



FairFields

CULTIVATING JUSTICE

Stephanie Arnold
University of Bologna

Alessia Aspide
Leiden University

Nil Barutel Gaspar
Pompeu Fabra University

Rose Champion
University of Oxford

Iris del Pino García Saavedra
Complutense University of Madrid

Hadil Louz
University of St Andrews

Claudia Marà
KU Leuven

Bradley Reynolds
University of Helsinki

Alena Zelenskaia
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

Teaching Fellow:

Dr Katerina Pantazatou
University of Luxembourg



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Executive Summary

European rural development strategies overlook the importance of fair living and working conditions for agricultural workers. Recent EU-level reforms fail to tackle working and living conditions: the EU Rural Pact decentres agricultural work, and the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) social conditionality clause insufficiently addresses living conditions and social inclusion.

This policy brief advocates for a more socially just system that promotes dignity and equality of opportunity in rural societies. We propose a comprehensive, multi-level set of policy recommendations that address stake-

holders at the EU, national, regional, and local levels to foster an environment where agricultural workers can exert greater agency.

Policy recommendations proposed here suggest an innovative strategy to put quality agricultural work at the centre of EU rural development. It builds on and adapts existing institutional structures to facilitate cooperation between relevant rural and labour actors to deliver better services for workers and to bolster social dialogue in the agricultural sector.

We also propose two concrete outputs:

An EU-wide Rural Pact Community Group with local actors underpinned by a letter of agreement (appendix 2).

A European multilateral online platform that facilitates agricultural workers' access to services and enables translocal networking opportunities for local actors (appendix 3).



Introduction

The agricultural sector in Europe provides regular employment for 25 million people (Eurostat, 2022), which equals the combined populations of Greece, Denmark, Finland, and Ireland. According to estimates, this number rises considerably since several million people are assumed to work in an irregular capacity (UNHRHC, 2020; Augère-Granier, M. L., 2021).

While agricultural workers represent the core labour force of rural areas, they often endure dire working and living conditions. Physical and social isolation exacerbates these problems and endangers rural development overall. Agriculture is the primary driver of economic growth in many rural regions, but fair and decent work is necessary to achieve equitable growth (Hurst, 2007). Fair work generates tax revenues, local income and also facilitates workers' participation in local communities. Agricultural workers' integration is even more important given the ageing of rural populations and as such, is vital to the survival of rural areas (Augère-Granier & McEldowney, 2020).

Despite recent reforms, European strategies for rural development re-

peatedly overlook the importance of fair living and working conditions for agricultural workers. Considering that EU rural development and the [Common Agricultural Policy](#) (CAP) rely largely on agricultural workers, this constitutes a grave oversight. Specifically, the recently-adopted [EU Rural Pact](#) does not prioritise agricultural work in its agenda. This is even more surprising considering the recent introduction of the CAP's social conditionality clause, which attempts to tackle employer compliance with existing labour legislation. Rural development will remain confined without investing in the working and living conditions of the agricultural workforce.

To do so, we recommend a holistic approach and a set of multi-level policy recommendations that address stakeholders at EU, national, regional, and local levels.

European strategies for rural development repeatedly overlook the importance of fair living and working conditions for agricultural workers

11 policy recommendations are scaffolded under three main themes:

A Address institutional shortcomings

B Improving working conditions

C Addressing living conditions for agricultural workers

Methodology

The following recommendations stem from research conducted by a multi-disciplinary team.

Desk research surveyed relevant reports from EU institutions, labour unions, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic literature, and newspaper reporting. 12 expert interviews were conducted with trade union representatives, employers organisations, local and national authorities, NGOs and other non-profits, journalists, academic experts, and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to help identify problems and formulate solutions (*appendix 1*).

In March 2023 a survey was launched for Local Action Groups (LAGs) registered in the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) database. 241 respondents offered important insights into the challenges their regions face and suggestions for change (*appendix 3*).

Survey participants were invited to two feedback sessions in the summer of 2023. The sessions, hosted in English and Spanish, brought together ten LAG coordinators, NGOs, union representatives, and other stakeholders from Finland, the UK, Greece, Italy, and Spain.

