



# Doing business with respect

What is important to us and what we can expect from each other

Sharing a healthy future



Issue 2022

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**What is important to us and what we can expect from each other**



# Our commitment

We had a dream. This dream began in around 1990, when the management of Rijk Zwaan, Anton van Doornmalen, Maarten Zwaan and Ben Tax, bought the company from its former shareholders. Their aim was to turn Rijk Zwaan back into a family business that put people first; a company where profit is a means to an end, rather than an end in itself.

This is still the philosophy behind Rijk Zwaan, and today our dream is alive and kicking. Every day, we work together to achieve our common goals. Our principal aim is to provide our employees with a pleasant, sustainable job with good employment benefits, and our policies have been formulated to enable this. We believe that everyone should enjoy going to work, and we therefore treat each other fairly and with respect.

But this is only the start. As a vegetable-breeding company, we play an important role in the world's food supply. Every day, hundreds of millions of people eat vegetables that have been grown from the seeds we supply.

This places a great responsibility on our shoulders, as well as inspiring us to keep doing what we do best: developing innovative vegetable varieties with added value for growers, chain partners and consumers.

We do this in harmony with our corporate culture. In 1990, we laid the foundations in what we call the triptych, the full text of which you can read on the following pages. The keywords are honesty, respect and motivation. Building on this foundation, we want to do the right thing by each other, for and with the people who deal with us, and for the world in which we live. These principles apply worldwide.

Our actions will be guided by this code of conduct as we continue to build upon the triptych. But the code of conduct is not a blueprint or action plan that can be applied directly to every situation. Every context is unique, so we must act with integrity and care in every situation, always respectful of our impact on others. This is at the deepest core of our motto: Sharing a healthy future.

The Rijk Zwaan Board of Directors

*"We had a dream. A dream of creating a company; a community of people united by a common goal. We are convinced that this is only possible if our everyday working environment is pleasant and if everyone has the freedom to be themselves. I think it is very important that you don't have to*

*pretend to be someone else from 9 to 5; that all employees of all ages can identify with Rijk Zwaan and say:*

*"We are Rijk Zwaan!"*

Ben Tax,  
Kees Reinink en  
Marco van Leeuwen

# Our company culture

Primarily, it is the policy of Rijk Zwaan to offer its employees a lasting and pleasant position with good working conditions.

This aim can only be achieved if Rijk Zwaan is sufficiently profitable to ensure its continuity. Profits may be used to finance investments and provide a satisfactory level of working capital. In view of this main aim and to increase the chance of achieving sufficiently high profits, we have set out our company policy in more detail. Our company policy embraces all fundamental rules and important traditions of a company.

Our company culture can be summarised in the following points:

- 1 High motivation and close involvement of the employee.
- 2 Strong team spirit amongst employees, in the interest of Rijk Zwaan.
- 3 Commitment to supply top quality products and service to our customers, whom we regard as partners.
- 4 Excellent business ethics.



5 Within Rijk Zwaan, personal relations are based on the following starting points:

- All communications, whether verbal or written, will always be based on the truth so that decisions can be made on this basis.
- Friendly, open and clear communication.
- Respect for each other's opinions and ideas.
- Adherence to high moral values and norms.

6 **Decentralisation and decision making**

Within Rijk Zwaan, authorities and responsibilities are delegated as much as possible under decentralised management. It is expected from employees that they act independently but always maintain a large measure of solidarity towards their colleagues. Ours is a "flat" organisation. Decision making is done on the basis of discussion and argument. Blindly following orders without a critical mind is not our style. If, sporadically, a difference of opinion remains after discussion, the decision of the ultimately responsible person is followed loyally.

7 **Innovation and creativeness**

Our business is based on continual development and putting into effect new ideas, always geared to market demands. Dynamic market conditions demand a creative attitude and working method for the development of our products.

