

## **Acting responsibly in the global marketplace: The relevance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s ethics for entrepreneurs in international value chains**

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### **Abstract**

In a value chain, products flow from primary producers to end users, often through intermediaries. The distribution of market power in each of the successive stages of the value chain is usually unequal and affects the financial compensation of participants. Unorganized primary producers in food or clothing chains tend to fall victim to heavy competition in consumer markets or to extreme efficiency requirements by retail chains. Increasingly, entrepreneurs running value chains are expected to take on responsibilities regarding the well-being of all participants, especially primary producers in developing countries. But what does acting responsibly mean for these entrepreneurs? Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945) provided clear guidance on what the content of acting responsibly should be for Christians and non-Christians alike. However, is his concept of acting responsibly also relevant for leaders in value chains? Entrepreneurs are expected to adopt corporate social responsibility (CSR) requirements, which, among other things, imply that all participants in a value chain enjoy an appropriate livelihood. I explore whether entrepreneurs, if they take Bonhoeffer’s criteria for responsible action seriously, do justice to all stakeholders in their value chain.

### **Keywords**

*acting responsibly; Bonhoeffer’s ethics; “being there for others”; international value chains; challenges for entrepreneurs*

## **Challenges related to acting responsibly in current value chains**

In a product value chain, products flow from primary producers to end users, often through intermediaries such as processors, traders, and retailers. Unorganized primary producers in food or clothing chains often fall victim to fierce competition or to extreme efficiency demands. In mission-driven value chains, parties invest in making the value chain more sustainable and strive to improve the prospects of the weakest parties, including small-scale primary producers. In market-driven value chains, parties use current supply and demand relationships in global markets to optimize their purchasing arrangements. This often means that little attention is paid to improving the living conditions of producer families and their workers, particularly in Third World countries where child labour, lack of access to adequate health care and low participation in education remain common. Increasingly, entrepreneurs who function as leaders of the value chain are expected to bear responsibility for the living conditions of their suppliers. In my work as a development economist, with a focus on marketing issues for farmers in Africa, I was looking for an ethic that encourages entrepreneurs in value chains to take responsibility for providing acceptable incomes to weak participants so that they can earn a living.

I was attracted to the writings of Bonhoeffer in which he gives substance to the concept of responsible action. This is because of his general idea that loving one's neighbour as oneself should be the norm for a responsible life. This implies that, under uncertainty, one dares to make decisions for the sake of the weak. According to Bonhoeffer, a Christian cannot expect support when he makes risky decisions, but God waits for - and answers - our sincere prayers and responsible actions (DBW 8:31). The decision-maker can only live by God's grace and forgiveness when it turns out in retrospect that a wrong decision was made. Bonhoeffer called us, including entrepreneurs, to view the world from the perspective of those who suffer, the outcasts, the abused, and the oppressed (DBW 8:38). I explore here whether entrepreneurs, if they take Bonhoeffer's criteria for responsible action seriously, can do justice to all participants in their value chain in the sense that they can make a living from it. In this contribution, I apply

Bonhoeffer's conceptual framework to two case studies, one involving a Nile perch chain originating in Kenya and the other involving a Rooibos tea chain originating in South Africa.

I cover the following topics. What does corporate social responsibility (CSR) mean for entrepreneurs (2)? I then discuss Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action along two lines (3). Section 4 discusses the relevance of Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action for policy makers today and, in particular, entrepreneurs in international value chains. Section 5 applies the conceptual framework to two case studies. I conclude with the insights gained from this study (6).

## **Entrepreneurs and corporate social responsibility (CSR).**

Decisions made by leaders of a value chain, to be effective, must meet the needs and wants of the buyers of their products. In making their decisions, do entrepreneurs feel responsible not only for their business but also for the welfare of society by doing more than the law and union contract dictate (Rahman 2011)? The so-called Triple Bottom Line definition (Elkington 1997) reflects the responsibility of entrepreneurs for human values ('people'), the preservation of nature ('planet') and the continuity of their organization ('profit'). About two hundred leaders of multinational corporations in the U.S. endorsed the following position: We commit to dealing fairly and ethically with our suppliers to deliver value to all our customers and to protect the environment (*New York Times* 2019).

