



ECIP



The Ethical Charter Implementation Program for Growers

Following the 2014 Los Angeles Times “Product of Mexico” series on labor abuses in the agroexport sector, the Produce Marketing Association and United Fresh Produce Association formed a joint committee to create the Ethical Charter on Responsible Labor Practices. Published in 2018, the Charter outlines 13 principles to guide the management of agricultural labor, covering areas such as legal compliance, professional conduct and human rights.

While these principles established a strong and common foundation, they lacked a mechanism for enforcement or verification, leaving buyers no basis to determine which of their suppliers were actually upholding the Charter. Four retailers worked together to pilot several approaches to Ethical Charter implementation, and worked with their suppliers to launch ECIP in November 2023.



ECIP is not a compliance test. It is a pre-competitive, capacity-building initiative designed to support buyers, suppliers and growers in a shared commitment to improving labor management systems across the fresh produce supply chain. The program was born from a collaborative industry effort to offer a scalable, supplier-owned alternative to audits that supports continuous improvement. ECIP measures supplier and grower **engagement** rather than **compliance**. Through the ECIP LAB (Learn, Assess, Benchmark) platform, growers and suppliers are invited to:

LEARN

about the management systems required to align with the Ethical Charter

ASSESS

their own management systems and explore resources to strengthen them

BENCHMARK

their performance over time on a continuous improvement journey

Why Am I Being Asked to Participate in ECIP?

You may wonder why participation in ECIP is necessary, especially if you already hold a social responsibility certification. ECIP is designed to complement, not replace, existing certifications by providing additional support and resources to help you improve your labor management systems. Being active in ECIP provides your buyers with a single view of their supply chain. Plus, if your operation holds one of the following [16 benchmarked certifications](#), you receive free access to ECIP and earn a gold star, which is the highest form of engagement:

1. BRCGS Ethical Trade and Responsible Sourcing (ETRS)
2. Clearview
3. Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) - with Ethical Charter Addendum
4. Fair Food Program
5. Fair for Life
6. Fair Trade USA
7. Fairtrade International
8. Florverde Sustainable Flowers
9. GLOBALG.A.P: IFA plus GRASP add-on
10. Kenya Flower Council – Silver or Gold
11. MPS - Socially Qualified (SQ)
12. Rainforest Alliance
13. SA8000 - Social Accountability International
14. SIZA - Sustainability Initiative of South Africa
15. SMETA - Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit
16. Sustainably Grown

The Value of ECIP to Growers



REDUCTION OF AUDITS: ECIP helps reduce the burden of multiple audits by promoting uniformity for social responsibility reporting across the industry for major buyers.



CAPACITY BUILDING: ECIP offers resources and a marketplace of expert service providers who can help you address key challenges in labor management, strengthening your systems and responding to retail customer requirements.



SINGLE PLATFORM: By participating in ECIP, the entire produce industry will enjoy the benefits of a singular platform. This means as growers you can showcase your social responsibility efforts, certifications and areas where you are actively improving to your retail customers.



How to Respond in the ECIP LAB Assess Channel

The Assess channel within ECIP LAB is designed to help you evaluate your current labor management systems and identify areas for improvement. When completing the assessment, it is important to provide honest and accurate responses. ECIP is not a compliance tool, it is a learning tool that can guide you on your continuous improvement journey. The data collected through the self-assessment helps guide your priorities and your responses are never shared outside of your organization.

How is My Data Being Collected, Used and Stored?

Growers have access to their own data, but this information is aggregated and anonymized when reported to suppliers and buyers. This approach encourages honest self-assessment without fear of commercial repercussions, while also providing valuable insights into industry-wide labor practices. Data is used to track progress and identify trends within the industry, helping to shape future resources and support provided through ECIP. This aggregated, anonymous data is used to track engagement and improvement over time, helping to drive the continuous improvement process that is at the heart of ECIP.

Pricing Structure

For growers who do not hold one of the 16 benchmarked certifications, there is an annual \$200 subscription fee to use and report through the ECIP LAB platform.

Additional Resources



FAQ PAGE

ethicalcharterprogram.org/faqs



GROWER PAGE

ethicalcharterprogram.org/growers



VIDEO LIBRARY

ethicalcharterprogram.org/learn-more/#videos