8 **Careful use of resources**

To carry out our work we use appropriate, well made and durable equipment. Facilities must be such, that they induce excellent results under favourable working conditions. Employees are expected to treat equipment with care to lengthen its economic lifespan. We need to possess the material goods required to supply high quality products. Extravagance is not our style.

9 **Consideration for the environment**

In every department of our enterprise each employee will continually be alert to any contribution we may be able to make to improve the environment. Besides economic interests, the environmental aspect will be an important factor during the decision making processes.

It is of great importance that all employees adhere to these ground rules and encourage their colleagues to do the same. The intention is to remind the employees within the various companies and departments of Rijk Zwaan regularly of the above aims and policies of the company. During job interviews it should be ascertained whether a candidate could be able and willing to stick to our company policy.

# Putting our principles into practice

**The reality can often be more challenging than the theory. In a large company like ours, situations arise daily that require careful and conscientious action which takes everyone's interests into account. In doing this we have to deal with both internal and external factors. Internal factors are often within our control, but external factors can be more complicated. How do we deal with them?**

Operating internationally as a vegetable-breeding company, we are at the beginning of the value chain; a chain that consists of several links – sometimes spanning thousands of kilometres – and affects many people. Each link in the chain has its own characteristics, challenges and risks, and includes aspects such as human and labour rights, health and safety, environmental protection and governance.

## Examples of risks in the international value chain

- Child labour
- Forced labour
- Poor working conditions
- Inadequate health and safety
- Discrimination
- Restricted freedom of association
- Handling and use of natural resources
- Soil and air pollution
- Land rights
- Corruption

## International value chain



Suppliers & seed producers



Plant raisers & growers



Traders & processors



Retail & food service



Consumers

Several of these risks are discussed in this document. For the sake of convenience, and to provide a better grasp of these issues, we have divided the contents into five themes or focus areas.

- 1 People & Labour
- 2 Environment
- 3 Ethics & Governance
- 4 Partnership
- 5 Social Awareness

Based on our own business principles, together with international guidelines\*, we apply the same working method to each of these themes.