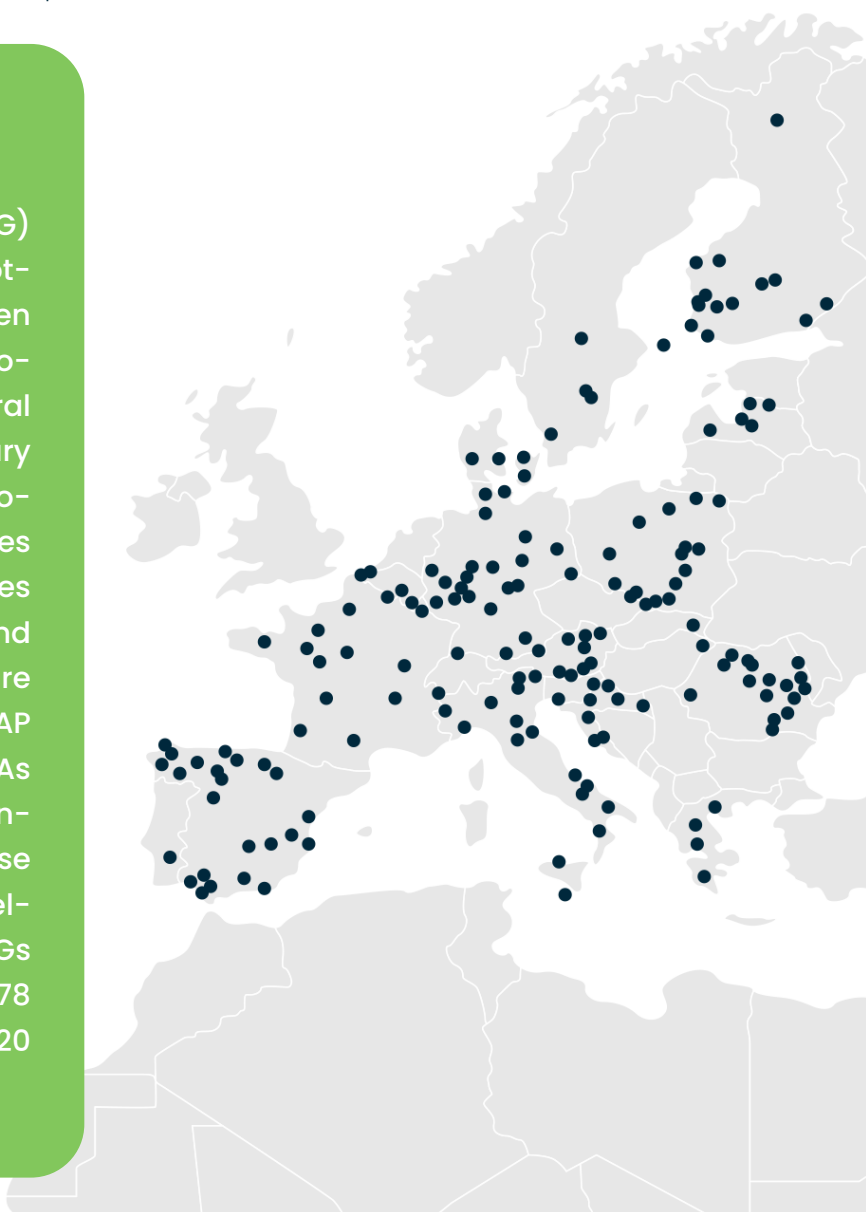
12
expert
interviews

241
survey
respondents

2
feedback
sessions

WHAT IS A LOCAL ACTION GROUP?

A Local Action Group (LAG) is a community-led, bottom-up partnership between public, private, and civil-society stakeholders in rural regions. One of the primary tasks of a LAG is to design local development strategies and enhance the capacities of local actors to create and implement projects. LAGs are an integral part of the EU CAP Network (formerly ENRD). As such they can obtain national and EU funds to propose and implement rural development projects. 3,000 LAGs across the EU carried out 878 projects in the 2014-2020 budget cycle.



Defining the problems

Rural development faces a complex web of structural challenges. We outline three of the most pressing problems that impact not only seasonal agricultural workers, but rural communities more broadly.

EU fails to address a key dimension of rural development: respecting workers' rights and securing decent living conditions

A - Institutional shortcomings

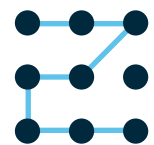
Current EU policies offer state and local actors avenues to foster rural development and agricultural work. The new [CAP](#) addresses 'depopulation, access to and improvement of basic services, opportunities for employment and need for better connectivity' throughout Europe. The Rural Pact provides a complementary framework to build and expand local coalitions (especially LAGs) to tackle challenging policy areas, such as social inclusion and community development. The new CAP and Rural Pact (alongside similar initiatives¹) create spaces in these institutions for local actors.