### **Is entrepreneurship a 'vocation'?**

Entrepreneurial vocation means being receptive to issues, which transcend the well-understood self-interest of the entrepreneur (Hoogstraten 2012, 18). Central to this is the fundamental dignity of every human being, based on truth, freedom, justice, and peace. In this vision, entrepreneurs are challenged to see themselves as stewards rather than owners, their wealth as a common rather than a private asset, and their employees as individuals rather than means of production. There are obstacles that may conflict with this entrepreneurial vocation such as fierce competition in the marketplace, excessive demands for efficiency, lack of regulation, or greed. An important internal obstacle is the temptation to set aside one's

own beliefs when fulfilling one's occupational activity (Turkson, 2014). In this regard, I was intrigued by the following words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Although the concepts of "vocation" and "responsibility" are not identical to those used in the New Testament, they are so remarkably similar that there is reason to use them as synonyms (DBW 6:290).

### **CSR in international value chains**

Product value chains can connect distant producers and end users. Managers of retail chains in the northern hemisphere need to be familiar with the living standards of their primary producers in the southern hemisphere. With advances in communications technology, these channel leaders can no longer hide behind the excuse that they cannot know the living conditions of their primary producers. Entrepreneurs are challenged to learn about these living conditions and to feel at least co-responsible for abuse of labour, lack of proper health care, and lack of other basic needs. In other words, the nature of the policies of value chain decision-makers affects the quality of life of value chain participants, especially primary producers or workers and their families. What leads people, and therefore entrepreneurs, to look beyond their own interests and take others into account, for example by respecting their human rights, combating abuses of power, or standing up for the weakest in their field of interest? On what value system do they base their decisions? Is this related to their cultural values, religious values, values associated with a political philosophy, or traditional economic values such as maximizing a company's profitability?

African culture has traditionally been characterized by mutual aid and community support. African humanism, called Ubuntu in southern Africa and Utu in eastern and central Africa, is based on shared values and customs that reinforce human dignity and human rights. Maintaining harmony and consensus is therefore crucial in the African version of CSR. Society, therefore, expects companies to fulfil their social responsibility by reducing poverty and inequality among their stakeholders (Cheruiyot and Onsando 2016, 95-97). Smallholder farmers in Africa, as in other parts of the developing world, face various constraints when they want to produce some of their crops or animals for the market. These constraints may include the lack of fertile agricultural land, insufficient knowledge of management skills, lack of market transparency and/or lack of market bargaining power.

Who takes responsibility for taking initiatives to address these constraints? This also depends on the governance structure in the value chain. Is this structure based on free current supply and demand in relevant markets, contractual relationships, or mutual trust (Schalkwyk et al. 2012, 245)? Practical solutions include improving farmers' skills, collective action in buying and selling products, making market information freely available, facilitating the provision of both credit and agricultural inputs, adding on-farm value to harvested products, and reducing market risks (Schalkwyk et al. 2012, 226).

### **Practices related to corporate social responsibility.**

Below I list experiences in value chains related to CSR as described by Hans Nauta, economic editor of the daily newspaper *Trouw*.

#### *(a) EU legislation (Source 1)*

A European directive aiming to make food trade fairer disapproves of improper practices by supermarkets. Unfair trade practices are practices that deviate from good commercial behaviour, they are imposed unilaterally by one trading partner on another. Agricultural producers are particularly vulnerable to unfair trade practices because they often lack bargaining power. Their alternatives for getting their products to consumers are limited. Good management of the food supply chain must ensure that these producers can develop their businesses and compete on fair terms. The European Commission has identified four main categories of unfair trading practices: overdue payments for delivered products, late unilateral cancellations, or changes of orders possibly with retroactive effect, refusal by the buyer to sign a written contract with a supplier and misuse of confidential information. Threats of retaliation against suppliers, such as withdrawing their products from the market or delaying payments to punish them for filing complaints, will also be prohibited. Regulations aimed at ensuring fair trade between actors in the food supply chain can help resolve specific problems.

