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Responsibility

# Fairness, stability in ensuring human rights in seafood

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By James Wright

## Magdalena Lamprecht-Wallhoff shares how social investment is key to Regal Springs Tilapia's culture

*Editor's note: This is the third in a three-part series about advancing human rights solutions in the global seafood supply chain in advance of the SeaWeb Seafood Summit, Feb. 1-3, in St. Julian's, Malta. Read **part 1 here** (<https://www.aquaculturealliance.org/advocate/intelligence-integrity-in-the-fight-against-forced-labor-in-seafood/>), and **part 2 here** (<https://www.aquaculturealliance.org/advocate/technology-diligence-in-ensuring-abuse-free-seafood-supply-chains/>). The Advocate will be reporting from the event, and GAA Editorial Manager James Wright will be moderating a breakout session titled "Gauging consumer engagement and perceptions of sustainable seafood."*

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Most companies with large work forces in developing nations cite corporate social responsibility as a top priority for their businesses. And rightly so, as human rights violations have in recent years impacted the electronic, garment, mining and seafood industries, to name a few.

But how many such companies are truly invested in their employees' futures, and those of their



Magdalena Lamprecht-Wallhoff, global sales director for Regal Springs Tilapia, speaks to employees in Honduras during a workshop on domestic violence and sexual harassment. It's one of many social investment initiatives the company undertakes.

families? How many see social services for workers as a cause, not a cost?


 A blue banner for Best Seafood Practices. On the left, there are two small images: one of a person in a yellow protective suit and mask handling fish, and another of a fishing boat on the ocean. The text in the center reads "A comprehensive solution for the wild seafood supply chain." To the right of this text is a list of three items, each with a checkmark: "Crew rights", "Food safety", and "Environmental responsibility". On the far right is the Best Seafood Practices logo, which consists of a stylized eye shape, and a "LEARN MORE" button with a right-pointing arrow.

(<https://bspcertification.org/>).

Magdalena Lamprecht-Wallhoff likes the idea of corporate social responsibility, but also thinks the term is so often overused – and with little accountability – that it has lost its meaning. Social investment that creates stability and fairness better describes the approach at Regal Springs Tilapia, where Lamprecht-Wallhoff – daughter of company founder Rudi Lamprecht – is the global sales director and leader of its substantive social initiatives.

For Regal Springs, the returns on fair treatment, timely pay and a commitment to community are ante to the game.

“What we’re after is quite simply to give people a clear job,” Lamprecht-Wallhoff told the *Advocate*. “A stable job underpins all our lives. It gives us a basis for planning ahead for a better future.”

Regal Springs, which operates in places where people are often relegated to subsistence living, runs public health, education, small holder training and domestic violence prevention programs at its farms and processing facilities in Honduras and Mexico. Health and life insurance — unheard of in some developing countries — is offered to its workers, and Regal collaborates with local NGOs to further extend its resources to the communities. In short, Regal treats its employees as stakeholders.

***Instead of hand-outs, we expect much of our employees. But we support them and their communities. We have a return on that investment. Employees contribute ideas and improve their performance when they are in a dynamic and healthy environment. We pursue efficiency in every way, but not at the cost of our peoples’ well being.***

“...I think a for-profit has the greatest potential to do good, to make the truly sustainable changes, because everyone is invested,” she said. “Instead of hand-outs, we expect much of our employees. But we support them and their communities. We have a return on that investment. Employees contribute ideas and improve their performance when they are in a dynamic and healthy environment. We pursue efficiency in every way, but not at the cost of our peoples’ well being.”

Having spent her own childhood on a mountainside in Central Java, Indonesia, Lamprecht-Wallhoff understands the challenges of operating in rural regions of the world where rule of law may be absent. In regions where fisheries and aquaculture are common, violence and corruption are often common. “But when you operate a company fairly, you’re changing an aspect of people’s lives,” she added. “They come to work and have the stability of a clear sets of rules.”



Regal Springs Tilapia employees conduct a weekly water quality check on Lake Yojoa in Honduras. Photo courtesy of Regal Springs Tilapia.

Regal strives to remain one of the best employers in the areas where it produces its tilapia, and the upward mobility it allows its workers helps the company differentiate itself. In Honduras, a job at Regal is seen as a ticket to opportunity and a source of pride, Lamprecht-Wallhoff said. In places where poverty proliferates, aquaculture producers should understand what poverty truly means, she said.

“We see poverty not as a dollar amount. It is a lack of power to change your position in life,” she said.

Regal is in the process of quantifying the returns on its social investment endeavors. The company knows it benefits from the social investment, but wants to have key measures that can be taken across time, she added. That combination of pragmatism and principles has made Regal a known and desirable place to work.

For Lamprecht-Wallhoff, the true meaning of Regal’s social initiatives became clear a few years ago, when she was approached by a pregnant young woman in a remote village in Honduras. “She said to me, ‘When my children are grown up, they will work for you one day. My husband works for you already.’”

She had access to our free clinic, free medical care, and would she ever get a job with us, too, she could have her child in our day care. I realized then that we provide jobs, but much more than that – we provide people with a future to look forward to.”

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