



June 11 2019

To the Government of Ecuador:

The undersigned companies, **Axfood**, **Coop**, **Everfresh**, **Greenfood**, **Martin & Servera** and **Menigo**, source from the banana sector in Ecuador. Our work with Ecuadorian suppliers contributed to the 3,2 billion USD in banana exported from Ecuador last year. As the leading food companies in the European market we are aware that the agriculture sector is one of the most dangerous sectors for human rights defenders globally, with an increase in threats and attacks during recent years.

We are currently gravely concerned about the situation of Ecuadorian human rights defender and trade union leader **Jorge Acosta**, who we understand risks prosecution for “creating economic panic” chargeable with five to seven years in prison according to article 307 of Ecuador’s Comprehensive Organic Penal Code.

Jorge Acosta is the coordinator of the banana workers’ union ASTAC (Asociación Sindical de Trabajadores Agrícolas y Campesinos). He has worked for over ten years to address labour rights, health and safety issues and environmental impacts of business activities in the banana sector. Jorge Acosta is furthermore the President of the Ecuadorian Consultative Council for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the EU.

On April 18, 2019, Jorge Acosta was notified that an official complaint had been presented to the Ecuadorian Attorney General by a private individual. The complaint alleges that Mr Acosta had spread false information in order to hurt the economy of the country and in favour of competitors. The accusations made against him came shortly after he published a complaint directed to the European Commission concerning lack of respect for basic labour rights in Ecuador.

As companies that are dependent on global supply chains we are committed to respecting human rights in all parts of our operations. We rely on human rights defenders, such as Jorge Acosta, to be able to speak freely, and without fear of retaliation or reprisal, about challenges in the supply chains. Such information, in addition to information by other sources, is crucial for us to continue improving the performance of our sector, in close cooperation with our suppliers.

We are encouraged that over the past two years various pieces of legislations strengthening respect for political and civic freedoms in Ecuador were passed. We also acknowledge Ecuador’s strong support to the recent resolution on environmental human rights defenders at the UN Human Rights Council.

In light of these positive steps we call upon the Ecuadorian government to guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in line with the ILO Core Conventions ratified by Ecuador, and to provide full protection of all human rights defenders.

We equally call upon all actors in the Ecuadorian agricultural sectors to guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms in their operations and address any violations of such rights and freedoms within their sphere of influence.

Sincerely,

Axfood, Coop, Everfresh, Greenfood, Martin & Servera and Menigo

For more information please contact:

- **Åsa Domeij**, Head of Sustainability, **Axfood**: asa.domeij@axfood.se; +46-73 077 43 07
- **Charlotta Szczepanowski**, Head of Sustainability and Quality, **Coop**: Charlotta.Szczepanowski@coop.se; +46-70 698 41 42
- **Jennie Montell**, Sustainability Manager, **Everfresh**
- **Lisa Isakson**, Head of Communication and CSR, **Greenfood**: lisa.isakson@greenfood.se
- **Niclas God**, Director of purchasing, **Martin & Servera**: niclas.god@martinservera.se; +46 86 7284 64
- **Christoffer Carlsmose** Corporate Sustainability Manager, **Menigo**