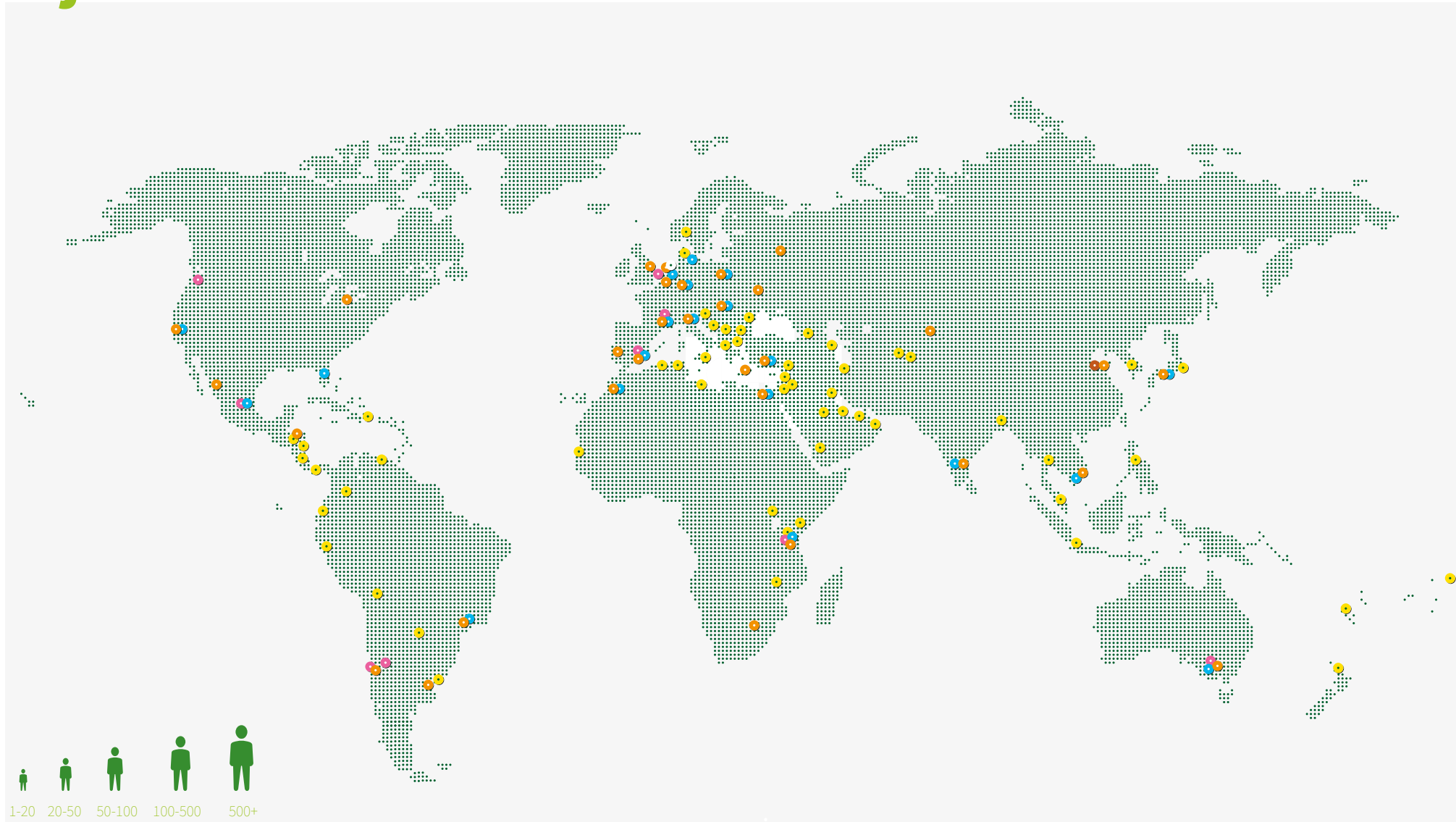
- Insofar as possible, we document our policies with regard to these topics in relevant policy documents and process descriptions, so that all employees can be clear about what we stand for and how we deal with any abuses.
- We identify and assess risks, both within our company and its subsidiaries and elsewhere in the chain.
- We take appropriate precautions to prevent these risks from ever materialising. If they do, we do everything possible to stop and limit their negative impact. Our actions are based on what may reasonably be expected of us given our position in the chain and the options available to us to tackle the cause. There are often actions we can undertake ourselves, but occasionally we must try to use our influence in the chain to prevent or eliminate an undesirable situation.
- We always take measures in consultation with stakeholders, acting with respect for each other and awareness of the local context. We ensure that direct stakeholders are able to comment on

our approach, and we take their wishes and ideas into account when determining it.

- We always keep our finger on the pulse and monitor whether the measures taken have led to the desired result. This is reported to the central management of Rijk Zwaan.
- We make sure that everyone concerned is kept informed of our approach. This primarily concerns those colleagues working in business processes and/or countries that are subject to certain potential risks. New employees are briefed immediately upon hiring. We ask our business partners to respect our values and standards and to apply them accordingly. Where necessary, we lay this down in an agreement.
- We report on the impact of our approach in the annual report.

\* As a starting point for drafting this code of conduct, we have applied our own corporate principles as well as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains.

