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AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT



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International Union of Food, Agricultural,
Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco
and Allied Workers' Associations

Agricultural Workers and Their Contribution
to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

Agricultural Workers and Their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

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The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was founded in 1945 with a mandate to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living, to improve agricultural productivity and to better the condition of rural populations. It is today one of the larger specialized UN agencies and the lead agency for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and rural development.

To fulfil its mandate and objectives, the FAO has had a long history of cooperating with civil society organizations, including rural workers' organizations and international agricultural trade unions. This cooperation, particularly on the themes of food security and sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD), has been in two major areas: information exchange and policy dialogue with governments through regional and international consultations and the provision of technical development assistance to member countries.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) was established in 1919, and is a specialized agency of the United Nations. Its aim was to build a social framework for peace and stability within which economic processes could generate prosperity with social justice in the life of workers and in the world of work. The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Within the UN system, the ILO has a unique tripartite structure, with workers and employers participating as equal partners with governments in the work of its governing organs.

The ILO formulates international labour standards in the form of Conventions and Recommendations setting minimum standards of basic labour rights: freedom of association, the right to organize, collective bargaining, abolition of forced labour, equality of opportunity and treatment, and other standards regulating conditions across the entire spectrum of work-related issues.

The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) is an international federation of trade unions representing workers employed in

- agriculture and plantations
- the preparation and manufacture of food and beverages
- hotels, restaurants and catering services
- all stages of tobacco processing

The IUF is currently composed of 336 trade unions in 120 countries representing a combined membership of over 12 million workers. The IUF organizes workers throughout the global food chain or from “plough to plate”. It is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Preface

Agenda 21, the programme of action for the 21st century^I adopted by governments, intergovernmental organizations, major groups and other stakeholders at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992:

- enshrines the concept of sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) in Agenda 21, Chapter 14, and the related Chapters 10 and 13 on management of land resources and sustainable mountain development respectively;
- in Chapter 29 on Major Groups,^{II} commits to strengthen the role of workers and trade unions in sustainable development.

Agenda 21, Chapter 14 on sustainable agriculture and rural development, however, does not make explicit reference to waged agricultural workers or the trade unions that represent and organize them. This chapter speaks of “ensuring people's participation and promoting human resource development for sustainable development” and refers to the importance of promoting “greater public awareness of the role of people's participation and people's organizations, especially women's groups, youth, indigenous people, local communities and small farmers, in sustainable agriculture and rural development”; and the need “to strengthen and develop the management and the internal capacities of rural people's organizations and extension services and to decentralize decision-making to the lowest community level”.¹ The important role of trade unions in achieving sustainable development is recognized in Chapter 29 of Agenda 21, on Strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions in sustainable development. This chapter states that “as representatives of the workers, trade unions are vital actors in facilitating the achievement of sustainable development in view of their experience in addressing industrial change, the extremely high priority they give to protection of the working environment and the related natural environment”.²

Since waged agricultural workers make up such a significant segment of the rural workforce, workers and their trade unions need to be recognized as playing a vital role in sustainable agriculture and rural development as well as in industrial change and in protecting the environment.

In spite of these commitments, the 450 million women and men who labour as waged workers in agriculture, and who are at the heart of the commercial food production system, have been largely overlooked to date. These waged workers form over 40% of the world's agricultural labour force and, along with their families, they are part of the core rural poor in many countries. Waged agricultural workers do not own or rent the land on which they work, nor the tools and equipment they use. In these respects, they are a group distinct from farmers. Yet these workers remain invisible in terms of the goals, policies, programmes and activities to eliminate poverty and to strengthen the role of major civil society groups in promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD), world food security (WFS), and sustainable development (SD).

^I Agenda 21. United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, New York, 1995.
Website: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm>

^{II} The Agenda 21 Major Groups, whose roles in sustainable development should be strengthened, are: workers and their trade unions, farmers, business and industry, indigenous people and their communities, women, youth, non-governmental organizations, the scientific and technological community, and local authorities.

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. - FAO, World Food Summit Plan of Action (1996).

At recent major international summits, governments, intergovernmental organizations, trade unions, civil society organizations and other stakeholders have reaffirmed their commitments to promote SARD, WFS and SD, and linked these to the United Nations Millennium Goal of eradicating poverty and hunger:

- At the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002, these stakeholders' groups reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of Agenda 21 - globally and locally - and made recommendations to achieve SARD in the Plan of Implementation;
- At the World Food Summit: Five Years Later 2002, commitments to ending poverty and hunger and increasing world food security that were made at the World Food Summit 1996 were reaffirmed.

A key challenge from these Summits is to ensure full recognition of waged agricultural workers as a distinct occupational group; as workers who have much to contribute to sustainable agriculture, sustainable development and food security in terms of knowledge, skills and experience; and as a social group who must be empowered to tackle the poverty in which many of them live. The right of agricultural workers and small farmers to adequate food and sustainable livelihoods can only be achieved as part of a package of ensuring wider social and political rights. It is also important to recognize the role that trade unions can play in responding to this challenge.

This Report has been jointly produced by two United Nations bodies - the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with a global trade union federation, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). It aims to provide information, ideas, examples and suggestions to governments, intergovernmental organizations, development agencies, banks and credit institutions, trade bodies, the Major Groups and other stakeholders on how they can help increase the contributions of waged agricultural workers^{III} to sustainable agriculture^{IV} and rural development, world food security and sustainable development.

^{III} In this Report, for consistency, the word "worker" will be used uniquely to refer to employed persons who receive some kind of "wage", whilst the terms "workforce" or "labour force" will be used to refer to workers, self-employed farmers and other types of rural self-employed workers. The term "agricultural workers" is used in preference to "farmworkers" as it better reflects the broad nature of plantations, horticulture, primary agricultural processing and fish-farming, and recognizes that waged agricultural workers form part of the larger rural workforce.

^{IV} For the purpose of this Report, the term "agriculture" covers agricultural and forestry activities carried out in agricultural undertakings (including plantations), including crop production, forestry activities, animal husbandry and insect raising, the primary processing of agricultural and animal products by or on behalf of the operator of the undertaking as well as the use and maintenance of machinery, equipment, appliances, tools and agricultural installations, including any process, storage, operation or transportation in an agricultural undertaking, which are directly related to agricultural production. It is not an exclusive definition and others may choose to define it differently.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & RURAL DEVELOPMENT, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND FOOD SECURITY

Sustainable agriculture and rural development are integral and necessary components of sustainable development. Sustainable agriculture involves all three pillars of development - economic, social and environmental. It cannot be viewed merely or even primarily as farming systems that are technically able to maintain or increase yields while conserving their natural resource base. This is a common interpretation held by many international development organizations and practitioners, but one in which the aspect of equity goals tends to be forgotten. In practice, sustainable development, sustainable agriculture and food security are similar and overlapping concepts. Promoting both food security and sustainable agriculture implies dealing with the same issues.³

At the moment, however, these concepts are "buzzwords" which do not mean anything to the vast majority of grassroots agricultural workers or even many union officials and leaderships. The challenge is how to make these concepts real for agricultural workers and their trade unions.⁴

Agriculture and rural development are sustainable when they are ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, culturally appropriate, humane and based on a holistic scientific approach. SARD inherently addresses multiple sectors encompassing not just agriculture, but also water, energy, health and biodiversity. Since 1992 when, in Agenda 21, Chapter 14 of the section on SARD first outlined programmes and actions to enhance food security in a sustainable way, the concept of SARD has evolved to include social, institutional and economic sustainability, as well as environmental sustainability. This means that sustainable agriculture and rural development action programmes, including forestry, and fisheries must meet the nutritional requirements and other human needs of present and future generations, provide durable and decent employment, maintain and, where possible, enhance the productive and regenerative capacity of the natural resource base, reduce vulnerability and strengthen self-reliance.⁵