#### *(b) Do covenants work against human rights violations? (Source 2)*

Back in 2011, the United Nations published guidelines for companies to respect human rights around the world. Companies encounter human rights violations in their value chain. Examples are dangerous sewing

workshops, underpaid tea pickers, a form of slavery or land grabbing. In 2013, the Dutch government wanted to address these problems through voluntary agreements or covenants. These are partnerships of members of the value chain, supported by NGOs, trade unions and the government. Examples are the food covenant and the textile covenant. But it turned out that quite a few of these covenants fail. That is why Oxfam Novib called for a law that obliges companies to act in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. However, a Dutch trade union pointed to success stories with covenants in different sectors of the economy and wondered if the glass is half full instead of almost empty.

*(c) Blockchain approach (Source 3)*

Blockchain technology tracks products from farm to store and provides secure data collection where participants in a value chain can share information. Western companies doing business on the other side of the world bear responsibility for the conditions of the weaker partners in their value chains. They must contribute to a liveable income for farmers and workers. For example, a blockchain app developed by the supermarket chain Albert Heijn (AH) shows the origin of the oranges used in their juice. However, users of the app could not find out if the orange pickers received a living wage. In one of the supplying plantations, the pickers were found to be underpaid. Another application of the blockchain approach concerns nutmeg from spice producer Verstegen. Customers of the supermarket chain Coop can see from the code on the nutmeg packaging whether the producers are paid fairly.

*(d) Fair trade initiatives (Source 4)*

Another interesting experience comes from the Fair-Trade movement, which advocates for both higher than prevailing market prices for small-scale producers and the improvement of social, health and environmental standards for their communities. Fair Trade NGOs support mission-driven value chains in which the addition of value by the producer is extended through the sorting of harvested produce into homogeneous lots, or through the processing of produce into products ready for supermarket shelves. Fair Trade NGOs supported members of farmer cooperatives by improving their market access, providing training in production techniques, and improving their living conditions (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010). The

NGO Solidaridad, for example, made farmers less dependent on middlemen or supermarkets by setting up an auction that put farmers in direct contact with buyers from growing urbanized areas.

The question now is whether the concept of responsible action, as discussed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is also relevant for entrepreneurs in international value chains. This in relation to the impact their decisions have on the well-being of primary producers and their workers.

### **Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action.**

Bonhoeffer inspired me in two ways in my search for a better understanding of his concept of responsible action. My access to Bonhoeffer was primarily biographical. I wanted to discover how, over the course of his eventful life, he wrote about responsibility, including caring (being there) for others. The second way was to explore the underlying concept, by following him in his explanation of each of the four essential characteristics of responsible behaviour.

Bonhoeffer's biography provides a number of clues about events in his environment that stimulated his thinking and writing about acting responsibly for others. Below I provide some examples. His life and work were based on his understanding and conviction that we fundamentally exist in relation to other people. As early as his dissertation *Sanctorum Communio* (1927), he wrote that we must stand up for one another in prayer (DBW 1:192). During his assistant pastorate in Barcelona (1928/29), Bonhoeffer wondered if someone with a Christian conscience could be a businessman. He wrote that the Christian businessman has the duty to do what he can for the good of others (DBW 10:340-341). Faced with social problems during his time in New York (1930/1) at a time of high unemployment during the Great Depression, he wondered how American philosophy and social ethics might help reduce poverty (DBW 10:269, 282). After his return to Germany, as a student pastor in Berlin (October 1931), he observed with great concern the disastrous economic situation and its social and political consequences. He wondered how to deal with mass unemployment and hunger in Germany. What can our theology contribute to this (DBW 11:27-29)?

