a first step. The true measures of success are improvements in the lives of people living in poverty and protections for our environment and natural resources.Oxfam’s Behind the Brands Implementation Initiative focuses on how companies are implementing their policies and draws on emerging good practice for the sector as a whole.

The initiative is composed of four focus areas:

* Continuing engagement with Behind the Brands companies on implementation of their commitments. Oxfam recognizes that implementation is complex, and that NGOs have a role to play in holding companies accountable to their commitments. Oxfam thus provides advice and lends expertise to support initiatives where companies seek to do better, while simultaneously monitoring for progress.
* Ensuring uptake of commitments through Behind the Brands companies’ supply chains. Behind the Brands companies must work with and through their suppliers to implement their policies. Oxfam is focused on whether a selection of the most influential suppliers to Behind the Brands companies have policies in place that meet their customers’ expectations and adhere to international standards for best practice.
* Convening, innovating, and monitoring progress in target countries. Oxfam teams in Brazil, Ghana, Guatemala, India, and Malawi are engaging Behind the Brands companies and other stakeholders on innovative efforts toward responsible commodity production. Teams are also monitoring companies’ progress implementing their commitments.
* Establishing better food sector governance. Oxfam is engaging with investors on risks in their portfolios related to women, land, and climate in agricultural supply chains. Oxfam is also encouraging multi-stakeholder initiatives to strengthen their social criteria and improve stakeholder consultation processes.

Through this initiative, Oxfam and Behind the Brands companies can demonstrate that meaningful implementation of commitments through supply chains is possible. This in turn will drive forward more sustainable business models and mobilize leadership across the food and agriculture sector as new commitments are set toward 2030.

1. Associated British Foods/Illovo, Coca-Cola, Danone, General Mills, Kellogg, Mars, Mondelez, Nestle, PepsiCo and Unilever [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Oxfam will interview civil society groups and women’s organizations separately for their input on the pivot strategy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Please note Oxfam will provide additional materials that have not been published yet during inception meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)