However, the working and living conditions of seasonal agricultural work-

ers in the EU remain beyond the scope of these policies.

To be sure, local actors across Europe already address many of the issues surrounding seasonal agricultural work, but their efforts remain largely disconnected. Overcoming workers' physical and social isolation requires coordination between different stakeholders. In survey responses and stakeholder meetings, local actors raised the issue of inaccessible and bureaucratic funding processes. EU funds are managed through governance networks at the EU, national, regional, and local levels and are encapsulated by a complex EU legal framework (*Pantazatou, 2018*).

projects tackling these problems across the EU remain disconnected



WHAT IS THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP)?

The **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** is an EU policy, common for all EU countries. It is managed and funded at the European level from the resources of the EU's budget. It accounts for 31% of the EU budget for the 2021–2027 period. EU Funds devoted to the CAP come from the two CAP Pillars, the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). The CAP was last reformed in December 2021 with the aim of promoting a fairer, greener, and more performance-based CAP, allowing greater flexibility for EU countries to adapt measures to local conditions.

¹ These include the [EU Rural Action Plan](#) and the [EU Green Deal](#).

WHAT IS THE RURAL PACT?

The **Rural Pact** is a framework launched by the European Commission in 2021 to boost multi-level cooperation between public authorities, civil society, businesses, academia, and citizens to develop the Long-Term Vision for Rural Areas. The Rural Pact aims at amplifying rural voices on the political agenda, structuring and enabling collaboration and knowledge exchange, and encouraging voluntary commitments towards achieving the “[Rural Vision](#)”.

B – Degrading working conditions

Irregular labour practices undermine decent working conditions and pervade the agricultural sector. These include work without contracts, contract noncompliance, and health and safety violations. Under-developed regulatory mechanisms and insufficient labour inspections contribute to illegal and unethical working conditions.

These conditions affect a majority of the sector. According to one estimate, in Italy 40% of migrant agricultural workers are hired without a contract, denying them any social or legal protection (*Augère-Granier, 2021*). According to other estimates, up to one in two agricultural workers in the EU may be working irregularly (*Williams, 2019*). Migrant workers in particular are vulnerable to gang-mastering, a

widespread form of illegal intermediation between farmers and workers. Even when workers are offered an employment contract, it is usually short-term or only sent once the working period expires (*interview 5*). Moreover, many migrant workers do not speak the primary language(s) in the host country and do not fully understand employment conditions.

Regardless, many employers do not honour the terms of contracts. Seasonal hires often work in the field for more than 10 hours per day, earning a fraction of the national minimum wage. Many working hours simply go unpaid. In Southern Italy, experts speak of conditions akin to slavery in the olive oil, tomato, and grape industries (*interview 2*).

40%
of migrant
workers
in Italy's
agricultural
sector
are hired
without a
contract



WHO ARE THE SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS?

Every year between about 1 million seasonal agricultural workers are hired across the EU. Germany, Italy, Spain, France, and Poland in particular rely on migrant workers, either from EU member states or third countries (Fries-Tersch et al., 2021; Siöland et al., 2023). The main countries of origin are Poland, Romania, Morocco, Ukraine, Pakistan, and Thailand. While migrant workers are particularly vulnerable in the fields, they share similarly poor conditions with native workers.

from
Poland, Romania,
Morocco, Ukraine,
Pakistan, and Thailand → ~1 mln seasonal
agricultural workers in Europe

Few provisions guarantee workers' health and safety. In addition to the bodily toll extracted by work in the fields, workplace illnesses and accidents can cause permanent harm. Workers rarely have access to legally-mandated protective equipment to shield themselves from pesticides or adverse weather conditions. Field workers must also combat psychological stressors, such as the threat of deportation or dismissal if they raise complaints. Employers and recruiting agencies may use this precarity as leverage to enforce a culture of non-reporting.