In 1938, his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi asked Bonhoeffer to meet with Hans Oster, head of military intelligence under Admiral Canaris, and others to discuss the question of whether one could, as a Lutheran Christian, plot a coup d'état and commit tyrannical murder. This question from the conspirators got Bonhoeffer thinking about what acting responsibly means for Christians and non-Christians alike. It encouraged him to go beyond what he wrote in his book *Nachfolge* (DBW 4:1937), because it was no longer possible to resist the murderous regime of the Third Reich with nonviolent civil disobedience. The central idea of violating God's commandment "Pray for those who offend and persecute you" and the idea of becoming vicariously guilty as Christ did, was not yet present in his book *Nachfolge*. The central theme in *Nachfolge*, discipleship through imitation of Christ, was transformed into "responsibility" or "responsible action" in the manuscripts of his book *Ethik*, DBW 6 (editors of DWB 4:323-325; DBW 6:258; Mokrosch et al. 2003, 15-16). Bonhoeffer's conclusion based on his study of responsible action was that love for seriously endangered groups of people takes precedence over the life of an exceptionally criminal leader. The ongoing extermination of the Jews and reports of the so-called euthanasia program, as well as the persecution of those who supported the Confessing Church, contributed to Bonhoeffer's decision to support the political plot to overthrow the regime (Mokrosch et al. 2003, 16). After helping the conspirators do so, he was asked to join military intelligence as a free-lance secret agent. This was not because much was expected of his contribution to the conspiracy, but to keep him out of the service. He would have refused to enter military service with the result that he would have been executed.

In August 1944, while he was in prison, Bonhoeffer wrote a draft of a publication of about one hundred pages with chapters on the current state of Christianity, the meaning of the Christian faith, and its implications (DBW 8:556-561). Bonhoeffer hoped to serve the future of the church with this intended publication. He included in each of the three chapters the theme of "Being There for Others" ("Für andere da sein"). In his outline on the current state of Christianity, Bonhoeffer wrote: The cardinal point is whether the church chooses self-preservation or dares to be there for others. In the outline on the meaning of Christian faith, he wrote: Faith implies participation in the life of Jesus. One comes to know God in the encounter



with Jesus Christ who exists only by being there for others. We experience God as “man for others” in our neighbour. In his notes to the third chapter, he wrote that the church is only church when she is there for others. It must give all its possessions to the needy. The church must participate in the worldly tasks of human community life, not governing, but helping and serving. The church must tell people of all professions about living with Christ, about what it means to be there for others. This section shows that for Bonhoeffer “Acting responsibly” and “Being there for others” are closely related concepts, as the parable of the Good Samaritan illustrates.

### **Bonhoeffer’s thinking about each of the characteristics of responsible action**

Bonhoeffer described the meaning of responsibility in the first draft of his manuscript on ‘History and Good’ as follows. The content of Jesus Christ’s responsibility to men is love; its form is freedom. The commandments of divine justice are fulfilled in vicarious representative action, which concretely means responsible action in love for people. Love for people makes sense only in the freedom of personal devotion (DBW 6:231). He distinguished four essential characteristics of responsible action. The first characteristic is vicarious representative action (*Stellvertretung*), because Jesus Christ acted vicariously for humanity. The second characteristic is responding to reality according to the commandment “Love your neighbour” and refraining from utopias, but instead seeing the happenings in the world from the perspective of the weakest (*Wirklichkeitsgemässheit*). The third is about daring to accept guilt over an unexpected negative outcome of a decision (*Schuldübernahme*). The fourth characteristic is about freedom in decision-making by not acting according to predetermined principles, but instead distinguishing between good and evil by asking what God’s will is (*Freiheit*). Below I provide a chronological anthology of Bonhoeffer’s writings on each of these four elements.

