

U.K.-based Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) has terminated the membership of Ireland-based fruit company Fyffes, after a year after it suspended the company.

Fyffes' initial suspension in May 2018 followed formal complaints made by the NGO Banana Link and the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF) in March 2016 over the alleged treatment of workers at Fyffes' Suragroh farm business in Honduras.

The ETI said that during its suspension, Fyffes was encouraged to develop and implement solutions to the aspects of the complaint that were upheld, namely the right of farm workers to be represented by a union of their choice.

However, the decision to finally terminate membership followed the ending of a flagged 60-day period, which included a joint mission to Honduras of a high-level ex-senior executive from a corporate and a trade union representative.

But ETI's Board decided at meeting on Monday that Fyffes was still failing to resolve the substantive concerns raised.

"ETI recognises that in the real world of global supply chains there will be times where there is a specific problem or dispute involving one or more ETI member companies," ETI director Peter McAllister said.

"Typically, these are addressed through a mediation process with solutions agreed and implemented between concerned parties."

He pointed out that when companies join ETI, they commit to implementing its Base Code, an internationally recognised code of good labor practices and a process of continuous improvement.

"We recognise that in many locations, workers do not enjoy the full rights described in ETI's Base Code," he said. "It's why we work with business to motivate companies to behave ethically to the benefit of workers in their supply chains and to improve their performance over a period of time.

"While our expectations are high, where possible we seek to promote engagement and reach practical collaborative solutions, rather than find fault.

"But, our processes allow ETI to act if there is insufficient progress, as has happened here. Yet clearly, when such mediation fails, no-one is a winner."

Fyffes has a right of appeal and that may be exercised within a period of 28 days.