Women are especially at risk of exploitation, sexual abuse, and blackmail as numerous reports from Spain and Italy have shown (Altimira & Badia, 2020; interview 5). Women's caring responsibilities are also exploited, as some Spanish employers prefer to hire Moroccan women with children at home to ensure that they return when their contract expires (interview 11). This violates the 'Prohibition of Discrimination' (Art. 14) of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Although labour unions and NGOs across Europe strive to strengthen the voice of agricultural workers, engaging in meaningful collective bargaining and social dialogue on working conditions proves to be an ongoing struggle. In fact, workers in this sector suffer from limited structural power due to their replaceability and the seasonal nature of their work. Moreover, many EU Member States lack the relevant legislation to appraise and punish unlawful practices.

Finally, labour enforcement authorities are understaffed and lack resources (EFFAT Executive Committee, 2021). Current approaches rely on in-person inspections which inadequately cover vast areas. A number of experts highlighted the importance of identifying high-risk areas and introducing digital technologies to boost inspections' effectiveness and coverage (interviews 1 & 3).

Women are risk of exploitation, sexual abuse, and blackmail



understaffed labour enforcement authorities



In addition to these structural shortcomings, numerous actors actively work to maintain this status quo. Many farmers rely on unfair labour practices to retain a competitive advantage (Williams, 2019). Lobbies and other advocacy groups protect farmers' interests in member states and EU institutions. Local governments are also subject to these pressures, especially in regions where the agricultural sector dominates the economy. In the fields, gang-masters exploit these vulnerabilities and use intimidation tactics to thwart reforms (interview 4).

A first positive step towards considering working conditions in agriculture came under the reform of CAP-related funds, the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the insertion of a social conditionality clause in Regulation (EU) 2021/2115. This clause (Article 14) provides that farmers and other beneficiaries receiving payments under the CAP Funds are subject to administrative penalties if they do not comply with requirements related to applicable working and employment conditions or employer obligations arising from relevant EU legislation.

social conditionality clause



These employment obligations pertain primarily to transparent working conditions and measures to encourage minimum workplace health and safety. The social conditionality clause requires bare minimum compliance with EU law in order to receive funds. Yet, it insufficiently addresses the problems raised here for the following reasons:

- *The social conditionality clause allows for broad discretion in the decision on the system of penalties and their enforcement (Art. 14 (2)).*
- *The social conditionality clause is only limited to the disbursements from these specific funds (EAGF and EAFRD).*
- *The specific working conditions that need to be met before applying for funding do not refer to improving agricultural workers' living conditions, nor their integration into the local communities.*



C - Inadequate living spaces

Insufficient transportation and dire living conditions threaten seasonal agricultural workers' wellbeing and compound their social and physical isolation.

Seasonal agricultural workers often lack access to decent housing. Workers may be forced to live in camps consisting of huts, tents, containers, or other unsuitable materials (*interviews 5 & 8*). Even in more decent forms of housing, sanitation facilities may be shared with hundreds of people. The lack of proper kitchens increases fire risks in settlements. Some of these so-called 'shantytowns' do not dispose of waste collection (*interview 8*). The absence of WiFi as well as sparse cellular and data connections, further isolate these groups.

Women are particularly vulnerable to unhygienic environments and abuse in irregular housing. They are also more likely to experience dire living conditions, especially when accompanied by minors (*Palumbo & Sciurba, 2016; Palumbo & Sciurba, 2018*).

Transport poses an additional hurdle. Workers housed in remote areas do not have equal access to public transport, which isolates them from basic necessities and important services. The distance from town centres increases reliance on hitchhiking or expensive taxis where one trip can easily exceed a day's earnings (*interview 11*). Dependence on unregulated transport, such as that offered by gangmasters, has resulted in deadly accidents (*Foggia, strage di braccianti migranti, 2018*).

Gangmasters in particular profit from these subpar conditions and have an interest in maintaining them. Without reliable transport, decent housing, and access to services, workers are forced to rely on gangmasters, which increases their vulnerability to exploitation (*interview 3*).

inadequate housing



- transport



+ exploitation



Recommendations

In light of these problems, we make the following recommendations. These serve to improve the living and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers, but also to support local actors in addressing these problems in their communities. A sustainable and effective solution can best emerge by facilitating collaboration within the EU's existing structures to promote rural development.



A – Address institutional shortcomings

This proposal envisions strengthening existing networks and initiatives to focus on creating the requisite institutional contexts for workers to regain agency, and thereby become more active and integrated participants in society.

A1 Bring seasonal agricultural work to the fore in the EU Rural development strategy.