#### *(a) Vicarious representative action (Stellvertretung).*

Vicarious representative action is a matter of sacrificing oneself for the sake of one’s neighbor. As Christ bears our burden, so we will bear the burden of our brothers. The church of Jesus Christ vicariously represents the world to God when it follows Him under the cross. Followers of Jesus share in the

misery, humility, and guilt of others. They are not content with their own misery or their own shortcomings (DWB 4: 82, 84, 106).

*(b) Conforming to reality, or promoting a concrete ethic (Wirklichkeitsgemässheit)*

Church members must proclaim the word of God in the most concrete way. Otherwise, it is powerless. The church should not proclaim principles that are always true, but only commandments that are true today. A commandment that is not concrete is not a commandment. (DBW 11:331). History is shaped by taking responsibility for other people or communities, because the norm of action is the concrete, God-given neighbour. To act responsibly means to ask oneself step by step what is possible and to place the last step, and therefore the last responsibility, in the hand of God (DBW 6:219-224).

*(c) Acceptance of guilt (Schuldübername).*

Church members confess that the church has not often and clearly enough proclaimed its message of the one God who has revealed himself for all time in Jesus Christ. The church confesses its evasiveness and its dangerous concessions. She has often been unfaithful to her office of guardian. As a result, she has often denied the compassion she owes to the outcast and the despised. She has remained silent when she should have cried out as the blood of the innocent cried out into the heavens. She has failed to speak the right word in the right way and at the right time (DWB 6:129). By her silence, the church is guilty of the lack of responsible action and the lack of willingness to suffer for what is right (DWB 6:132).

*(d) Freedom to make decisions by not assuming predetermined principles (Freiheit)*

A moral action is not directly related to God when it blindly follows prevailing principles. Do we dare to serve truth and justice and thus abandon predetermined principles? If a decision-maker does not consider alternative courses of action, he becomes a slave to his principles and gives up his freedom (DBW 10:327-333; DBW 11:327-346). The Christian stands free – without any backing – before God and his neighbour; on him alone rests the responsibility of how he handles this gift of freedom. There must be a spirit of sober self-control in carefully weighing the possibilities and consequences of a decision. If man humbly asks God, He will certainly

communicate His will to him through the Holy Spirit, and there will be freedom to decide (DWB 6:324-329; Rom. 12:2).

Responsibility and freedom are corresponding concepts; responsibility presupposes freedom and freedom can only exist in responsibility. The evidence of freedom for the Christian is that he must perceive, judge, weigh, decide and act for himself. He must examine the motives, prospects, value, and purpose of his actions (DBW 6:283-285). Obedience knows what is right (Micah 6:8) and does it, and freedom dares to act and leaves the judgment of right and wrong to God. Obedience follows blindly and freedom has open eyes. Obedience acts without asking questions and freedom asks about the purpose of a decision (DBW 6:288).

### **Relevance of Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action for today's decision makers**

Is Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action also relevant today? Several contemporaries underlined the current relevance of the meaning of responsible action as described by Bonhoeffer. I will give some examples. The evil of Bonhoeffer's time was the result of the loss of human solidarity and the failure of responsible action. Bonhoeffer is our contemporary in signalling the underlying challenge of society: how to restore human solidarity and how to enable people to live responsibly in all contexts where the word of God makes itself heard. Acting vicariously representative is a true imitation of Christ, a willingness to be despised and abused for the sake of those who are themselves despised. Acting responsibly with a willingness to take on blame became the touchstone of Christian action (Lovin 2006). For Bonhoeffer, the opposite of acting responsibly is the sin of selfishness, which implies living for oneself, which is a break with any human relationship (Prueller - Jagenteufel 2017). Why is Bonhoeffer relevant today? Imagine if all people recognized Christ from the perspective of the suffering, the outcast, the accused, the abused, the powerless, the oppressed, and the reviled. Imagine a policy that sees the needs of others as our responsibility. Imagine how our communities would benefit if those with power and privilege acted on behalf of those without power and privilege (Brandt Hale 2019).