# Rijk Zwaan in the world



Japan	Kazakhstan
Morocco	Mexico
Netherlands	Other
Poland	Portugal
Russia	Spain
Tanzania	Turkey

Subsidiaries 30+	Distributors 100+	Argentina	Australia	Belgium	Brasil	Canada	Chile	China	Egypt	Ukraine	USA
Breeding stations 20	Production stations 10	France	Germany	Greece	Great Britain	Guatemala	Hongary	India	Italy	Vietnam	Employees 3.800+

# 1 People & Labour

**At Rijk Zwaan, we put people first. That means that we pursue a people-focused personnel policy and are fair and respectful in our dealings with each other. We also use our influence outside Rijk Zwaan to help ensure that people are treated fairly and with respect.**

## General principles

- At Rijk Zwaan we work together. We motivate, help, respect and show interest in each other.
- We respect internationally recognised human rights.
- We do everything within our power to protect the rights of people if they are in jeopardy within our company.
- We do everything within our power and what can reasonably be expected of us to protect the rights of people when we identify situations, outside our company but within the scope of our influence, which pose a threat to human rights.
- We do not discriminate against anyone, either within or outside Rijk Zwaan, on any grounds whatsoever. Our selection policy for new employees focuses on the candidate's suitability for the job in question, their intrinsic motivation and their full endorsement of our corporate culture.

## Employment principles

- Our employees must be able to do their work safely.
- We provide fair primary and secondary terms of employment and ensure good working conditions.
- After an intensive application procedure, new employees will receive a permanent contract unless they have specifically been engaged for work of a seasonal or temporary nature.
- We make sure that vulnerable people feel at home at Rijk Zwaan and that they can fully participate in the labour process.
- Our employees are given sufficient scope and opportunity to develop themselves.
- We pay attention to the interests and wellbeing of people in the immediate vicinity of our sites.
- Our whistle-blowing policy is accessible to all employees.
- Whenever necessary and where possible, we ask our cooperation partners to pay attention to good working conditions and fair treatment for employees.

*Elsbeth Graswinckel &  
Sekunda Malimiru  
Rijk Zwaan Tanzania*

*“At Rijk Zwaan Tanzania, our colleagues come first. We ensure good working conditions and a pleasant working environment for everyone. We take great care that people are treated fairly and respectfully, free from any form of discrimination. We encourage colleagues to behave responsibly and set a good*

*example when it comes to safety. Thanks to raising awareness about working safely and taking the necessary measures, paying attention to safety at work becomes the norm.”*





## Going the extra mile

- **We want to prevent child labour and forced labour, both at our own sites and at the facilities of seed producers and suppliers.** In high-risk countries, such as India, we implement a number of additional measures. We explicitly state in our contracts with producers that we do not allow child labour and we have our producers periodically inspected by an independent, external audit agency. Within our sector organisation Plantum, we work with other plant-breeding companies, as well as with NGOs and the Dutch government, to keep this issue high on the agenda and to look for solutions together. In doing so, we take the input and needs of local communities into account.
- **Everyone is entitled to decent working conditions and fair treatment.** In our [Rijk Zwaan Principles of Fair Labour](#) we state what we think is important with regard to labour, employee rights and remuneration worldwide. We ask contracting parties, including seed producers, to subscribe to the principles set out in Rijk Zwaan's Principles of Fair Labour.
- **The safety and health of our employees are paramount.** In countries where there are

additional health risks such as common diseases, poor hygiene or exposure to crop protection agents, we pay extra attention to the drawing up of, and compliance with, hygiene rules. We train our employees in the safe use of machinery and chemical agents and we check their compliance with safety and hygiene protocols. Medical assistance or advice is available where needed. In countries where access to medical care is limited, we offer our employees and their families additional medical facilities.

- **We help our employees to stay fit and healthy for longer** by offering vitality programmes and regular medical checks.
- **Employees know where they can make suggestions or complaints.** We listen to our employees and take their feedback seriously. If, despite the measures we have taken and the attention we devote to this issue, a malpractice occurs that cannot be resolved in consultation with the immediate supervisor, employees can use the whistle-blowing process or contact a confidential advisor.



### What can you do?

Go to [inseeds/resources/our-policy/code-of-conduct](#) to find HR regulations, useful documents and more.