The Rural Pact should spotlight substandard working and living conditions for these workers as a critical policy area for the just development of rural communities across Europe. Given the recent introduction of the CAP's social conditionality clause, we recommend that the Rural Pact introduces an explicit focus on seasonal agricultural work to align the two policies.

Taking into consideration that labour is not directly represented in the Rural Pact's existing structures, we also recommend that labour unions and labour-oriented civil society organisations participate as key stakeholders in rural development through their integration into Local Action Groups (LAGs).

**focus
on seasonal
agricultural
work**



Change implementer: European Commission DG AGRI, Rural Areas and Networks (Unit D.1); Rural Pact Coordination Office.

A2 Enhance horizontal cooperation between LAGs.

A key aspect of trans-local network facilitation in the Rural Pact transpires through so-called 'Community Groups' – dedicated spaces created within the online space of the Rural Pact Community Platform that allow members of the Rural Pact Community to facilitate structured exchanges and discussions around common fields of interest and plan actions (*'Join a Community Group'*; n.d.).

We propose a new Community Group in the Rural Pact for local actors with the common goal of improving conditions for agricultural workers in rural areas. In addition to providing access to the Rural Pact's resources, a Community Group helps members to build skills, mobilise other actors, and draw attention to specific issues. It also helps establish an administrative network that is very often required in the context of EU funds to comply with existing ex-ante conditionalities at the local/regional level.

Change implementer: European Commission DG AGRI, Rural Areas and Networks (Unit D.1); Rural Pact Coordination Office.

New Community Groups



A3 Enhance vertical cooperation between local actors and EU policymakers.

While existing networks such as the CAP Network facilitate long-term collaboration between policymakers and project implementers (*Kramer & Wells 2005, 430*), local actors continually find it difficult to navigate funding applications and bureaucratic requirements at the national and EU levels. We therefore encourage more personalised interaction between LAGs and EU officials through information sessions and physical gatherings. These encounters should introduce LAGs to unconventional lines of funding for social inclusion that are not traditionally included in rural development. These networks also facilitate two-way knowledge exchange: institutions share information about funding and local actors share their experiences directly with policy-makers.

To nurture a lively knowledge exchange between actors, we recommend identifying experienced practitioners from EU institutions to act as 'knowledge brokers' (*Kramer & Wells 2005*). Local actors can eventually become knowledge brokers in their own right as the network matures, allowing for greater self-sufficiency and translocal cooperation. This horizontal connectivity allows for a smoother flow of information, services, and resources to facilitate the dignity of workers and their inclusion across Europe. At the same time, translocal cooperation in funding will cultivate a network through intensive and sustained interactions.

Change implementer: European Commission DG AGRI, Rural Areas and Networks (Unit D.1); Rural Pact Coordination Office.

personalized interaction between LAGs and EU officials



A4 Expand the scope of existing EU funds to target agricultural workers.

The EAGF and the EAFRD constitute the primary EU funds pertaining to agriculture. However, other EU funding opportunities do not directly link to agriculture but profess more social objectives, such as promoting social rights, inclusion, and social dialogue. These funds include the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (*Regulation (EU) 2021/1058, common for the ERDF and the Cohesion Fund*), the ESF+ (*Regulation (EU) 2021/1057*), and budget lines from the Social Prerogative and Specific Competencies Lines (SOCPL). All of these funds could be used to promote better working and living conditions through financing education, healthcare access, and social inclusion. However, local actors often overlook them because they do not target the agricultural sector. Including agricultural workers as a separate category of marginalised people entitled to such funding would allow LAGs and other stakeholders to access a larger pool of funds.

**direct funds
for better
conditions in
agricultural
work**



Change implementer: European Commission to propose the amendment to the existing Regulations and the Council and the European Parliament to agree in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure.



ACTION 1

A new Community Group in the Rural Pact Platform

A new Community Group focusing on agricultural work is created within the Rural Pact Community Platform. The new Group aims to facilitate horizontal and vertical connections to benefit rural communities and seasonal agricultural workers. An interactive map of stakeholders will bring together contact information for LAGs as well as local authorities and organisations, the projects they have participated in, and the types of future projects they are looking to find funding for. Peer exchanges are expected to amplify rural voices and boost actions on the ground.

To show the viability of this new Community Group, research participants signed a letter of agreement committing to participation in such a network (*appendix 2*). This initiative has been developed as part of this policy paper and would be managed in the long term under the Rural Pact framework.



