

〈Report〉

Suntory Holdings Limited
Findings from Interviews with Foreign Workers

-As part of the human rights impact assessment-
November 30, 2021

Caux Round Table Japan

CAUX  TABLE

Interview content and questions

*The same questions used for both the Tsuzuki factory and the Takatsu factory

Profile		Name, gender, hometown/nationality, language spoken
		Comprehension of Japanese (level of speaking and writing)
		Family, place of residence, frequency of returning home
		Type of employment (e.g., full-time, part-time))
Introduction		How, why, and when did you come to Japan?
		Where did you study Japanese?
		How did you find your job here? How long have you been working here?
		What type of visa are you currently working under? Please tell us about your job.
Questions	Appropriate hours of work/ forced labour	What is your shift pattern and working hours?
		Is there any overtime work? Are you forced to work overtime?
		Are you taking the time to rest and relax on your days off?
	Fair wages	Is your wages being paid on time and in the amount as agreed?
		If you do overtime work, are you paid for it?
	Occupational health and safety	When do you feel a sense of accomplishment at work? Do you enjoy working here? When do you feel rewarded?
		Have you ever been in danger or felt unsafe at work?
		When do you feel that your work is hard? Do you have any dissatisfaction with your job?
	Freedom of association and the right to collective	Does the company have a system where you can voice your opinion to the company?
		Do you think the company is making efforts to improve the work environment?
	Communication	Do you feel that you have sufficient communication with your company and supervisor?
		Do you have a good relationship with your Japanese employees and team?
		Is there anyone at work you can talk to when you are very tired, have a problem, or have a bad day? When you have a problem, who do you go to for advice on how to handle it?
		Have you ever seen someone in a difficult situation at work (is it a specific group of people)? Has anyone ever told you that they are having a hard time? What would you do if someone asked you for advice?
	Others	Do you have any opinions about the company (e.g., suggestions for improvement)?
		Would you be willing to recommend this job to someone?
(Technical internship student) Did you find any differences between the impression you had of your job before you started working and when you actually started working?		

Scope

Scope of the interview

Interviews were conducted with a total of nine foreign workers (and three other managers) at the manufacturing plants (Tsuzuki factory and Takatsu factory) of Izutsu Maisen Co. Ltd., a group company of Suntory Holdings Ltd., with the purpose of better understanding their working conditions.

Schedule: November 2021

Interviewees:

- 1) Foreign workers who have been working at one of the plants for more than 6 months.
- 2) Managers (on-site managers, HR manager)

Details are as follows.

Factory	Tsuzuki factory	Takatsu factory
Date	November 12, 2021	November 17, 2021
Format	Group interview for an hour	Group interview for 40 minutes
Number of interviewees	4 (only female)	5 (only female)
Nationality	Philippines (4)	Philippines (5)
Languages used	Japanese, English	Japanese, English
Visa status	Technical Intern Training, Designated Activities	Technical Intern Training
Interviewers	Caux Round Table Japan Ishida (male), Ode (female)	Caux Round Table Japan Ishida (male), Ode (female)

Findings from Interviews

Findings from Interviews

Summary

- The Tsuzuki and Takatsu factories both maintain a good relationship between the foreign workers and the Japanese staff. The factories have an awareness of the importance of foreign workers as valuable assets to the company. Although the principal language spoken is Japanese, the company's attitude and actual efforts to create a good working environment for foreign workers can be seen, such as providing explanations and posting notices in multiple languages when necessary.
- With very open communication within the factories, there is customary to report any concerns to factory leaders. The interviewees look up to the factory manager as their father (Tsuzuki factory) and the leader as their mother (Takatsu factory) and the relationship is close enough to discuss matters outside the factories as well. The factories have an established culture where employees share information and raise issues through monthly meetings, and leaders hear employees' opinions.
- No Technical Intern Trainees (TITs) who came to Japan with a large recruitment fee debt were identified in this interview. The interviewees' work schedule is five days on two days off (day shifts at the Tsuzuki factory and nights shift at the Takatsu factory). Overtime work is on a voluntary basis, and no long working hours or forced overtime work was observed. The factories maintain a structured work schedule.
- A number of the interviewees wished to switch to Specified Skilled Worker after their technical intern training term and continue working. Some said they would like to introduce this job to their acquaintances in the Philippines, which suggests that the working environment is highly satisfactory for them. However, with restrictions on daily life due to the COVID19 pandemic, such as difficulty in going out, it is necessary to pay close attention to both the physical and mental health of the workers.
- As far as this interview could identify, there were no negative impacts on the human rights of the interviewees, such as the collection of large recruitment fees, forced long working hours, non-payment of wages, and working under dangerous conditions.