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Abbreviations

ACTRAV	: (ILO) Bureau for Workers' Activities
ADAS	: Agricultural Development and Advisory Service, UK
AFFLS	: (FAO) Adult Farmer Field and Life Schools
APABU	: Association of Agroecological Producers of Bella Union, Uruguay
BSE	: Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
CAC	: Codex Alimentarius Commission
CBA	: Collective bargaining agreement
CLI	: Crop Life International
COLSIBA	: Coordination of Latin America Banana Workers Unions
CNTC	: Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo, Chile
CONTAG	: Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura, Brazil
CSD	: (United Nations) Commission for Sustainable Development
CSO	: Civil society organization
ESAF	: (FAO) Food Security and Agricultural Project Analysis Unit
ETI	: Ethical Trading Initiative
ETUC	: European Trade Union Confederation
FAO	: (United Nations) Food and Agriculture Organization
FIAN	: Food First Information and Action Network
FES	: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
FLO	: Fairtrade Labelling Organization
GAWU	: General Agricultural and Workers Unions, Ghana
GIF	: Global Integrated Pest Management Facility
GDP	: Gross domestic product
GNP	: Gross national product
GUF	: Global union federation
HSE	: Health and Safety Executive, UK
HIV/AIDS	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICC	: International Code of Conduct (on Flowers)
ICFTU	: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IFAD	: (United Nations) International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	: International Flower Coordination
IFCS	: Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
IFPRI	: International Food Policy Research Institute
ILC	: International Land Coalition
ILO	: (United Nations) International Labour Organization
INDISCO	: ILO) Programme to Support Self-reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Through Cooperatives and Other Self-help Organizations
IP	: (FAO) Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme
IPEC	: (ILO) International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IPPM	: Integrated production and pest management
ISSA	: International Social Security Association
IUF Tobacco	: International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, and Allied Workers' Associations
JFFLS	: (FAO) Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools
KOMMUNAL	: Swedish Public Workers' Union
KPAWU	: Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union

LEAS	: Labour Environmental Alliance Society, Canada
MNE	: Multinational enterprise
NGO	: Non-governmental organization
NRI	: National Resources Institute, UK
NUCMAW	: National Union of Cooperative Movement and Allied Workers, Uganda
NUPAW	: National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers, Uganda
OATUU	: Organization of African Trade Union Unity
OECD	: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHSE	: Occupational health, safety and environment
PBKMS	: Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity, India
PAN	: Pesticides Action Network
PIC	: Prior informed consent
RENATRE	: Registro Nacional de Trabajadores Rurales y Empleadores, Argentina
RWO	: Rural workers' organization
SARD	: Sustainable agriculture and rural development
SD	: Sustainable development
SDW	: (FAO) Gender and Population Division
SEWA	: Self-Employed Women's Association, India
SiD	: Specialarbejderforbundet i Danmark - the Danish general workers' union.
SITRACHILCO	: Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Chiriquí Land Company y empresas afines (SITRACHILCO), Panama
SITRABI	: Sindicato de Trabajadores Bananeros de Izabal, Guatemala
SUDORA	: Sindicato Unico de Obreros Rurales y Agroindustriales, Uruguay
TGWU	: Transport and General Workers Union, UK
TNC	: Transnational Corporation
TPAWU	: Tanzanian Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union
TUAC	: Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD
UATRE	: Unión Argentina de Trabajadores Rurales e Estivadores, Argentina
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNCED	: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, 1992
UNCTAD	: United Nations Committee on Trade and Environment
UNEP	: United Nations Environment Programme
US	: United States (of America)
WCL	: World Confederation of Labour
WFP	: World Food Programme
WFTU	: World Federation of Trade Unions
WFS FYL	: World Food Summit Five Years Later 2002
WFS	: World Food Security
WHO	: (United Nations) World Health Organization
WSSD	: World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report on Agricultural Workers and their Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development focuses on the 450 million women and men who are employed as waged agricultural workers, and who are at the very heart of the food production system. Beyond forming the core of the rural poor, this workforce is disadvantaged in other respects. It is among the most socially vulnerable, the least organized into trade unions, is employed under the poorest health, safety and environmental conditions, and is the least likely to have access to effective forms of social security and protection.

The Report demonstrates that these waged agricultural workers - who account for over 40% of the total agricultural workforce - remain largely invisible to policy- and decision-makers in governments, agricultural and rural development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, science and research institutions, agricultural banks and credit institutions as well as to many civil society organizations and groups. They remain unrecognised in terms of goals, policies, programmes and activities to eliminate poverty, to strengthen labour standards and human rights, and to strengthen the role of civil society groups in promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) and world food security (WFS), as part of the general process of sustainable development (SD).

They are hardly ever mentioned in United Nations documentation outside of the International Labour Organization. If they are never mentioned:

- How can their needs as part of the core rural poor be assessed and programmes to eradicate their poverty and hunger be developed?
- How can their basic human rights be ensured?
- How can their contributions, actual and potential – to SARD, WFS and SD be assessed and strengthened?

This Report has been jointly produced by the FAO, ILO and IUF to promote recognition of this group of workers by policy- and decision makers. By providing data on the size and composition of the waged workforce, and those elements which are needed to ensure sustainable livelihoods for this occupational group, the Report shows how waged workers are a major and dynamic part of the agricultural workforce. Yet waged agricultural workers are different from farmers and need specific attention and resources in order to strengthen their role in sustainable agriculture. Farms and plantations cannot become sustainable workplaces if waged workers do not achieve decent employment and living conditions, and if they cannot participate in decisions that affect their lives and workplaces.

The Report shows that waged workers, and the trade unions that organise and represent them, already play important - if largely unacknowledged - roles in sustainable agriculture and rural development, food security and sustainable development. It argues that the contribution of agricultural workers and their trade unions to making food production and food security sustainable is potentially very large and virtually untapped. Agricultural workers are a talented and motivated group of workers who, given proper support, along with their trade unions, can work to improve their own livelihoods and those of their communities, who can help ensure

food safety and security for the wider community, and who can help put agriculture on a truly sustainable footing - economically, socially and environmentally.

The Report also recognises that waged agricultural workers and small farmers have many similar needs as well as common concerns related to food security, and sustainable agriculture and rural development. This is particularly the case for farmers who depend on wage income on a regular basis. Common needs and interests include:

- Fighting poverty: both waged agricultural workers and small farmers and their families form the core of the world's poor;
- Right of freedom of association and to form their own independent organizations; both groups would be able to articulate their concerns and needs more effectively by creating organizations such as trade unions;
- Improving health, safety and environmental conditions on farms and plantations: both groups work in one of the three most dangerous occupations globally.

The Report notes, however, that wage-dependent smallholders, despite representing a large share of farmers, are rarely addressed by agricultural programmes targeted at small farmers. Beyond livelihoods diversification and support to micro-enterprises, the need to increase smallholders' wages and improve working conditions is rarely taken into account in poverty eradication programmes and strategies.

The Report argues that as rural employment becomes increasingly casualized, the distinction between waged agricultural workers and the rest of the rural working population becomes less and less clear-cut. As a result, waged agricultural workers have become potential allies of disadvantaged rural groups such as small, subsistence farmers, tenants and sharecroppers, the unemployed and the landless. They are engaged in similar activities, share the same environment and often come from the same household. Although there are sometimes tensions and conflicts between these different actors, relations based on solidarity and mutual support can be developed as their interests converge to tackle common problems.

Part I of the Report looks in detail at the women and men who make up over 40% of the agricultural workforce. The women and men labour in the fields, orchards, glasshouses, livestock units and primary processing facilities to produce the world's food and fibres. They are waged workers, and distinct from farmers, because they do not own or rent the land on which they work nor the tools and equipment they use. They are employed on small- and medium-sized farms, including family farms, as well as large industrialized farms and plantations.

They work for some kind of 'wage' which can include payment 'in kind', under a variety of work arrangements, defined by a farmer, farming or plantation company, or agricultural contractor or subcontractor. These work arrangements are not always recognised as employment relationships, and often entail relationships of subordination and dependency. As a result, waged agricultural workers lack many rights and access to social protection, thereby increasing their vulnerability.