## 2 Environment

**When you put people first, you automatically focus on the environment in which they live. We take care of Mother Nature and our planet, which we want to preserve for future generations. This means that we treat natural resources carefully and ensure that our business operations are not only efficient and economically profitable, but also sustainable and environmentally friendly.**

### General principles

- At Rijk Zwaan, we use our resources carefully and we take care of the environment. We do so at board level, in our subsidiary companies, at departmental level and at the level of each individual employee. This means that we choose solid, comfortable and sustainable equipment over unnecessary luxury.
- We avoid polluting the environment. If any pollution should occur, we minimise the impact and ensure that it is remedied.
- We separate our waste, use sustainable materials as much as possible and try to extend the life of materials, appliances and machines.

- We minimise the consumption of water and energy and use renewable energy sources wherever possible.
- We prevent food waste, both in our company canteens and through our improved vegetable varieties.
- We encourage the use of sustainable cultivation methods and train employees in the responsible use of crop protection agents.
- We share our knowledge of sustainability and the professionalisation of vegetable cultivation with growers, usually within the context of specific projects.
- We respect – and help to protect – nature and biodiversity.
- We develop new varieties that provide answers to societal challenges like food security and climate change.

Arno van Steekelenburg,  
Station manager in the  
Netherlands

*“The global climate objectives require us all to contribute. At Rijk Zwaan we are committed to making our processes more sustainable, such as by using geothermal heat to heat our greenhouses so that we can reduce our use of fossil fuels.”*





### What can you do?

Go to [inseeds/resources/our-policy/code-of-conduct](#) for safety and environmental protocols and to find useful tips to contribute to a healthy environment.

## Going the extra mile

- **A changing climate calls for resilient vegetable varieties and more sustainable cultivation methods.** By developing varieties that are more resistant to dry, hot or salty conditions, we make healthy and affordable food more accessible, even in areas where growers have to deal with salinisation, drought and high temperatures. Breeding in resistance contributes directly to reducing the use of crop protection agents, as well as making cultivation methods more sustainable. We train our employees, partners and growers – large and small – in the application of methods such as drip irrigation and Integrated Pest Management (IPM).
- **We optimise processes and apply technologies that enable us to save on energy and water consumption.** Wherever possible, we use sustainable heat sources and water is recirculated.
- **We prevent emissions as much as possible.** Before water is discharged, it is purified to prevent any chemical residue, and wherever possible, carbon emissions are captured and used in plant cultivation.
- **Increasing shelf life and developing smaller vegetables prevents waste.** We are always looking for traits that give vegetables a longer shelf life or ensure that less food perishes during transport. We work together with value chain partners to find ways to supply vegetables packaging-free, or with more sustainable packaging, without compromising on shelf life.
- **Biodiversity is worth protecting.** We fund collection missions that enable gene banks to expand their collections and secure genetic resources for the future. We also help to describe, characterise and propagate these resources.
- **We are environmentally aware when it comes to travel and transport.** We travel for work only when it is necessary. It is often more efficient and also more sustainable to hold meetings digitally using the videoconferencing equipment available at all Rijk Zwaan locations.

# 3 Ethics & Governance

**Honesty is the best policy. We live by this motto at Rijk Zwaan, and the opposite – dishonesty – is unacceptable to us. We do business and work together in an ethically responsible way on the basis of shared values and standards. It may sometimes take a little longer to achieve the desired result, but the outcome is all the more satisfying.**

## General principles

- At Rijk Zwaan, honesty, integrity and fairness come first – all over the world. We make no concessions on these values.
- We have a flat decision-making structure, meaning that responsibilities are allocated to the employees directly involved and their managers as far as possible.
- We take decisions on the basis of consensus whenever possible. If we cannot agree among ourselves, we do not hesitate to call on the responsible manager.