Findings from Interviews

Challenges and countermeasures

- The interviewee's proficiency in Japanese was very high and no language barrier issues in communication were observed. However, when the number of foreign employees increases in the future, it will be necessary to devise ways to ensure effective communication regardless of foreign workers' proficiency in Japanese, such as posting notices and precautions in the factories in multiple languages. In particular, the Takatsu Plant is considering accepting TITs from countries other than the Philippines. Along with helping foreign workers improve their Japanese language skills, it is also expected to establish a support system where they can ask for advice and raise concerns in their native language and improve Japanese staff's cultural understanding. Assistance with living arrangements and irregular visa application process due to the COVID19 pandemic may also be needed. In addition, it is necessary to check concerns associated with the recruitment of TITs, such as whether foreign workers are being charged exorbitant recruitment fees. It is expected to ensure safe recruitment procedures.
- In the future, it is recommended to sort out a sequence of occurring events, such as what problems are raised within the factories and what improvement measures are taken, and report it to relevant departments and Suntory Holdings. A greater effect is expected if this mechanism can be officially established in the factories and effectively used as a grievance mechanism.
- Due to the nature of the work, the workers are required to stand continuously except during breaks, which places a heavy physical burden on them. In food manufacturing factories, it may be challenging to place anti-fatigue mats from the standpoint of the hygiene management. However, it is expected to make improvements and minimize the fatigue of stand-up work. This will not only increase the job satisfaction of employees but will also increase the efficiency of production.

Tsuzuki factory

Details of the working conditions of foreign workers in the factory as confirmed through this interview.

(Fair wage, reasonable hours of work, forced labour, freedom of association, and right to collective bargaining, health and safety in the workplace)

Reasonable hours of work/forced labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work schedule is five days on two days off for 9.5-10-hour day shifts (7:00 am-5:30/6:00 pm). A drop in the overall workload due to the COVID19 pandemic led to a decrease in overtime work. Currently, 0 hours of overtime, compared to two hours of overtime every day before the pandemic. • Work on most weekends.
Fair wage/forced labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wages and overtime are paid on a monthly basis. Some commented, "it's a good company because they pay me well for the hours I work." • A decrease in total overtime workload followed by a drop in overtime pay.
Occupational health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put well-defined rules for machine use, regulations within the factories and safety measures in place as factories have a variety of machines including large dangerous equipment. • Swollen legs due to stand-up work on the hard floor though employees can sit down and rest during breaks. The heavy physical load especially during menstruation. • Insulation rubber shoes and foot warmers are provided by the factory to prevent the cold in the production line where the temperature is set at 10°C on the third floor and 15°C on the second floor.
Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining/communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The section chief is available for discussing any work-related issues. A monthly two-hour meeting functions as an opportunity for sharing information and raising suggestions. For residence-related matters (e.g., breakdown of home appliances), the factory manager, who responds quickly, is available to directly discuss. • All employees in the factory are caring and supportive, which makes a very comfortable working environment.
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With Maisen HR in charge of hiring TITs, the Takatsu factory manager and Maisen HR manager visit the trainees' country of residence for face-to-face interviews. Maisen is working with iforce, a supervising organization. Maisen hopes to continue with the current recruitment method in the future.

Takatsu factory

Details of the working conditions of foreign workers in the factory as confirmed through this interview.

(Fair wage, reasonable hours of work, forced labour, freedom of association, and right to collective bargaining, health and safety in the workplace)

Reasonable hours of work/forced labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work schedule is five days on two days off for 9-hour night shifts (9:00 pm-6:00 am). The start time varies (usually between 9:00 pm and 10:00 pm), depending on the day's assignment. Two hours of overtime until 8:00 am when needed. If overtime is needed, the factory will inform employees with prior notice. They are not forced to work overtime, only those who wish to do so. All those who wish to work overtime can work extra hours. • Take a one-hour break in the designated break room with some vending machines available to purchase drinks and refrigerators also available to keep the food/snack for breaks.
Fair wage/forced labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wages and overtime are always paid on time. Some TITs regularly send money to their families in the Philippines while the other save money up for their own future. • The interviewees punched a time clock before the interview, which was conducted prior to their work shifts.
Occupational health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For machines that can be dangerous if used improperly, instructions are given on how to handle them in a safety-first manner (e.g., men are assigned to work with heavy objects). An interviewee suffered a minor injury to the back of her hand when getting it caught in a machine and got treated with a band-aid provided in the factory instead of going to see a doctor. All injuries are thoroughly reported to the leader. • In the break room, tables and chairs are laid out to prevent infection in such a way that people face the same direction without facing each other.
Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining/communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With an open workplace environment, the interviewees feel free to discuss concerns with leaders. The leaders at the Takatsu factory are all women and available not only for work-related concerns but also for problems in the residences, providing support both inside and outside the factory. • A poster of a hotline is displayed in the break room. Although the interviewees are aware of it, they rely more on consulting their leaders first when raising concerns. Alternatively, they may contact and speak to the supervising organization through Facebook. • Proficiency in Japanese is rarely a major barrier to work or communication.
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hiring process is conducted locally in the Philippines, and the factory manager interviewed applicants there with the presence of an interpreter. • The night shifts used to have many experienced part-time employees, which led to an awkward work environment, but the arrival of the first TITs resulted in a change in the team dynamic and the workplace atmosphere became more sociable. • Maisen hopes to continue with the current recruitment method. Maisen, which is currently accepting TITs only from the Philippines, is also considering hiring TITs from countries other than the Philippines from the perspective of incorporating diversity (temporarily suspended due to the COVID19 pandemic).

Snapshots during the Interview