Even though the agricultural workforce as a whole is shrinking as more and more small farmers leave the land, the number of waged agricultural workers is growing in absolute and relative terms in most regions of the world. The number of

waged women workers is also rapidly increasing (they already account on average for 20-30% of the waged workforce). Therefore, gender differentiated activities will become increasingly important for the waged workforce.

Waged agricultural workers may be full-time, seasonal, temporary or casual, migrants, indigenous workers, or piece-rate workers, or a combination of these. Sadly, child labourers, employed as cheap labour, also form part of the “waged” workforce. Over 150 million children, under 18 years of age, work in many of the poorest paid and often dangerous tasks. Many small farmers are also 'wage-dependent', working regularly on farms or plantations to supplement their basic incomes. In reality, they are part waged worker, part farmer though this condition is frequently overlooked in agricultural development policies and poverty elimination programmes.

In Part II, the Report examines what employers, governments, agricultural and rural development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, science and research institutions, agricultural banks and credit institutions, civil society organizations and others must do to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of waged agricultural workers.

Examples of how waged agricultural workers, as workers and as citizens, are already contributing to SARD, food security and sustainable development are provided in Part III. It describes how trade unions support waged agricultural workers and help to increase their contributions. The examples demonstrate how workers and trade unions are meeting the challenges through new forms of interaction, cooperation, and partnerships.

The Report concludes with a set of recommendations, some of which are specifically addressed to the FAO and ILO, to ensure that conditions of decent work and fair employment prevail in agricultural industries, and that basic human rights in this sector are respected. Implementing these recommendations would help to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development by ensuring that waged workers, along with small farmers, can feed and clothe themselves and their families, and produce good quality, safe and affordable food for communities and consumers worldwide.



PART I:

WAGED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

1. Who are they?^v

Waged agricultural workers are the women and men who labour in the crop fields, orchards, glasshouses, livestock units, and primary processing facilities to produce the world's food and fibres. They are employed on small- and medium-sized farms as well as large industrialized farms and plantations. They are waged workers because they do not own or rent the land on which they work nor the tools and equipment they use and so are a group distinct from farmers.

Such workers do not form a homogeneous group. Their terms and conditions of employment vary tremendously, creating diverse categories: permanent (full-time) agricultural workers; temporary or casual agricultural workers; seasonal agricultural workers; migrant agricultural workers, piece-rate workers; or workers receiving some form of 'in-kind' payment. There are also many indigenous agricultural workers who are part of the employed workforce. Agricultural workers work for some kind of 'wage', whether cash payment, in kind payment, or a combination of these. They work within an employment relationship, be it with a farmer, farming or plantation company, or labour contractor or sub-contractor.⁶

The demand for agricultural labour fluctuates with the seasons and this is reflected in the nature of the workforce. Hours of work tend to be extremely long during planting and harvesting, with shorter hours at off-peak times. During rush periods, field work can go from dawn to dusk, with transport time to and from the fields in addition. The intensity of the work offers little chance for rest breaks; the length of the working day offers insufficient time for recuperation. Payment systems can exacerbate this situation. As minimum wages tend to be low or non-existent for agricultural workers in general and many casual, temporary or seasonal workers are paid at least in part on a piece work basis - i.e. per kilo of crop picked, row weeded, or hectare sprayed, there is a strong financial incentive for them to extend their working time to the maximum so as to enhance their earnings.

Much agricultural work is by its nature physically demanding, involving long periods of standing, stooping, bending, and carrying out repetitive movements in awkward body positions. The risk of accidents is increased by fatigue, poorly designed tools, difficult terrain, exposure to the elements and poor general health. Even when technological change has brought about a reduction in the physical drudgery of agricultural work, it has introduced new risks, notably associated with the use of sophisticated machinery and the intensive use of chemicals often without appropriate safety measures, information and training. Unsurprisingly, the level of fatal and serious accidents and illness is high. Yet, agricultural workers are among the least well protected in terms of access to health care, workers' compensation, long-term disability insurance and survivors' benefits.

^v Although the various categories of the agricultural workforce and the organizations that represent them have distinguishing features, there is a certain amount of overlap among them. Many of the concepts presented here are working definitions drawn from the definitions used by the organizations that are represented and have contributed to this Report. They reflect the present state of debate.

1.1 Full time, permanent workers

Full-time, permanent agricultural workers receive more job security, relatively higher wages, better housing and better health and work benefits than do other waged agricultural workers. However, this does not mean that such workers are well-paid relative to the average wage levels in a given country. Wages in rural areas, both in cash terms and in real terms, are generally lower than in cities, and the hours of work are longer.

Many full-time workers in agriculture live on or below the poverty line. Permanent contracts are the least common form of contract and their share in total agricultural employment has been declining in most countries.⁷ There is a trend away from full-time employment to more casual and seasonal employment, often referred to as the "casualization" or "flexibilization" of employment, with little or no social protection.

1.2 Casual, temporary and seasonal workers

The majority of waged agricultural workers in most developing countries and in some developed countries are employed on a seasonal and often a casual or temporary basis. Casual work refers to those employed and paid at the end of each day worked or on a task basis. Temporary work refers to those employed for a specific but limited period of time. Most seasonal, casual or temporary workers do not receive any form of social security or unemployment benefit, holidays with pay, or sickness or maternity leave. Indeed, many full-time waged agricultural earners lack these same benefits.

An increasing number of women workers are employed as casual or temporary workers. Furthermore, jobs are often classed as casual or temporary even if there is in reality continuous employment. The practice of rotating individual workers so as to deny them the benefit of permanent employment status is also quite prevalent.⁸



In the cut flower industry, for example, data provided by the Ugandan National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers⁹ affirms that the majority of casual workers are women. Over 70% of this workforce is casually employed without job

security and other benefits such as annual leave. The women workers are mostly employed in harvesting and in the grading sections. A full-time worker is paid a total package of 70,000 Uganda shillings (\$35 US) per month while a casual worker earns 1,500 Uganda shillings per day (75 cents US). The trend towards casual and temporary labour is encouraged by, amongst other factors, unpredictable weather conditions, unstable market demand for produce, and labour laws which require that certain benefits, such as notice pay, leave allowances, and medical attention, be provided to seasonal and permanent employees.

To counter this development towards casual and temporary labour, unions in the plantation sector in many countries such as, for example, Kenya, have worked to include provisions in collective bargaining agreements limiting the length of time during which employees may be engaged on a seasonal, casual or temporary basis.¹⁰

1.3 Migrant workers

Migrant workers are found in all types of employment relationships as casual, temporary, seasonal or even full-time workers. They may be migrant workers from a different part of a country, or foreign workers. Wherever they come from, migrant workers are always heavily disadvantaged in terms of pay, social protection, housing and medical protection.

Globalization and structural adjustment have transformed agriculture in many countries into an export-oriented sector heavily dependent on migrant labour. According to a trade union consultation on Irregular Migration and Human Trafficking in Europe, 2003, it is essentially the power of the large supermarket chains that forces farmers to produce at very low cost. Farmers respond to the pressure by decreasing their labour costs, thus passing the burden on to the workers. Low pay and status for hard work is not attractive for the national workforce. Therefore farmers rely increasingly on migrant labour. In some areas, such as in the Almeria region of Spain, more than 90% of workers in agriculture are immigrants.¹¹

Labour migration is one of the major consequences of growing work flexibility, casual employment, low pay, bad working conditions and poverty. This labour mobility is very significant throughout the world.¹²

The migrant labour force often consists in reality of whole families, although formally only the head of the family is employed. In many countries, children of migrant and seasonal workers work next to their parents but do not figure on the payroll. As much work is paid on a "piece-rate" basis, migrant and seasonal workers need their children to work in order to achieve a living wage.¹³

1.4 Indigenous rural workers

Indigenous agricultural workers form part of the agricultural workforce in many countries. Having been forced off their own lands, they often end up as agricultural workers, usually under poor employment and working conditions.

