

Face It, Find It, Fix It

What 60,000+ SMETA Audits Reveal
About Supply Chain Risk & Resolution



It's impossible to avoid sustainability concerns in your supply chain – concerns that can hit your business. Labour disputes, extreme weather, product delays and media scandals translate into operational, reputational and financial consequences. Meanwhile, supply chains are more complex than ever – making in-depth visibility and proactive risk management challenging, even as stakeholders demand both.

But progress is possible. Sedex's latest insights show what supply chain teams can achieve with the scalable due diligence tools and technology that already exist. Grow visibility, gain multi-tier intelligence and evidence improvement to support short-term needs and long-term goals.

Scale your supply chain intelligence with Sedex – talk to our team

Scalable, Site-Level Assessment



1 million issues identified in 4 years

SMETA remains one of the most widely used site-level, in-person assessments – at the frontier of scalable supply chain due diligence. Every issue identified is a chance to improve a site's practices or working conditions.



1,000 severe issues found every week with SMETA

Critical and business critical issues are the most severe breaches of workplace conditions and requirements. These present the biggest threats to operational continuity, ethical compliance and reputation – priority areas to address.



24% of SMETA audits conducted at small sites with <30 peak-season workers

SMETA enables consistent assessment across even small worksites – helping supply chain teams capture risks further upstream and build a fuller picture across regions and tiers.

Spotting Exploitation Risks



Migrant workers comprise 25% of the workforces at SMETA-audited sites

Migrant workers are more vulnerable to exploitation, including forced labour, in particular through their recruitment experiences and channels. Some regions, industries or product lines have a higher prevalence of these workers – identify where to prioritise protective measures.



Wage-related issues identified at 46% of audited sites

From missing benefits to unpaid wages, these issues may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups including women and migrant workers. Apply these lenses to spot increased risks and impact. Wages concerns can also indicate hidden subcontracting, or more severe exploitation.



1,000 audits in the last year identified issues directly relating to forced labour

SMETA 7 has identified thousands of issues regarding employment being freely chosen. This includes findings on forced overtime, freedom of movement, retention of workers' IDs, and even instances of debt bondage. Multiple red flags indicate a greater likelihood of exploitation.



Issues regarding excessive working hours identified at 16% of audited sites

Excessive hours can increase safety risks, inefficiency and worker turnover. They can also signal wage theft, hidden subcontracting or serious exploitation – excessive overtime is a recognised Indicator of Forced Labour (International Labour Organization).

Addressing Due Diligence Gaps



38,000 Management Systems gaps on child labour prevention

The new Management Systems Assessment in SMETA 7.0 focuses on prevention and resilience. This figure reflects where audits found missing checks, policies or governance relating to child labour – highlighting higher-risk environments and opportunities to improve risk prevention.



15% of sites don't have systems to ensure their suppliers meet labour standards

According to Sedex Self-Assessment Questionnaires (SAQs), 15% of sites globally admit they don't have measures in place to ensure suppliers and subcontractors meet required labour standards. This figure varies across sectors and regions – where it's higher, there could be higher risks of hidden exploitation or labour violations.



29% of sites don't know end customers' environmental requirements

Achieving environmental goals depends on collaboration, which starts with bringing everyone in a supply chain on-board to agree commitments and shared actions. This statistic shows supplier engagement may be lacking, especially further upstream in supply chains.



4,000+ businesses have now done living wage gap assessments thanks to SMETA 7

SMETA 7 significantly expanded its living wage assessment, providing companies with a structured way to identify and address wages gaps. This is helping more businesses take – and demonstrate – practical steps to improve on this complex topic.

Showing Measurable Improvement



150,000+ issues resolved in 1 year

Across global supply chains, Sedex members have resolved thousands of issues – including over 20,000 severe concerns. Each resolution reflects tangible progress, whether through stronger risk management at sites, better working conditions or improved labour practices.



30% fewer issues at sites respecting freedom of association

Freedom of association is one of the most effective ways to reduce risks of forced labour and other exploitation. It also supports more resilient workforces and supply chain operations – as this finding indicates.



38% fewer critical issues at sites with gender-balanced management

SMETA finds fewer serious issues at sites where women and men are equally represented in supervisory roles. Balanced leadership is essential to addressing gendered risks – from harassment to unequal pay – and supports better operations generally, as this insight shows.



>30% reduction in issues at agriculture, forestry & fishing sites

This improvement reflects progress over time, even at the earliest stages of supply chains – where risks can be higher but also harder to detect. It shows what's possible when visibility and engagement extend beyond Tier 1.

From small suppliers to multinational enterprises, businesses continue to identify risks, make changes and drive improvement – increasing both sustainable practices and resilience in the face of challenge.

What does the data say for your supply chain?

Find out with Sedex

Data sources: Sedex SAQ, SMETA and risk data up to September 2025

About Sedex

With a network comprising over **95,000 businesses and +115,000 supply chain sites**, our integrated data-driven solutions help teams to unearth hidden risks, prioritise action on high-risk areas, demonstrate due diligence and safeguard supply chain operations.



Sedex Platform

Store, integrate, analyse and report on sustainability risks and practices globally – connect with existing Suppliers to accelerate your efforts.



SMETA Audit

Gain visibility into site-specific working conditions and environmental performance with our world-leading, in-person assessment.



Sustainability Coordinator

Maximise the impact of your sustainability initiatives with our expert specialists.



Training and Community

Learn, share and connect with our exclusive networking and training programmes.

Learn more – contact our team today