



UNION FOR
ETHICAL
BIOTRADE

SOURCING[®]
WITH RESPECT

Three Questions for Sureel Singh, UEBT's Representative in India

Tell me what you do at UEBT

My role is to oversee all the UEBT programs in India. I also cover Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. My job entails working with companies on achieving UEBT membership and verifying sourcing practices in the field. I also work to support companies in India based on the gaps identified during a verification audit.



You travel a lot to the fields. Can you give us a few specific examples of how the UEBT standard is used to improve practices in the sourcing areas?

The UEBT standard has seven principles, and these are put into indicators of good practice. When we go to assess a company, we try to not focus on performance on that day but on the whole sourcing operation - a continuous improvement approach. We use a field checklist to understand their current practices. Right now, a lot of the companies I am working with are supplying flowers for the fragrance sector, or herbs for the herbs & spices (food) sectors. Many times, I see what we would call 'regional practices' that are not in line with international good practices. So, there is a tension there. But once we talk and explain things a bit, these local practitioners do understand the logic and they begin to learn better practices over time. For example, the topic of taking actions for local biodiversity is often quite new to them, and when we explain it, they realize they need to make improvements and some have even worked with us on 'Biodiversity Action Plans.' On social issues, they often have things in place, but these are only verbal, so they might have a workplan developed after our assessment that is focused on making things more formal, such as writing down procedures and having these documents available for their buyers.

You came to UEBT in 2019. What made you want to work with UEBT?

I worked for a decade with Fairtrade International and with their regional partner. I saw real changes that were very impactful on these farmers. This had a powerful influence on me, and I thought that certification schemes can really work. I wanted to continue this, so when I got the opportunity to work with UEBT I accepted. One of the things that was interesting to me was to learn more about ingredients sectors. I feel I can take my experience from the sectors that Fairtrade worked in and contribute to UEBT from what I learned there, while also learning new things from the sectors that UEBT works with.