In many countries in Latin America, for example, the living and working conditions of indigenous workers and their families are below the average for workers belonging to what is referred to as the "predominant society", including non-indigenous

rural workers. These differences are evident in access to education, social security, levels of trade union membership, salaries and occupational health and safety.¹⁴

1.5 **Lack of standardization of definitions of categories of workers**

These categories of waged workers often overlap. The lack of standardization of definitions impacts on accurate calculation of the number of workers. For example, farmers in the Western Cape, South Africa, who employed women workers, differentiated between permanent, seasonal and temporary or casual workers. However, definitions of permanent workers differed greatly and many farmers defined casual workers as seasonal and vice versa. There was in fact little consistency in terms from farm to farm, or within a sector or region.¹⁵

1.6 **Wage-dependent small farmers**

Many small farmers regularly work on a farm or plantation for part of the year to supplement their meagre incomes. Their annual income depends on waged work as a regular source of revenue. In reality, they are part farmer/part waged worker. A 1998 study of the Mexican agricultural labour market, for example, estimated that as many as 4.8 million farmers, forming 78.3% of the rural labour force, were engaged as waged workers for at least part of the year.¹⁶

This phenomenon of wage-dependent smallholders, though well-known, rarely forms part of agricultural programmes to empower small farmers. The need to increase smallholders' wages and improve working conditions is rarely taken into account in poverty eradication programmes and strategies.

1.7 **Developing links between waged agricultural workers and small farmers**

There are many common issues in sustainable agriculture and rural development, and food security affecting waged agricultural workers and small farmers and many similarities in their needs and roles, especially where farmers are regularly wage-dependent. Similar interests include, for example, the right of freedom of association and organization (see Part II, section 2.1.1) and improving health, safety and environmental conditions on farms and plantations (see Part II, section 2.8).



As rural employment becomes increasingly casualized, the distinction between waged agricultural workers and the rest of the rural working population becomes less and less clear-cut. As a result, waged agricultural workers have become potential allies of disadvantaged rural groups such as small, subsistence farmers, tenants and sharecroppers, the unemployed and the landless. They are engaged in similar activities, share the same environment and often come from the same household. Although there are sometimes tensions and conflicts between these different actors, relations based on solidarity and mutual support can be developed as their interests converge and common strategies are elaborated to tackle common problems.

The potential links can be illustrated by the case of a sugar plantation and processing facility in Kenya managed by a multinational enterprise (MNE). This sugar company employs 3,200 permanent employees on its own nucleus plantation, but contracts, buys in and processes sugar from a network of 65,000 outgrowers, i.e. small farmers, grouped under their own company. The two entities - the sugar company and the outgrower network - are totally interdependent.¹⁷

1.8 Child labourers in agriculture

Child labour is a worldwide phenomenon. An estimated 218 million children¹⁸ around the world carry out work that harms their well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Child labour is work which, by its nature and/or the way it is carried out, harms, abuses and exploits the child or deprives the child of an education.¹⁹ Child labour takes many different forms, and whilst the long-term goal is the elimination of all forms of such labour, a priority is to eliminate without delay the worst forms of child labour as defined by the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182). In this Convention, the term “child” applies to all persons under the age of 18.

Seventy per cent of all child labourers work in agriculture. While many children have traditionally been employed in family enterprises, children also work in large-scale commercial plantations and in agriculture as migrant farm workers. They usually work alongside their parents, often in situations of indirect employment where only the head of the family is actually employed, but where he or she is paid according to the amount of fruit or vegetables that are turned in at the end of the day. With more hands to help, the family makes more money.²⁰ Participating in home-based agriculture helping the family is a completely different situation from working during harvesting on a piece-rate basis, as a member of a migrant worker's family in a foreign country. These migrant children work long hours, sometimes over 60 hours a week.²¹

In the Philippines, for example, child labourers work 10 hours per day from Monday through Saturday with only short breaks and half a day on Sunday. The children earn less than one dollar daily. They weed, cultivate, turn soil, fix canals, harvest and apply pesticides. Children weed, cut cane and apply fertilizers on sugar plantations. Sometimes, they are as young as 7-8 years old and begin to cut the cane at age 12. Children are injured by using sharp knives, and are poisoned by the use of dangerous fertilizers.²²

Hazardous child labour

An estimated 126 million children aged 5-17 - in all economic sectors - work in dangerous, hazardous conditions that could result in them being killed or injured (often permanently) and/or made ill (often permanently). Work which results in children being killed, injured or made ill as a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working conditions/arrangements is called “hazardous child labour”.²³ Child labourers in agriculture are especially at risk, as agriculture is one of the three most hazardous sectors in which to work, along with construction and mining.²⁴ (see Part II, section 2.8) Children's work is often invisible, because they assist their parents in task or piecework. Because this work is not recognized, nor easily recorded in statistics, it goes largely unnoticed, and is not taken into account in policy-making.



An estimated 22,000 children are killed every year at work in all sectors. No figures for child accidents or ill-health due to work for any sector are currently available. But every year there are 270 million work accidents and 160 million cases of ill-health due to work, and child labourers figure amongst these statistics. The risks arising from hazards in the workplace are much greater for children. They are more vulnerable due to a variety of factors including:²⁵

- Lack of work experience.
- Lack of knowledge about hazards and risks, and on risk prevention and control measures.
- Children's bodies are still growing and their minds developing. Frequent awkward or heavy lifting and repetitive strains, for example, can permanently injure growing spines or limbs, especially if poorly designed equipment is being used. Skin, eye, respiratory or nervous problems occur in children exposed to pesticides, and children are vulnerable to much lower levels of exposure than adults. There may well be chronic long-term health effects from exposure to pesticides that will not show up until the child is an adult.
- Children may also experience conflict because they are expected to work like adults, whilst still behaving obediently.

The aim is the elimination of hazardous child labour, with no child under 18 undertaking hazardous work, with very limited exemptions for young workers, aged 16-17 - for training purposes. (see section 1.9 below).

Child labour and sustainable agriculture and food security

The prevalence of child labour in agriculture also undermines decent work, sustainable agriculture and food security as it maintains a cycle where household income is insufficient to meet the needs of families. Children work as cheap labour because their parents do not earn enough to support the family or to send their children to school. Working children represent a plentiful source of cheap labour. Child labour undermines the bargaining power of agricultural workers and their trade unions and weakens the possibility of negotiating a fair and decent wage for adult workers.²⁶

Measures have to be taken to improve workers' wages and farmers' incomes so that their children are not obliged to work to try and help get their families enough to live on. Improving conditions for waged agricultural workers will in the long term reduce child labour by ensuring that workers have the economic means to support their families.

The overall aim is to eliminate child labour and to provide quality education for children and more and better jobs for their parents. Waged agricultural workers, farmers and their organizations have vital roles to play in helping to realize these aims.

1.9 Young workers

Article 16 of the ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No.184) states that "the minimum age for assignment to work in agriculture which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried is likely to harm the safety and health of young persons shall not be less than 18 years".

However, national laws or regulations or the competent authority may, after consultation with the representative organizations of employers and workers concerned, authorize the performance of work as from 16 years of age on condition that appropriate prior training is given and the safety and health of the young workers are fully protected.



1.10 The "employment relationship"

The "employment relationship" involved in the different forms of waged employment is often complex and difficult to understand, especially where casual labour is employed or labour is supplied through labour contractors (see Part II, section 2.4).

The employment relationship is a notion which creates a legal link between a person called the "employee" and another person called the "employer" to whom she or he provides labour or services under certain conditions in return for remuneration.²⁷ The concept of an employment relationship is common to all legal systems and traditions but the obligations, rights and entitlements associated with it vary from country to country.

One of the consequences associated with changes in the structure of the labour market, the organization of work and the deficient application of the law is the growing phenomenon of workers who are in fact employees but find themselves without the protection of an employment relationship. This form of false self-employment is more common in less formalized economies. However, many countries with well-structured labour markets are also experiencing an increase in this phenomenon. Some of these developments are new; some have existed for many decades.

Changes in the structure of the labour market and in the organization of work are leading to changing patterns of work both within and outside the framework of the employment relationship. In some situations, it may be unclear whether the worker is an employee or genuinely self-employed.

