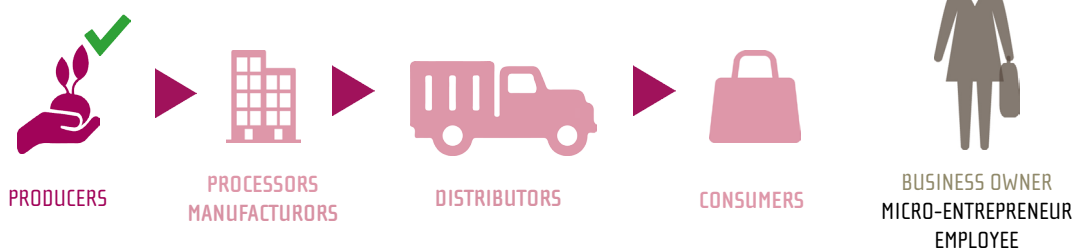


# Women as Inclusive Business partners

## The Fruit Republic: Vietnamese women smallholders offer international quality horticultural produce for urban markets



### ENGAGEMENT IN THE VALUE CHAIN



- **Company:** The Fruit Republic
- **Business focus:** The Fruit Republic is a Dutch owned company in Vietnam that supplies international quality certified fresh fruits and vegetables year round from four regions to urban retail, B2B markets and abroad.
- **Started:** The Fruit Republic was initiated in 2009. The affiliated consultancy, Fresh Studio, started in 2006 and trained both farmers and staff of the Fruit Republic until 2014.

#### Results for women

1000 small-scale farm-households in four areas across Vietnam are offered sustainable livelihoods. Especially in the North, most producers are women. In the South, both men and women work on the farms. The producers have stable supplier contracts and receive ongoing agricultural extension to improve their horticultural quality. In the packing houses and fresh cut facility TFR employs 106 women.

#### Results for business

TFR, with its focus on 'safe' products, benefits greatly from the fact that the women producers and employees are known for their strong sense of quality and quality control. They take their work more seriously, have an eye for detail and work with precision. Production groups with female leaders are the most entrepreneurial and successful.

*'Women as Inclusive Business Partners' is an initiative by [BoP Innovation Center](#) and [ICCO Cooperation](#)*





*“By default, many of our producers and employees are women. Our experience is that, compared to men, women are more serious, precise and detailed in their work. At the same time, this means that we have to be more flexible as a company.”*

Jeroen Pasman  
Export Manager  
The Fruit Republic

### **‘Make Vietnamese consumers proud of their home-grown produce’**

The growing urban demand for fresh vegetables and fruits in Vietnam offers opportunities for local production, especially given the bad reputation of imports from China. The Fruit Republic (TFR) was established to act as a coordination body, utilizing the climatic circumstances that allow for year round production and building up stable links with smallholder farmers and urban markets

Currently TFR sources high quality fresh fruits and vegetables from four different regions in Vietnam. They manage distribution for a large wholesaler (Metro Cash & Carry) and supply to B2B buyers like McDonalds, Vietnam Air Catering, Pizza Hut. They also have their own branded channels, incl. Mekostar for the Vietnamese domestic market and Wildboi for international markets. The products they offer meet international quality standards. They are guaranteed in terms of food safety, have a consistent quality and are fully traceable.

For this, TFR also operates the 1st temperature controlled packing house in Vietnam and a fresh cut facility with 75 staff, mainly women.

### **Male and female dynamics in horticulture**

Typical horticulture production in Vietnam is generally based on family labor on small scale fields (300 m<sup>2</sup> and below). Land is leased on an individual basis from the government. In the South, both men and women work on the farm and often specialize in one crop. In the North, farms are in semi-urban areas. Women work in the ‘gardens’ and produce both for cash and own consumption. Men tend to have jobs in factories in the city.

TFR has contracts with around 1000 farmer family businesses/households. Male family members usually sign the contracts, even though women dominate day to day operations and decision making.

TFR offers group based training on good agricultural and harvesting practices, pesticide use, etc. They experience that women are often more entrepreneurial and some farmer groups with women leaders are among the most successful. Generally speaking women in Vietnam have a strong role in public and economic life which is influenced by the communist system.

In the packing stations work is done mainly by women. In the peak season this requires extra arrangements for overtime and evening work. But for TFR this is simply a matter of understanding the needs of the employees and responding accordingly. “Women have a better feeling for quality, quality control, logistics etc. They take their jobs more seriously and they are detailed and precise. These characteristics are essential to ensure the production of “safe” products.

*For more information about The Fruit Republic visit the websites [thefruitrepublic.com](http://thefruitrepublic.com) and [freshstudio.vn](http://freshstudio.vn)*