- We focus on the long term and do not believe in hasty changes of direction or reorganisations. This translates into loyalty to our employees, customers and partners.
- We refrain from unethical practices such as corruption, fraud and tax evasion.
- It goes without saying that we respect and abide by national and international standards and the laws and regulations that apply in the countries in which we operate.
- We respect competition law and do not enter into any agreements that conflict with it.
- We account for our results annually in the annual accounts, which are made publicly available through the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce.
- Non-financial information, about our social impact for example, is shared through our website, social media channels and brochures.

*dr. Joan Fontrodona,  
lecturer in ethics at IESE  
Business School, Spain*

*“Ethics matter to Rijk Zwaan. They are a distinctive element of this company, making it stronger and better. At IESE Business School, we are proud to contribute to this corporate culture by sharing knowledge and examples with employees of Rijk Zwaan.”*

*“My participation in the Business Ethics and Company Culture Course has made me an ambassador for our company culture. By sharing what I have learned, I help both colleagues and myself to communicate well with business partners and customers, and contribute to better awareness of important values such as honesty and transparency.”*

*Olga Simovich,  
Rijk Zwaan Russia*





## Going the extra mile

- **We ensure a clear separation of tasks, powers and responsibilities.** Rijk Zwaan is a family business that keeps ownership and management separate. Although the families are closely involved in the ups and downs of our company, it is the board of directors that sets the direction and maintains the course. The board of directors have regular, constructive and open consultations with both the Supervisory Board and the Works Council.
- **We conduct internal and external checks on compliance with legal standards and internal procedures.** In the first place, local management is responsible for this. In addition, we conduct internal audits to check compliance and make recommendations. Financial statements are audited by an external auditor at both subsidiary and group level.
- **High values and standards are firmly rooted in our company.** Our recruitment policy is aimed at hiring employees who share our values and standards. We conduct several job interviews with each candidate, in many cases followed by an assessment to determine whether or not there is a match. If there is a match, the new employee is given a permanent contract straight away. During the on-boarding process, we pay a great deal of attention to our company culture and way of working. Executives at board level and management level follow the Business Ethics & Company Culture Course, which is provided by the board of directors and external trainers at the IESE Business School in Barcelona.



### What can you do?

Go to [inseeds/resources/our-policy/code-of-conduct](#) to find practical tips and examples of how to act when faced with unethical practices.

# 4 Partnership

**Our company exists thanks to cooperation: cooperation between colleagues, customers, chain partners, governments, NGOs and knowledge institutions. Together we work on common goals, such as improving the food supply and finding ways to produce more efficiently and sustainably. Loyalty, reliability, clear communication and knowledge sharing are the pillars underpinning these partnerships.**

## General principles

- At Rijk Zwaan we communicate in a clear, open and friendly way.
- We respect each other's opinions and are always open to new ideas as these form the basis for our creative solutions and innovative products.
- We are well aware that our knowledge, techniques and skills are unique and valuable. We use them

- responsibly, keeping in mind both the company's interests and the broader interests of society.
- We share our knowledge and expertise with partners wherever this is possible and useful because we believe in open innovation. We can achieve more together than on our own.
  - We aim for long-term partnerships that can withstand setbacks and which offer added value to all parties.



Satish Kumar and  
Praneet Sharma,  
Rijk Zwaan India

*“High-quality starting material, knowledge and optimal growing conditions are all essential for sustainable food production. At Rijk Zwaan we work with our customers to get everything possible out of the seed. Through our e-learning programmes,*

*we share knowledge and best practices with indoor cucumber growers in India.”*



### What can you do?

Go to [inseeds/resources/our-policy/code-of-conduct](#) to read more about our cooperation with value chain partners and knowledge partners and for tips on how to better protect the data on your phone and laptop.