Disguised employment occurs when the employer treats a person who is an employee as other than an employee so as to hide her or his true legal status. False self-employment, false subcontracting, the establishment of pseudo-cooperatives, false provision of services and false company restructuring are amongst the most frequent means that are used to disguise the employment relationship. The effect of such practices can be to deny labour protection to the worker and to avoid costs that may include taxes and social security contributions.²⁸

An ambiguous employment relationship exists whenever work is performed or services are provided under conditions that give rise to an actual and genuine doubt about the existence of an employment relationship. In an increasing number of cases, it is very difficult to distinguish between dependent and independent work, even where there is no intent to disguise the employment relationship. In this respect, it is acknowledged that in many areas the distinction between employees and independent workers has become blurred. One of the characteristics of some new forms of work is the autonomy or greater independence of employees. Clarity and predictability in the law are in the interests of all concerned. Workers and employers should know their status and, consequently their respective rights and obligations under the law.

It is in the interest of all the labour market actors to ensure that the wide variety of arrangements under which work is performed or services are provided by a worker can be put within an appropriate legal framework. Clear rules are indispensable for fair governance of the labour market.

2. Why focus on waged agricultural workers?

Key points

Waged agricultural workers are a very large occupational group.

- There are an estimated 450 million waged agricultural workers out of a total workforce in agriculture of some 1.1 billion. They account in fact for over 40% of the total agricultural labour force and play a major role in feeding the world and in fibre production.
- Waged employment is now a central feature of employment in rural areas, and the number of waged workers is increasing in most regions of the world.
- Women waged agricultural workers account generally for 20-30% of the waged workforce, rising to 40% in Latin America and the Caribbean. The numbers of women in waged employment are also increasing in most regions. New jobs are usually in export-orientated agriculture like cut flowers and vegetable growing and packing. These jobs are often classed as temporary or seasonal even if there is, in reality, continuous employment.
- Waged workers are often poorly paid, with wages well below those earned by industrial workers. They and their families often live below the poverty line, and they form part of the core rural poor in many parts of the world. Millions of these workers earn the lowest wages in the rural sector, lower even than the amount required to subsist.
- Their employment is often unstable and temporary. Employment problems have increased as the impact of globalization has led to less and less permanent labour and a more casualized and marginalized workforce (often hired through labour contractors or subcontractors). Migrant workers face particular difficulties.
- Working and living conditions are often poor.
- Agricultural workers earn their living in an industry ranked as one of the three most hazardous along with mining and construction. They face a wide variety of hazards at work ranging from, for example, dangerous machinery, unsafe electrical wiring and appliances, livestock-transmitted diseases and falls from heights, to exposure to toxic pesticides. Every year, large numbers of waged agricultural workers and farmers are killed (170,000 in 1997 according to ILO estimates), injured or made ill as a result of their work.
- In many parts of the world, agricultural workers are denied fundamental human rights: the rights to freedom of association, to organize and to collectively bargain with employers. Rural workers are more subject to forced labour than other categories of workers. Yet decent conditions of work and respect for the fundamental rights of agricultural workers are essential to sustainable development.
- Agricultural workers in many countries are typically excluded from active participation in decision-making processes with employers and government.
- HIV/AIDS is also devastating the agricultural labour force in many parts of the world. HIV/AIDS is a workplace issue. The disease not only affects the workforce, but also results in loss of agricultural productive capacity, undermining farms, plantations and the national economy.
- The prevalence of child labour in agriculture undermines sustainable agriculture and food security as it maintains a cycle where household income is insufficient to meet the needs of families. Most children work because their parents do not earn enough to support the family and to send them to school.

3. Workers and their trade unions in agriculture and the food industry/food chain

A trade (or labour) union is an organization created and run by workers to protect and promote their livelihoods and labour rights in workplaces. A free trade union is independent of patronage. It is not a workers' organization established openly or secretly by an employer to control the actions or demands of the workers or an organization promoted by the elite or the authorities for the same purposes. Through collective bargaining (see Part II, section 2.2) with employers, trade unions work to improve their members' remuneration and conditions of work, and to ensure their security of employment. Unions also lobby and work with governments to maintain and improve labour rights, standards and policies.²⁹

Workers' membership dues provide the financial basis of unions. Union policies are democratically decided at conferences and congresses by delegates elected by the members. Unions also provide workers with a means of expressing their views on wider societal, economic, ethical and political issues.



The trade unions, federations and confederations found in agriculture include:

3.1 National level

- National agricultural trade unions having a membership composed solely of agricultural workers on commercial farms and plantations. This type of union is normally found in developing countries where agriculture is still the dominant economic activity. Such unions may organize workers across all agricultural sectors, or only have membership in specific crop sectors, e.g. tea, sugar, tobacco. These unions are often the largest workers' organization in a country. Plantation agriculture is often synonymous with large unions. Examples include the National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers in Uganda, and the Kenya Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union in Kenya.
- National general workers' unions bring together members from different industrial and commercial sectors and they are found in countries where the size of the agricultural workforce is relatively small. Waged agricultural workers form sections or trade groups within these large general unions. Such unions are often found in developed countries. Examples include the agricultural workers' sections of Kommunal in Sweden, SiD in Denmark and the Transport and General Workers in the UK.

- There are also agricultural trade unions which are hybrid organizations representing both agricultural wage earners and self-employed farmers. For example, CONTAG in Brazil has some 9 million members (3 million waged workers and 6 million smallholders). Such unions usually have separate organizational and political structures for dealing with the dual types of membership. Sometimes the relationship between the two types of membership in the same organization is not easy, especially where small farmer members also employ waged labour.
- National trade unions - whether agriculture-specific, general or hybrid - usually affiliate to, or in some cases are part of, a national trade union centre. A national centre represents unions organizing workers across different industrial and commercial sectors. There may be more than one national centre in a country.
- Some agricultural unions are organized on a federal state basis such as, for example, in India.
- In some countries, labour laws confine unions to organizing in one company. An example of this is the banana union SITRABI in Guatemala.

3.2 International and regional levels

National unions may affiliate on a sectoral basis to global union (labour) federations such as the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). The IUF is a network of 336 national affiliated unions organizes workers on farms and plantations, in food and drink manufacturing companies, in hotels, restaurants, and tourism and catering services around the world. The IUF has targeted six major crops - bananas, cocoa, coffee, (cut) flowers, sugar and tea - for developing links between unions along the food chain and bringing together workers in all stages of the production process.

Global union federations work in turn with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which is made up of national trade union centres. The ICFTU has 233 affiliated organizations in 154 countries and territories on all five continents, with a membership of 148 million workers. It has three major regional organizations, APRO for Asia and the Pacific, AFRO for Africa, and ORIT for the Americas. It also maintains close links with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Global Union Federations.

Two other international trade union organizations made up of national centres also exist. The World Confederation of Labour (WCL) is an international trade union confederation uniting 144 autonomous and democratic trade unions from 116 countries with over 26 million members. Its head office is located in Brussels, Belgium. (WCL 2004). Merger talks are now underway between the ICFTU and WCL to create a new international trade union organization. The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) is located in Prague.

3.3 Union organization in transnational corporations in agriculture and along the food chain

Global union federations such as the IUF represent and organize workers in large multinational enterprises (also referred to as transnational corporations, TNCs for short) in agriculture and along the food chain in food and drink processing companies, catering services, restaurants and hotels/tourist facilities, and in retail and wholesale distribution.

National and regional trade unions through their international federations can play important roles in working with such multinational enterprises (MNEs) and monitoring their performance and progress, especially in respect of labour standards, on moving towards sustainable agriculture.

3.4 Levels of trade union organization in agriculture

The level of trade union representation among agricultural workers, and particularly workers who are not permanent, is generally low in most countries, and particularly among women agricultural labourers.³⁰ Data on agricultural trade union membership are far from comprehensive.

There are many reasons why agricultural workers remain poorly organized. Some of these difficulties are practical or financial, e.g. difficulties of organizing over large geographical areas, lack of transport for organizers, low membership dues resulting in only basic union services, and so on.

