Fundo Dona Pancha: Recognizing women’s talent helps horticulture business to remain frontrunner

Company: Fundo Dona Pancha (part of a group of privately held companies)
Business focus: Fundo Dona Pancha produces, packages and exports fresh green asparagus
Started: in 1998

Results for women
Up to 400 women have been provided jobs under decent working conditions and in functions traditionally not available to them, where their talents can be fully used and developed

Results for business
As a result of its progressive employment practices, the company can always attract sufficient employees, which is a competitive advantage in times of labor shortage

“Women as Inclusive Business Partners” is an initiative by BoP Innovation Center and ICCO Cooperation
The business of asparagus
The favorable climatic conditions in the coastal region of Peru have made it a major producer of asparagus and other vegetables and fruits for export. For many economically deprived people in the region, the horticulture sector offers important employment opportunities. Women in Peru, especially those from indigenous and under-privileged backgrounds, suffer discrimination and often receive less pay. This is also true for women in the horticulture sector.

The company Fundo Dona Pancha produces, packages and exports fresh green asparagus for organic and conventional markets. Besides growing asparagus on 300+ ha of land in Peru, the company has cattle, which are fed with the agricultural rest product from the asparagus production. Harvesting and packaging takes place during 6-7 months a year. Due to the seasonal character of the work, staff numbers vary between 150-600 persons. During the peak season, attracting and retaining the most talented staff represents a competitive advantage. The male/female balance of employees is approximately 50/50. Women work across the company: in harvesting, packaging and office jobs (as export managers, administrators and financial controllers). On the farm and packing station on average 70% of employees are women, but this varies depending on the season.

The added-value of women employees
Unlike many companies in the region that give preference to men for certain roles, Fundo Dona Pancha does not have a predefined preference for either gender. Experience has shown that women are generally better in quality-control, and have a better eye for detail than their male counterparts. This is particularly important at the packing stations. Women’s leadership is also encouraged; as women have been found to be good in monitoring and guiding other employees.

Good working conditions pay for themselves
Fundo Dona Pancha’s employment practices have not yet been externally certified, but it does strictly follows government regulations. This means among other things, paying taxes for social security and employee insurance, which is uncommon in the agri-sector in Peru. As part of its overall policy to offer good working conditions, certain facilities are offered on a voluntarily basis. Child care is organized on the job during harvest time. Furthermore there are free lunch, transport and regular health services. Special attention is also given to prevent and react quickly to cases of sexual harassment. If incidents do occur, the male perpetrator is warned or even fired.

By offering opportunities to female employees under good working conditions, Fundo Dona Pancha is able to attract sufficient employees, even in times of labor shortages.

For more information about Fundo Dona Pancha visit the website