## Going the extra mile

- **We care about the world around us.** We have our own offices and facilities in more than 30 countries – in cities, villages and rural areas. We want to be a good neighbour, and we therefore seek contact with the people around us. We do our best to ensure that our activities do not cause any nuisance, we resolve any disputes that may arise amicably and we also do our bit to support local projects and initiatives. We are friendly and approachable.
- **We share information responsibly and securely.** We invest around 30% of our turnover in Research & Development. The knowledge we acquire in this way is very valuable. Where necessary, we protect our innovations as a form of intellectual property so that we can continue to innovate and invest. Open innovation is our starting point. Plant breeders' rights are a form of intellectual property that fit in well with that; other breeders are free to use our protected varieties to develop new varieties. That

is not the case with patents. In order to be able to use material protected by patents for breeding purposes, we have initiated and are a member of the [International Licensing Platform Vegetable](#) whose members give each other access to patented biological material for a reasonable fee.

- **We protect company-sensitive and personal information.** This may seem paradoxical, but we can only be a reliable partner if we securely protect business-sensitive information and personal data. We pay a great deal of attention to information security so that we can continue to work together and share knowledge with each other and our partners safely. Human behaviour is key, and we therefore work hard to raise awareness among our employees and ensure that system security is in order.

# 5 Social Awareness

**Rijk Zwaan has grown into a large, international company. Our activities and products not only have an impact on our employees and their families, but also on the inhabitants of the villages and towns where we operate. They affect the farmers (and their families) who use our varieties, as well as the food that ends up on consumers' plates in the more than 100 countries where our seeds are sold. We are keenly aware of this.**

## General principles

- At Rijk Zwaan we pay attention to the interests of our company, our surroundings and society as a whole.
- We are aware of the interests and wellbeing of people living in the immediate vicinity of our facilities; in other words, we are good neighbours.

- We are approachable and willing to answer questions from local residents, the media or politicians. We keep in touch with what is going on in society.
- By showing exemplary behaviour, we exert a positive influence on the living conditions of, and opportunities for, the people with whom we come into contact. We do so both directly, through our own actions, and indirectly.
- As a vegetable breeding company, we actively contribute to making available new varieties which provide answers to societal challenges such as food security and climate change. What we want is healthy, affordable food for everyone.
- We not only feel a responsibility to supply the professional market with high-quality seeds, but also to share knowledge and expertise with small farmers in less developed markets.

Edgar Gramajo,  
Rijk Zwaan Guatemala

*“At Rijk Zwaan Guatemala, we know that we cannot change the whole world by ourselves. However, we can change the world for more than a hundred families in the town of San Carlos Sija in the region of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, by providing them with vegetables and vegetable seeds. The seeds are*

*used to establish small vegetable gardens so that these families can enjoy healthy food year after year.”*





### What can you do?

Go to [inseeds/resources/our-policy/code-of-conduct](#) to find examples of how we treat our neighbours, discover inspiring stories from the Committee for Development Cooperation and learn more about our opinions.

## Going the extra mile

- **We are good neighbours.** We engage in active dialogue with people living in the vicinity of our facilities and take their interests into account, such as when drawing up plans for expansion. We support local initiatives, events and charities. Each subsidiary is free to make choices that fit the local context.
- **We want everyone in the world to have access to healthy food.** We feel a responsibility to contribute to the availability of healthy and affordable food, including in countries where this cannot be taken for granted. This is why we work on the sustainable development of vegetable cultivation together with our partners in a range of countries. For example, we make vegetable seeds available and provide technical advice to small farmers, and we support projects in a number of countries through our [Committee for Development Cooperation](#).
- **We are aware of what is going on in society.** In the plant-breeding sector, we have to deal with sensitive issues such as intellectual property and new breeding techniques. We listen carefully to what is going on in society. In our [opinions](#), we explain how we view these and other topics.
- **Health is not something to be taken for granted.** Driven by our company philosophy and our motto 'Sharing a healthy future', we pay extra attention to the welfare of sick and disabled people. That is why each financial year we reserve a percentage of our profit for projects conducted by organisations that contribute to the wellbeing of these target groups. The projects are selected by the Sharing Health & Wellbeing Committee which is made up of colleagues and is supplemented by an external advisor. The projects are then implemented by the partner organisation concerned.