## **Is Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action relevant to entrepreneurs?**

Why are the criteria for acting responsibly, as developed by Bonhoeffer, also relevant to entrepreneurs? There are two reasons for this, the first of which refers to the fact that Bonhoeffer's call is addressed to everyone, Christians, and non-Christians alike. The second reason is that our society, represented by institutions such as employer organizations, trade unions, scientists, NGOs, and governments, calls for action beyond immediate self-interest. Entrepreneurs operating in a value chain are thus challenged to act responsibly using Bonhoeffer's interpretation as a frame of reference. If I translate Bonhoeffer's criteria for acting responsibly into conditions that entrepreneurs can use as a frame of reference in their decision-making process, we get:

- Be in solidarity with all stakeholders involved in the value chain by putting yourself in the position of others (Bonhoeffer: Vicarious representative action),
- Stand up for the weakest (Bonhoeffer: Correspondence with reality),
- Do not make decisions based solely on predetermined principles (Bonhoeffer: Freedom in decision making), and
- Have the courage to make informed decisions under uncertainty, which are by definition risky (Bonhoeffer: Having the willingness to accept the consequences of an unexpected wrong outcome of a decision).

I would like to recall the distinction between two types of value chains, market-driven and mission-driven. When buyers in market-driven value chains buy from individually operating small producers, they generally operate in monopsonistic (many suppliers, one buyer) or oligopsonistic (many suppliers, few buyers) markets where they can set prices without regard to adequate livelihoods for farmers, which can lead to poverty and low participation rates in both health care and children's education. On the other hand, mission-driven value chains invest in sustainability and strive to improve prospects for the weakest party, usually smallholder farm households. How do mission-driven and market-driven value chains "score" on the four criteria of responsible action listed above? Two extremes

of a continuum, the purely mission-driven versus the purely market-driven value chain, are compared with respect to their scores on the four criteria.

Table 1 Extent to which ethical behaviour occurs in a pure mission-driven or pure market-driven value chain.

Type of value chain	Mission-driven	Market-driven
Question	Score	Score
Solidarity with other participants in the value chain?	Significantly	Not
Standing up for the weak in the value chain?	Yes, especially for small-scale primary producers	No
Decisions based on multiple criteria or one criterion?	Multi-criteria	One criterion: profitability or shareholder value
Willingness to compensate the weakest in case of a decision with a negative outcome?	More	Less
Value chain can be labelled as ...	Inclusive	Exclusive

From Table 1 we can see that mission-driven value chains are generally more inclusive with respect to stakeholder interests than market-driven value chains. Next, I discuss two selected case studies of value chains where stakeholders took responsibility for the weakest in the chain.

### **Application of the conceptual framework to two case studies**

I apply the conceptual framework developed in the previous sections to two case studies, one on a Nile perch chain from Kenya and the other on a Rooibos tea chain from South Africa. The first case study regards a market-driven value chain concerned with moving toward sustainable fisheries and marketing around Lake Victoria (Kambewa 2007; Kambewa et al. 2008) and the second is a mission-driven value chain concerned with moving toward sustainable Rooibos tea production and marketing in South Africa (Adey 2007; Tilburg and Kambewa 2011).

