

OPEN LETTER

To the attention of Member States' Agriculture Ministers
To the attention of Commissioner Wojciechowski - Agriculture
To the attention of Commissioner Schmit - Jobs and Social Rights
To the attention of Executive Vice President Timmermans - Green Deal
To the attention of Members of the European Parliament negotiating team

THE NEW CAP NEEDS SOCIAL CONDITIONALITY

End exploitation and raise labour standards in European agriculture

At least ten million people are employed in European agriculture, mainly as seasonal workers, day labourers or in other insecure statuses. Despite being defined as essential by the EU institutions and national governments when COVID-19 hit, the lived experience of many of these workers remains one of struggle, deprivation and violations of human rights. Inhuman working conditions, poor wages, long working hours, a high proportion of undeclared work and sub-standard housing are only some of the daily hardships faced by farm workers in Europe. Workers often fall prey to widespread exploitation, including gangmaster practices and other forms of modern slavery.

Although their plight remains largely invisible, farm workers, be they EU nationals or non-EU citizens, migrants or refugees, working in North, South, West or East Europe, are united in demanding rights, social justice, and dignity at work.

Astonishingly enough, workers have never featured in the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) - a flagship EU policy, now accounting for about one third of the EU budget (from highs of up to 73%). While CAP subsidies are now rightly conditional on respect for basic environmental standards, public health and animal welfare, compliance with human and labour rights plays absolutely no role in the allocation of direct payments. This is why, unsurprisingly, the CAP has thus far largely failed to improve agricultural workers' conditions.

A concrete and easily applicable solution, however, is in sight. The European Parliament has adopted a clear position: CAP direct payments must be conditional on respect for the applicable working and employment conditions under relevant collective agreements, national and EU law as well as ILO conventions.

The conditionality would cover various areas such as declared employment, equal treatment, remuneration, working time, health and safety, housing, gender equality, social security and fair conditions for all workers employed in agriculture, including mobile and migrant labourers.

However, this is only a first step in the right direction.

Negotiations between the EU institutions on the new CAP are ongoing and it is now crucial that social conditionality becomes part of the final agreement between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. The position of the European Parliament should be confirmed and further strengthened.

The case to be made is not just ethical – this is the only way to avoid social dumping, ensuring that the CAP can protect all those farmers who do respect workers' rights, but suffer unfair competition from those that do not. And with social conditionality, a relevant part of the EU budget – funded by EU taxpayers – will finally contribute to improving working and living conditions in one of the most challenging and precarious sectors of the EU economy.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents the EU with a unique opportunity - overhauling European agriculture to make it truly sustainable and socially just. The CAP must contribute to this objective, meeting ambitious environmental goals while upholding respect for agricultural workers' rights, which can never be considered red tape.

We, the undersigned signatories, call on your sense of responsibility as legislators and EU citizens. Agricultural workers endure burning heat and freezing cold, injuries, aches and threats, survive on a few hours of sleep and quick, frugal meals, live in shacks or containers, yet demonstrate astounding dedication to their jobs. It is thanks to them that, even in a global pandemic, there is food on our tables.

Agricultural workers now expect a clear response from the EU.

Social justice and fairness must prevail: the new CAP needs social conditionality.



INTERNATIONAL / EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS

EFFAT - European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions
ETUC - European Trade Union Confederation
IUF - International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations
ITUC - International Trade Union Confederation
OSEPI - Open Society European Policy Institute
ActionAid International
Amnesty International
ARC2020 – Agricultural and Rural Convention
Caritas Europa
CEO - Corporate Europe Observatory
ERGO Network
EAPN - European Anti-Poverty Network
ECCJ - European Coalition for Corporate Justice
Euro Coop - European Community of Consumer Co-operatives
EuroCOP - European Confederation of Police
ECVC - European Coordination Via Campesina
ECRE - European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EEB - European Environmental Bureau
EFBWW - European Federation of Building and Woodworkers
EPHA - European Public Health Alliance
EPSU - European Public Service Union
ETF - European Transport Workers' Federation
Faces of Migration
FTAO - Fair Trade Advocacy Office
Feedback
Food & Water Action Europe
Friends of the Earth Europe
GRAIN
Human Rights Watch
ICMC Europe - International Catholic Migration Commission
ILAW - International Lawyers Assisting Workers Network
IndustriAll European Trade Union
La Strada International
LLF - Lady Lawyer Foundation
Naturefriends International
Oxfam
PAN Europe
PICUM - Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants
Profundo
ROSCIDET - Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour le Développement du Tonkpi
Schola Campesina APS
Slow Food Europe
Social Platform
SOLIDAR
Stella Maris International Network
The Good Lobby
The SHARE network
UNI Europa, the European Services Workers Union
UnionMigrantNet
URGENCI

WeWorld-GVC ONLUS
Workers' Group EESC
World Fair Trade Organization Europe asbl (WFTO-Europe)

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ACV-CSC Services et Alimentation (Belgium)
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ASTRA - Anti trafficking action (Serbia)
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Bulgarian Association of Raspberry Producers
CCHP - Trade union of self-employed and informal workers "UNITY" (Bulgaria)
CCOO de Industria (Spain)
CERES (Romania)
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CG-FGTB/ABVV (Belgium)
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CGIL (Italy)
CISL (Italy)
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ELA-STV (Spain)
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KOK – German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings
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LDH - Ligue des droits de l'Homme (France)
MEDU - Medici per i diritti umani (Italy)
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MEDOSZ (Hungary)
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NNN (Norway)
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ÖGB - Austrian Trade Union Federation
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