Interactive map

[Click here](#) to see the **Mockup**

B - Improve working conditions

B1 Strengthen social dialogue.²

In agriculture, the fragmentation of productive units and social partners, combined with the remoteness of productive areas, hinders the voluntary formation of a cohesive and functioning bargaining structure.

Coalitions of local actors, organised in LAGs and involving labour organisations, should promote social dialogue between relevant stakeholders at the local level. The 'Territorial Protocols' signed across Italy following the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding exemplifies how multi-stakeholder networks can bolster social dialogue at the local level. These protocols often bring together historic social partners such as workers and employers organisations, but also law enforcement agencies, NGOs, labour inspectorate offices, etc. This constellation allows cooperation on work-related issues such as health and safety and monitoring of lawful labour practices. The Italian protocols embody a best practice for other LAGs to emulate.

Moreover, the social conditionality clause introduced in recent CAP reforms offers a space for boosting social dialogue at the national level. Within the national implementation of this social conditionality, governments should encourage negotiations and regular meetings among representative social partners and other relevant stakeholders, including rural development actors. Going beyond contractual working conditions, governments should promote protocols concerning labour inspections, living conditions, and access to services, encompassing government and civil society organisations alike.

Change implementer: Social partners, LAGs.

Territorial Protocols as in Italy



labour inspections, living conditions, and access to services

B2 Bolster EU legislation to counter gang-mastering.

To date, Italy is the only member state to implement a law combating gang-mastering. Research participants highlighted the effectiveness of this law, enabling state officials to uncover and address cases of severe exploitation. EU-level legislation would allow for the reproduction of member state legislative practices that have proven effective.

Change implementer: European Commission to initiate legislation on the basis of point (b) of Article 153(2), in conjunction with points (c) and (f) of Article 153(1) TFEU thereof.

²According to the European Commission, **European social dialogue** refers to discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations representing the two sides of industry – employers and workers. It takes two main forms: a tripartite dialogue involving the public authorities or a bipartite dialogue between the European employers and trade union organisations. This takes place at cross-industry level and within sectoral social dialogue committees. It aims to ensure active participation of social partners in shaping the future of work and in building social justice, including through the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining and through a reflection on adequate minimum wages, whether statutory or negotiated.

B3 Expand the capacity of labour inspectorates.

As is widely recognized, strengthening the system of control and inspections by labour inspectorates is key to preventing and tackling abusive practices in the agricultural sector. Inspections help intercept and stop social dumping and unfair competition (EFFAT, 2021).

Echoing and integrating the actions advocated by several actors³, we recommend the adoption of an EU Directive on inspections that:

(i) imposes minimum standards for personnel numbers, training, and resources allocated for inspections;

(ii) introduces innovative and efficient inspection methods, given the great potential of data-driven technology to identify risk areas for labour exploitation⁴;

(iii) assigns new tasks and responsibilities to European Labour Authority (ELA), and/or reinforces existing ones, and in particular equips the ELA with its own trained task force of inspectors to support national efforts;

(iv) establishes the principle of 'a worker is a worker' (Keith & LeVoy, 2020) with a clear distinction

between labour inspections and law enforcement. Workers should not fear the threat of detention or even deportation as a result of raising a complaint or through labour inspections (EFFAT, 2021);

(v) promotes dialogue between labour enforcement and law enforcement authorities on the one hand, and civil society and trade unions on the other. This strategy can significantly support undocumented workers who want to report abuses (Keith & LeVoy, 2020; Schneider et al., 2020), especially since law enforcement authorities may not always be fully aware of protection initiatives in place for irregular migrants who are victims of exploitation.

system of control and inspections



'a worker is a worker'

Change implementer: European Commission to initiate legislation on the basis of point (b) of Article 153(2), in conjunction with points (c) and (f) of Article 153(1) TFEU thereof. [Social Protection Committee](#) with an advisory status, as per Article 160 TFEU, to monitor the social situation and the development of social protection policies in the member states and the Union and to coordinate the implementation of the proposed Directive.

³ This includes the European Federation of Food, Agriculture, and Tourism (EFFAT), Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), European Labour Authority (ELA), and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

⁴ For instance, the Italian 'Rete del lavoro agricolo di qualità' is a network of certified farms adhering to labour law. Joining the network exempts farms from inspections, and authorities can focus on high-risk areas. Another option is combining crop calendars and labour data to target interventions.