## **The market-driven value chain for Nile perch sourced from Lake Victoria**

Participants in the value chain for Nile perch from Lake Victoria to Europe include fishermen, traders, processors, supermarkets, and consumers. The value chain experienced an up period followed by a down period due to overfishing. The fishermen and their families are the weakest party in this value chain. The documentary *Darwin's Nightmare* (2005) suggested that weapons were being flown in on the same planes that transported Nile perch fillets to European consumers, fuelling the conflict that aid was trying to resolve. The documentary showed the poor living and working conditions of the indigenous people. Many children became addicted to drugs and prostitution. All the prime fillets were sold to European supermarkets, leaving the locals to survive on the carcasses of the filleted fish. How did the supermarket sector react? European supermarkets did not know what was happening in the Lakeshores fishing villages and considered removing the Nile perch from their shelves, considering the documentary's criticism. A leading supermarket chain in the Netherlands changed its mind after a briefing by Emma Kambewa on how to improve living conditions in the fishing villages. Kambewa (2007) proposed fresh marketing schemes to improve the living conditions of these small-scale fishermen. Collective action by the fishermen resulted in Beach Management Units that improved both sustainable fishing and financial compensation. At the macro level, the border states of Lake Victoria established a joint fisheries organization to strengthen sustainable fishing practices.

## **A mission-driven Rooibos tea value chain in South Africa**

Until the early 1990s, agricultural production and marketing were driven by marketing boards, which generally favoured white producers and marginalized other farmers. After gaining democracy in 1994, the marketing of tea remained largely monopolized by the Rooibos Tea Cooperative. However, a breakthrough in the market for small-scale community producers came when a sustainable and marketable tea product was developed with the support of Fair-Trade Organizations. For example, cooperatives of small-scale farmers were established in the Northern Cape Province. The Rooibos tea fair trade initiative included processing and packaging activities in the cooperatives' operations so that they were able

to export Rooibos tea ready to be put on supermarket shelves. In this way, small-scale farmers gained more control over value-added activities in the value chain, resulting in more bargaining power in international markets. Examples include the Wuppertal and Heiveld cooperatives (Raynolds and Ngcwangu 2010). In the stories about the cooperative in Heiveld, women members cited increased ownership, freedom to buy goods and power to play a more active role in household decision-making as benefits, and they expressed hope for a better future (Daya and Authar 2012). How do these cases score on the characteristics listed above (Table 2)?

Table 2 Extent to which ethical behaviour occurred in a Rooibos value chain and a Nile Perch value chain.

Type of value chain	Rooibos tea value chain	Nile perch value chain
Institution in the value chain taking responsibility	Free Trade Organization (FTO)	Corporate Social Responsibility policy statement of the channel leader
Question	Answer	Answer
Solidarity with other members of the value chain?	Yes, investments to improve the living conditions of small-scale primary producers	To the extent consistent with its CSR policy
Do the stakeholders stand up for the weak in the value chain?	This is the purpose of the FTO, no guarantee	Not directly
Decision analysis based on multi-criteria or single criteria?	Multi-criteria, sustainability for people and planet first, but cost efficiency is a necessary condition	Multi-criteria, only as far as the company’s CSR policy allows
Willingness to compensate a partner in the value chain if a decision leads to a negative outcome?	More	Less

Table 2 shows that the Rooibos value chain is highly mission driven. This is not so much the case in the Nile Perch value chain, where the degree of ethical behaviour of decision-makers depends heavily on their willingness

to apply principles of corporate social responsibility. The approach in the Rooibos value chain was therefore more in line with Bonhoeffer's characteristics of responsible action than that in the Nile Perch value chain.

## Insights gained

Insights from this discussion are that Bonhoeffer's analysis of - and handling of - responsible action is still relevant, especially as society increasingly demands a more inclusive way of thinking and acting in all areas of life. As a result, Bonhoeffer's analysis is also relevant for entrepreneurs with responsibilities towards product value chains, especially when vulnerable small-scale producers in the Third World are the origin. If entrepreneurs take Bonhoeffer's criteria for acting responsibly into account, they would be in solidarity with all stakeholders in their value chain, stand up for the weakest, feel free to abandon predefined principles, and have the willingness and courage to accept the consequences of an unexpected negative outcome of their decision.

Looking at the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility, it is remarkable how relevant and topical Bonhoeffer's analysis of responsible behaviour is by giving hands and feet to the overarching concept of stewardship, which stands for solidarity, standing up for the weak, an inclusive way of decision-making and a willingness to compensate those who suffer from harmful decisions.

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