Often however legal and administrative barriers are placed in the way of workers wishing to exercise their basic human right to freedom of association by becoming unionized and joining the union of their choice. In Turkey, for example, the labour laws were only modernized in 2003 to cover agricultural workers. However, each new union membership application has to be approved by the public notary, for which a substantial fee is charged. This requirement makes it costly for unions, especially poor agricultural ones, to recruit members, and is an obstacle to freedom of association.³¹ The situation is even more critical for indigenous workers who are often denied the legal capacity to set up or join such organizations.³²

The fundamental right of both employers and workers to establish and join organizations of their own choosing as a means of defending their interests and improving their conditions is enshrined in the principle of freedom of association as expressed in the ILO Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No.11) and the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No.87). Both these Conventions are part of the ILO International Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. (see Part II, section 2.1). The ILO Rural Workers' Organizations Convention, 1975 (No.141) also seeks to extend the principle of freedom of association to those working in agriculture.

However, violations of freedom of association among those working in agriculture are frequent, as evidenced by cases examined by the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.^{VI} Such violations range from regulatory restrictions and practical impediments to physical assaults and the assassination of trade union leaders and officials in rural areas. Cases of forced and bonded labour involving agricultural workers in a number of countries in several regions have been examined regularly by the Committee of Experts. The ICFTU also publishes an annual survey of violations of trade union rights around the world.³³

Furthermore, waged workers engaged by labour contractors or subcontractors often face difficulties in registering as union members. This is causing growing concern, due to the increasing numbers of workers hired by these labour-supplying intermediaries (see Part II, section 2.4).

^{VI} See the reports of the Committee on Freedom of Association published in the ILO Official Bulletin.



PART II

ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Some of the key elements of sustainable livelihoods for waged agricultural workers are discussed in Part II. These include:

1. The agricultural labour market and its changing nature

Labour markets play a key role in determining employment and income levels in rural areas. While agriculture cannot be expected to absorb all of the rural labour force, its direct contribution to the generation of employment, including wage employment, and its indirect contribution through greater diversification of the economy, are critical.³⁴

Access to labour markets is particularly important for many of the rural poor as hiring out their labour power may be their sole source of income. Often, the only asset possessed by waged agricultural workers is their labour. Hence the importance of improving the functioning of rural labour markets as this is the only effective way of improving the productivity of their main asset, and therefore livelihoods of the rural poor.³⁵

1.1 Trends in waged employment, wages and poverty

The three major trends in agricultural labour markets in the 1980s and early 1990s, reflected in data collected by the International Labour Organization (ILO), have been:

- a) an increase in the share of agricultural waged employment in total rural economic activity;
- b) an increase in the share of women in agricultural waged employment;
- c) growing casualization of agricultural waged labour.

1.1.1 Waged employment

There are more workers in waged employment in agriculture today than at any time. The share of waged employment in agriculture, including the number of wage-dependent smallholders in agriculture, is continuing to increase in virtually all regions, and it is now a central feature of employment and income in rural areas.³⁶ In other words, as the agricultural sector is undergoing a process of concentration of ownership, leading to fewer and bigger farms with a higher number of waged workers - as opposed to a sector based on smaller production units and self-employed farmers - waged workers become central to agricultural production.

In 1996, the highest average shares of waged employment were found in Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia (over 80%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (over 50%), Asia (over 40%) and sub-Saharan Africa (30%), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries (35%) and Near East and North Africa (25%).³⁷

Also, the share of wage employment seems to move inversely with the share of the agricultural labour force - that is, the smaller the labour force in agriculture, the higher the share of waged employment. As the economy absorbs more labour in

other sectors, and the agricultural labour force shrinks, production units in agriculture are transformed from small family holdings to large units relying on wage labour; in other words, the number of smallholders decreases.³⁸

1.1.2 Women and waged employment

Significantly, the share of women waged agricultural workers has also been rising in all regions and women now account for 20-30 percent of total agricultural wage employment. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the figure is 40%.³⁹ In African countries, this percentage is likely to be higher; however reliable data are difficult to obtain given the prevalence of informal labour arrangements.

A study by Indian trade unions of the impacts of globalization on agricultural workers confirms the increasing feminisation of the workforce. Male workers have shown a greater tendency to migrate to non-agricultural work. Women have replaced them. The unions observe that landowners also seem to prefer women workers, as they are able to pay them less and find them a docile and dependent workforce. Thus, wage discrepancies between men and women have continued.⁴⁰

Increasing employment opportunities and higher levels of employment and earnings for women (not uniquely in agriculture) are critical for empowerment and food security. A study in the Latin American and Caribbean region demonstrates that increasing the share of women's income in the household considerably improves family and social welfare, given women's likelihood to invest more than men would in children's potential as human capital. Increasing women's earnings and share of family income has also been shown to empower women by strengthening their bargaining power in the household. Women's earnings are especially important, given the growing number of households headed by females.⁴¹



1.1.3 Casualization

The worldwide trend towards casualization of work, brought on in large measure by deregulation, globalization and competitive pressure to reduce labour and production costs, is changing the nature of agricultural employment in many parts of the world. Global trade and economic pressures are eroding the already low levels of protection of agricultural workers in terms of wage levels, employment security, health, safety and environmental standards and social protection.⁴²

Casualization means there is a trend away from permanent employment contracts and workers are increasingly being employed as temporary or casual labour on short-term, daily or seasonal contracts with poorer pay and working conditions. There is also a developing trend by agricultural employers towards outsourcing of work - that is, the process of relocating outside the enterprise the production processes previously carried out in-house.⁴³

The most serious problem is that of labour hired through or by contractors. This mainly applies to casual workers, especially migrants. Employers, who need to be able to count upon a supply of labour in periods of peak demand, increasingly call on the services of labour contractors specialized in the recruitment, transport and management of waged agricultural workers. This process involving middlemen undermines the whole employment relationship, creating a grey area around the employer's responsibilities and leading to a disregard for labour legislation. Conditions of employment are generally insecure and the labour contractors frequently abuse their authority over the workers by asking for commissions, overcharging for transport, housing and food, holding back wages and imposing debt slavery.⁴⁴

Most agricultural trade unions in India see the present global restructuring of the economy as a continuation of the commercialization of agriculture that has been taking place since the 1960's.⁴⁵ They see the most significant impact of globalization on agricultural workers as their displacement from work and livelihood. This has happened due to the adoption of labour-displacing mechanization and other new technologies and changes in crop patterns, with less labour-intensive crops.

1.1.4 Underemployment/unemployment/hidden unemployment

Unemployment and underemployment in rural areas are also major causes of poverty among waged agricultural workers and are regular and significant features of their lives. If full employment is assumed to be 260 days per year (52 five-day weeks, excluding leave and holidays), waged agricultural workers typically find employment for 175 days and are available for work (i.e. unemployed) for 85, with little income to sustain them between seasons.⁴⁶ These large pools of unemployed or underemployed labour keep down wages locally.

Another feature of rural labour markets is the high incidence of hidden unemployment, which is the underestimation of unemployment levels in labour statistics, where only those who are "actively looking for work" are counted as unemployed. As rural labour markets are generally not functioning smoothly, information is imperfect and transaction costs are high. There is a tendency for those who are not in employment to give up looking for jobs, and for the employed to work for less time that they would like.