C - Improve living conditions in rural areas

C1 Invest in quality housing for seasonal agricultural workers.

We recommend financial incentives for local actors to improve the quality of existing abandoned or unused real estate to achieve decent living standards and promote community integration. This includes connecting hot water, providing internet access, and demoulding. Such improvements benefit not only workers, but also the community more broadly. The LAGs, inclusive of labour-oriented actors (*as envisioned in A1*), should play an active role in planning and implementing such projects. Generating viable housing alternatives and community spaces takes away one mechanism for gangmasters to exploit workers.

quality housing



Change implementer: LAGs.

C2 Install facilities to provide for basic human needs.

Rural areas should offer adequate housing and other facilities to improve workers' living conditions. Previous LAG projects used EU funds to renovate and [repurpose vacated real estate](#) in rural areas to create communal facilities such as kitchens, showers, laundry rooms, and recreation rooms. Where possible, these facilities should host shops and service providers, as well as on-site offices for NGOs, unions, governmental services, and the one-stop shop (*see action 2*). Importantly, local populations should also be able to access these services. Facilities should offer meeting and event spaces for local associations that bring together seasonal workers and full-time residents. Given the high cost and long-term maintenance required by this intervention, the successful implementation and sustainability of on-site facilities strongly depends on the capacity of LAGs.

on-site facilities



Change implementer: LAGs.



C3 Strengthen access to services in remote areas.

LAGs should implement translocal projects aimed at providing access to basic services. This includes legal support, health and safety campaigns, free check-ups, mental health services, and spaces for events and festivals. We recommend the widespread implementation of mobile one-stop shops to provide services to workers in the fields. Such initiatives help close the service gap for doubly marginalised populations, such as women and irregular migrants. The mobile one-stop shop should receive support from local institutions (i.e. regional governments, labour and trade unions, NGOs, labour inspectorates) to create a comprehensive and context-specific support structure for seasonal agricultural workers (*Firmato il protocollo, 2016*). In line with the EU call for digital transformation as enshrined in the 2030 Digital Compass, we envision an on-line platform augmenting existing, physical mobile one-stop shops. This platform would facilitate service delivery and reduce the harm caused by physical isolation (see Box 5)⁵.

physical mobile one-stop shops



Change implementer: LAGs.

⁵ The tool builds on existing apps directed at agricultural workers and developed by institutional and social actors in the field, namely: the Season@Work app by the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT), which provides information to workers in their preferred languages, the Hermes app by the Finnish Industrial Union (Teollisuusliitto) which offers information about work contracts, working and living conditions and migration regulations to both employers and employees, and the app Filiera Legale developed by social partners in the Italian region of Puglia, that helps people to secure and manage work assignments and offers information on transportation

ACTION 2

A platform to enhance the services of mobile one-stop shops

[FairFields](#) was created as an international and multilateral platform that (1) facilitates workers' access to services and (2) enables networking opportunities for organisations. This platform brings together workers, employers, local actors, municipal authorities, and institutions. In particular, local service providers can generate user-friendly profiles to connect with communities; workers can locate, contact, and access vital services; and local actors and organisations across the EU can connect to exchange information about common problems and forge translocal cooperations.



FairFields can support workers with:

- Legal information in non-technical language with the possibility to request further consultancy at the mobile one-stop shop;
- An anonymous grievance mechanism sent directly to labour unions, NGOs, local authorities, or labour inspectorates;
- A calendar to book medical examinations and therapy sessions;
- Information and services specifically targeting the needs of women, including support for victims of sexual abuse and those with caring responsibilities;
- Online trainings, workshops, and language lessons to enhance workers' skills, confidence, and independence;
- An encrypted forum where workers can exchange information and experiences amongst themselves;
- A community calendar to advertise local events and promote the integration of seasonal agricultural workers in the local context;
- A job platform to match workers with employers and reduce the scope of gang-mastering;
- A housing platform where locals can advertise accommodation.

C4 Improve public transport.

Improved transport connections for workers in remote areas reduces the negative impacts of social and physical isolation (*Martin, 2016*). This is especially important for women who face additional gender-based vulnerabilities when no public transport is available. We therefore recommend that local actors make arrangements with transport companies to provide seasonal public transport between the fields and housing centres. While it may serve the needs of seasonal agricultural workers directly, improving public transport in remote areas also contributes to rural development and improves full-time residents' quality of life (*Sánchez Rojas, 2016*). The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) for Transport (Cohesion Fund) has been used to support investments towards improving transport infrastructure and could be mobilised here.

improvement
of public
transport



Change implementer: LAGs.

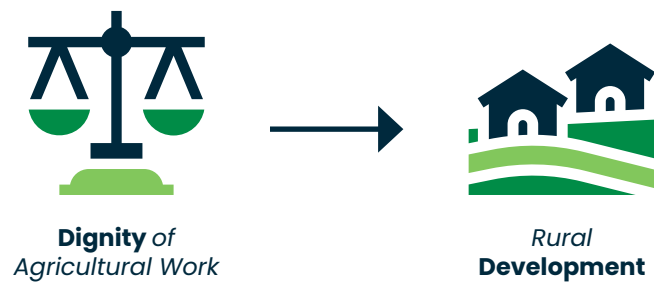
Conclusion

Rural development depends on the dignity of agricultural work, something which existing EU governance currently overlooks. To close this gap, the EU must address institutional shortcomings and improve agricultural workers' living and working conditions.

We propose 11 recommendations in these areas to facilitate cooperation between local actors, foreground the

importance of social dialogue, improve the effectiveness of European governance, and strengthen services for workers. These policy recommendations not only combat the precarity of agricultural work, but also revitalise rural economies and reduce their social and geographic isolation.

Rural development must go hand in hand with dignifying agricultural work in order to fulfil the vision of socioeconomic justice across the EU.



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The views expressed in this report are exclusively those of the authors and should not be attributed to any other person or institution. All errors that remain are the sole responsibility of the authors.



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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interviews

Nr.	Date	Organisation	Function	Location
1	07 Oct 2022	European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture, and Tourism Sectors and Allied Branches (EFFAT/IUF) (1)	Trade union	EU
2	07 Nov 2022	University of Salerno	Researcher	Italy
3	11 Nov 2022	Filiera Legale	European Project	Italy
4	21 Nov 2022	Flai-CGIL	Trade union	Italy
5	28 Nov 2022	Jornaleras Huelva en lucha	Women workers' NGO	Spain
6	28 Nov 2022	Südtiroler Bauernbund	Farmers union	Italy
7	29 Nov 2022	Faire Mobilität	Advisory Network to the German Federation of Trade Unions	Germany
8	06 Dec 2022	University of Bern	Researcher	Switzerland
9	21 June 2023	CIDAS	NGO	Italy
10	02 June 2023	Comisiones Obreras de Andalucía	Trade union	Spain
11	28 June 2023	International Labour Organisation	Specialist	Switzerland
12	14 July 2023	European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture, and Tourism Sectors and Allied Branches (EFFAT/IUF) (2)	Trade union	EU

Appendix 2: Letter of agreement

Please read the letter of agreement and the signatories by clicking on the following link: <https://fairfieldseu.org/letter-of-agreement/>.

Appendix 3: Survey respondents

The below table lists survey participation grouped by country.

Country	Nr. of LAGs contacted	Nr. of respondents	Response rate
Austria	77	9	12%
Belgium	32	6	19%
Bulgaria	72	0	0%
Croatia	68	8	12%
Cyprus	4	0	0%
Czech Republic	180	0	0%
Denmark	32	6	19%
Estonia	34	1	3%
Finland	65	14	22%
France	337	41	12%
Germany	348	24	7%
Greece	69	4	6%
Hungary	103	1	1%
Ireland	36	0	0%
Italy	235	36	15%
Latvia	37	6	16%
Lithuania	93	0	0%
Luxembourg	5	1	20%
Malta	3	1	33%
Netherlands	20	0	0%
Poland	324	17	5%
Portugal	74	1	1%
Romania	259	18	7%
Slovakia	110	1	1%
Slovenia	38	7	18%
Spain	284	35	12%
Sweden	50	4	8%
Total	2989	214	8

Note: the survey was administered in English, Italian, French and Spanish.



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Stephanie Arnold
University of Bologna

Alessia Aspide
Leiden University

Nil Barutel Gaspar
Pompeu Fabra University

Rose Campion
University of Oxford

Iris del Pino García Saavedra
Complutense University of Madrid

Hadil Louz
University of St Andrews

Claudia Marà
KU Leuven

Bradley Reynolds
University of Helsinki

Alena Zelenskaia
Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich

Teaching Fellow:

Dr Katerina Pantazatou
University of Luxembourg

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