1.2 Sustainable agriculture and labour markets

A key question concerns the impact of adoption of sustainable agriculture practices on employment generation and labour markets. More data and further research are needed as there is only very limited evidence of either positive or negative impacts at present. A research survey of sustainable agricultural practices worldwide by Essex University, UK demonstrates that such practices can have a significant impact on labour markets. Some sustainable agricultural practices resulted in increased on-farm demand for labour (e.g. water harvesting in Niger); others actually reduced labour demand (e.g. zero-tillage in Brazil); some resulted in the opening up of whole new seasons for agricultural production, particularly in dryland contexts, through improved harvesting of rainfall, leading to much greater demand for labour. Reverse migration, from urban to rural areas, could also occur when waged labour opportunities increased through sustainable practices (e.g. watershed improvements), when more productive agriculture led to higher wages and employment, when there were higher returns to agriculture, and when there were overall improvements in village conditions, such as infrastructure and services.⁴⁷

The real issue therefore is whether sustainable agriculture practices can be used to redress imbalances in labour supply and demand, and whether they can raise labour productivity. It is important to stress that, given the marked gender division of labour in some agricultural tasks, an evaluation of sustainable practices' impact on labour requires an analysis of the differential impact on men and women. This is because a technology determining savings or increased use of labour could have a different impact on men's and women's workload, depending on who will end up carrying out the tasks that are reduced/increased/substituted with the adoption of a new sustainable agriculture practice.

1.3 Wages

The work that waged agricultural workers do is often badly paid and as a result many live below the poverty line. Also, there is a large gap between the average earnings of industrial workers and their agricultural counterparts.

For example, data from Kenya showed that in 2000, agriculture and forestry offered wage employment to 311,000 workers out of a total regular waged workforce of 1,676,800 nationwide. Agriculture and forestry contributed more than 8.1% of the total wage earnings in 2000. However, wage earnings per employee in private sector agriculture and forestry were the lowest of any sector. At Kenya shillings (Ksh) 66,000 per annum, average wage earnings for employees in agriculture were less than 40% of average wage earnings among private sector employees as a whole.⁴⁸

The income determinants for waged workers are:

- for full-time workers: wage level, number of wage earners in household;
- for casual workers: number of days worked, wage level, number of wage earners in household; share of income derived from plantation/farm wage work.⁴⁹

Income gaps between full-time wage earners and casual workers can be quite wide, not only because the number of days worked is lower, but also because benefits such as housing, education and health care are not provided.

1.4 Factors affecting wages

Five major elements⁵⁰ affecting wage levels in agriculture can be identified:

- agricultural growth;
- food prices and food security;
- labour supply;
- non-farm employment;
- minimum wages.

1.4.1 Agricultural growth

The classical “trickle-down” argument is that agricultural productivity growth can translate in a sustainable reduction of hunger and poverty, as farm incomes rise following productivity increases. Increased farmers' incomes and higher agricultural workers' wages create increased demand for basic non-farm products and services in rural areas. These include: tools, blacksmithing, carpentry, clothes, processed food bought from roadside kiosks. These goods and services are often difficult to trade over long distances. They tend to be produced and provided locally, usually with labour-intensive methods, and so have great potential to create employment and alleviate poverty. FAO surveys in four African countries showed that between one-third and two-thirds of income increases in rural areas were spent on local goods and services.⁵¹

However, according to a recent study by Indian trade unions on the impacts of globalization on agricultural workers there has not been any automatic trickle-down effect of increased productivity on wages in the agricultural sector. Positive changes in wage rates seem instead to be associated with bargaining by agricultural workers or with the availability of alternative work opportunities. Despite the nominal gains, real wages have in fact deteriorated as consumption goods that were earlier available free of cost (e.g. water, fuel, fodder, wild vegetables, and river fish) are now becoming marketable commodities.⁵²

1.4.2 Food prices and food security

Worker households often spend over 70% of their cash wage on food. Rising food prices can push significant numbers of waged workers and their families below, or even further below, the poverty line. Improving earning power and livelihoods and ensuring food security are closely linked issues for agricultural workers and their trade unions.⁵³



Whilst noting that targets have been set at successive World Food Summits to improve food security globally, Indian agricultural trade unions see “food security for all” as a distant dream, in spite of huge stocks of food grains in their country. Because of low earnings, agricultural workers lack the purchasing power to buy sufficient food from the market. Furthermore, changes in crop patterns from staple food grains towards higher priced cash crops have worsened food insecurity for many worker households. The unions believe that dependence on imported food is likely to increase, eventually leading to lack of food sovereignty.⁵⁴

1.4.3 Labour supply

Real increases in wages are closely associated with rising labour absorption in agriculture, or land-augmenting agricultural practices based on higher cropping intensity, stimulated by investment in irrigation, such as happened in Bangladesh and parts of India in the 1980s. Robust agricultural growth, fuelled by exports, can also be an important means of real wage increases.⁵⁵

1.4.4 Non-farm employment

Rural non-farm employment in the form of emergency relief or poverty-targeted labour-intensive public works has been promoted by many governments over the years. The ILO has long advocated diversification of rural employment through such labour-intensive works programmes in view of the benefits accruing to the poor, both directly through employment and income generated by the public works programmes and indirectly, through the employment effects induced by the infrastructure created and the increased demand for locally-produced goods.⁵⁶ In addition, producers of simple consumer goods may also be located in rural areas, particularly those making use of local raw materials. The development of agro-ecological tourism has also become important in some areas.⁵⁷

Rural non-farm activities are generally small-scale and labour-intensive, using local materials and generally catering to local demand. Such activities can provide supplementary employment to that section of the rural labour force significantly underemployed during the lean agricultural season.

Despite declining levels of labour absorption in agriculture in some countries, aggregate rural employment can rise with the expansion of non-farm activities and result in lower levels of poverty, as has been demonstrated especially in countries such as China, northern India, Pakistan and some Latin American countries.⁵⁸

1.4.5 Minimum wages

National or sectoral statutory or negotiated minimum wages aim to protect the most vulnerable and lowest paid workers so as to guarantee a living wage to all workers. The ILO has long been advocating a system of minimum wages to protect the lowest-paid workers from undue exploitation.⁵⁹

As collective bargaining is often weak in agriculture (see Part II, section 2.2), some form of national wage-fixing machinery, involving government, can be important to set minimum wage levels. Such wage-fixing machinery varies according to national systems and practice but is usually characterised by having a legal framework with some form of third-party arbitration between employers and trade unions, often binding, e.g. Wages Boards.⁶⁰

Enforcement of minimum wages is widely thought to be difficult if not impossible in rural areas in view of the extent of surplus labour and widespread unemployment. The largely informal nature of labour contracts in agriculture seems to preclude the possibility of enforcing a non-market determined minimum wage.

Unfortunately, no comprehensive survey or data sources are available to enable any assessment of minimum wages in agriculture.

Unions have resisted attempts by governments at wage deregulation and abolition of wage-fixing machinery. In the United Kingdom (UK), for example, the agricultural workers section of the Transport and General Workers Union has vigorously defended the UK Agricultural Wages Board against government attempts at deregulation and called for a minimum wage.

1.5 Poverty among waged workers and sustainability

Currently, one in four people in developing countries lives in extreme poverty - defined as subsisting on less than US\$ 1 a day.⁶¹ Figures published by the FAO in 2002 show that 776 million people in developing countries remain undernourished - about one person in six.

Undernourishment also deepens other aspects of poverty, by reducing the capacity for work and resistance to disease, and by affecting children's mental development and educational achievements.

About 70 per cent of poor people in developing countries live in rural areas and depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Waged agricultural workers and their families are part of the core rural poor, though precise recent data are lacking as poverty estimates generally distinguish only between rural and urban areas. High levels of poverty among agricultural wage labourers are a source of concern, as their share in the rural labour force is increasing in virtually all regions.

Poverty is not confined to subsistence farming but is a feature of commercial agriculture as well. High incidences of poverty are common among waged agricultural workers on plantations. In 1987, for example, Indonesian agricultural workers accounted for less than 10% of the rural workforce but recorded the highest incidence of poverty, with 38% of all agricultural waged workers below the poverty line.⁶²

Waged agricultural workers are among the occupational groups with the highest incidence of poverty in a number of countries, often over 60%. This can vary by region.⁶³ Data from the ILO showed that in Africa and Asia, waged workers experienced consistently higher rates of poverty than the rural population in general, whereas in Latin America, with the exception of Chile and Mexico, the reverse seems to be true.⁶⁴

In terms of poverty elimination amongst waged agricultural workers and their families, the critical variables are wage levels and employment.

For these reasons, waged agricultural workers along with small farmers should be a key target group of the United Nations Millennium Development Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:

- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
- Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

However, it is not clear that waged agricultural workers are seen as a key target group. They are hardly ever mentioned in United Nations documentation outside of the ILO. If they are never mentioned, how can their needs as part of the core rural poor be assessed and programmes to eradicate their poverty and hunger be developed?

2. Conditions of employment and work

With a rising share of waged labour in agriculture and an increasing percentage of total output marketed domestically or internationally, concern for better conditions of employment at work should at least match concern for product quality standards. Improvements in conditions of employment at work are a necessary prerequisite to modernization and the opening of markets and they can stimulate economic efficiency by raising labour productivity. Such improvements should be considered as an investment rather than a social cost.



2.1 Labour law and international labour standards

Compared to those working in other economic sectors, many agricultural workers are only poorly protected by national labour law. In some cases, this is because the scope of the relevant legislation - a Factories Act, for example - is limited to industrial enterprises and their workforce. In some countries, the agriculture sector is specifically excluded from the scope of general labour legislation. Where it exists, protective legislation may not be fully applicable to the agriculture sector, may be out of date or may simply not be applied.

Application of general labour laws can be problematic in rural areas, where employers and workers may be less familiar with the details of the law and compliance may be considered impractical, particularly in small-scale farms and enterprises. Even where specific legislation has been enacted which accommodates the special characteristics of agricultural work - for example, with regard to working time arrangements, wage structure, and the provision of housing in remote areas - inspection and enforcement tend to be weak.

2.1.1 Promoting rights at work

International labour standards are comprised of ILO Conventions and Recommendations which together form the International Labour Code. ILO standards span most subjects relevant to labour law and the social aspects of development and thus provide guidance to member States for the improvement of national labour legislation and social policy. ILO standards are universal in character and are formulated with sufficient flexibility to take account of variations in conditions and practices in countries at different levels of development.

Many ILO Conventions apply to all workers. These include, but are certainly not limited to, ILO core labour standards on freedom of association,⁶⁵ the right to collective bargaining,⁶⁶ non-discrimination,⁶⁷ equal pay for men and women workers,⁶⁸ the abolition of forced labour,⁶⁹ and the elimination of child labour.⁷⁰ These core labour standards are often referred to as human rights at work. Not only are they important in their own right, but they also serve as enabling rights. That is, they create conditions to allow access to other rights. Freedom of association is a prime example of that function. The right of workers and employers to establish and join independent organizations of their own choosing creates the basis on which social dialogue between employers and workers can take place, with a view to regulating terms and conditions of employment through collective agreements. Freedom of association is a fundamental human right which paves the way for improvements in social and labour conditions, for example, through collective bargaining.

Despite nearly universal recognition of the right to freedom of association,^{VII} legal impediments to the right of agricultural workers to organize remain in a significant number of countries, where national legislation either denies the right to organize in agriculture, or excludes the sector from the relevant legal protections. Some national governments may consider it impossible for their labour administrations to enforce this right in practice in rural areas. Others may consider that the nature of work in agriculture, with its atypical, seasonal or casual employment relationships, makes the sector less accessible to the right to organize.⁷¹

^{VII} With the adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up in 1998, it was agreed that all ILO member States, even if they have not ratified the Conventions in question, have an obligation, arising from the very fact of membership in the Organization, to respect, to promote and to realize, in good faith the principles concerning the fundamental rights embodied in the core labour standards.

International labour standards, because they are formulated and adopted by representatives of governments as well as employers' and workers' organizations, offer member States valuable guidance on what minimum standards should apply in the world of work. Not only do ILO Conventions and Recommendations stimulate improvements in national social and labour legislation, they also inspire good practices at the sectoral and enterprise level, as employers and workers integrate their principles into collective agreements.

2.2 Collective bargaining and the right to organize

2.2.1 What is collective bargaining?

A major factor influencing workers' rights and the terms and conditions of employment is their ability to bargain collectively with their employers rather than on an individual basis. When workers band together in trade unions and bargain together, i.e. collectively, their power is increased and they can secure better terms and conditions.⁷²

Collective bargaining is a process of negotiation whereby terms and conditions of work are determined and rules created to govern labour relations. The participants in the process are employers and their organizations on the one hand, and worker representatives, usually from trade unions, on the other. The government is sometimes involved as a third party. The process usually culminates in the conclusion of an agreement, known as a "collective bargaining (labour) agreement (CBA)", though it may also be given other names. Individual bargaining between an employer and her or his employees is not regarded as collective bargaining.

Structurally, collective bargaining can take place at two levels: either at the enterprise (farm or plantation) level or the industrial or sectoral level. Issues which are collectively bargained can include wages, contracts of employment, labour contracting, maternity rights, health benefits, hours of work, leave, occupational health, safety and environment, housing conditions, grievance procedures, transport of workers, elimination of child labour, even measures to counter HIV/AIDS.

Given the predominance of women in the agricultural sector - notably in developing countries - and their vulnerable situation, it is particularly important that the gender implications of collective bargaining be understood and addressed. There are issues that in practice are of particular concern to women, which can be addressed through collective bargaining, such as equality of opportunity policies, equal pay for work of equal value, maternity leave and benefits, child care issues, reproductive health services. It is also important that the gender implications of apparently neutral issues for collective bargaining be assessed, including regarding wages, leave, overtime, bonus systems since these often in reality impact on women and men differently.⁷³

2.2.2 To what extent is collective bargaining an important element in improving working conditions in agriculture?

Collective bargaining is undoubtedly one of the principal instruments for regulating industrial relations. In many countries, however, collective bargaining does not appear to be a significant feature in the agricultural sector, largely because the

respective institutions are lacking, governments do not encourage such negotiations, and trade unions and other forms of rural workers' organizations tend to be weak. It does not form part of the system of industrial relations. However, as more and more workers enter the rural labour market in search of wage employment, the importance of collective bargaining in the agricultural sector is increasing.⁷⁴

In general, CBAs are concluded in those sectors and enterprises where full-time employment is significant and they tend to reflect the concerns of permanent workers. Other workers, whether daily, weekly, temporary or seasonal, may not be covered by such agreements, or may be only partially covered even if they form the majority of the total workforce.

Collective bargaining plays a more important role in plantation agriculture than in the sector as a whole. Because plantations are far better organized than the rest of the agricultural industry, the wages and terms of service set through collective bargaining have tended to be more favourable than those obtaining in the rest of the agricultural sector.

2.2.3 Which labour standards support the right to bargain collectively?

The right of workers to bargain collectively with their employers is supported by the ILO Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No.98), which is also linked to the right to freedom of association.^{VIII}

2.3 Contracts of employment

Written contracts of employment tend to be rare in agriculture, where verbal agreements are commonly used. Such agreements tend to be rather general and align themselves to market or "common" conditions.

Contracts of employment prevailing in agriculture display a great diversity, both within and between countries. Seasonal, daily and permanent contracts of employment can be found alongside task or piece rate employment. Permanent contracts are the least common form of contract and their share in total agricultural employment has been declining in most countries.⁷⁵

The nature of contracts of employment can be linked to the skill requirements of the production process. Casual and seasonal migrant labour is often used in low-skill harvesting and processing operations in which labour costs relative to skills are a primary concern.

The challenge is to find ways to balance the need for flexibility in hiring labour to meet production and marketing requirements with the basic standards and protection that should be inherent in any contract of employment. In the case of most casual and temporary forms of employment, this challenge has yet to be addressed.⁷⁶

^{VIII} Convention No. 98 is one of the conventions cited in the ILO International Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and Its Follow-up, adopted by the International Labour Conference, 86th session, Geneva 1998.

2.4 Contract labour and labour contractors

The employment of labour through labour contractors is a long-standing practice on plantations; it is also becoming increasingly common in other forms of commercial agriculture. Many agricultural undertakings retain a relatively small permanent core workforce whilst using labour contractors to source additional labour during peak periods such as harvest.



Labour contracting occurs in many different scenarios within commercial agriculture. The nature of labour contractors themselves also varies; some are well known companies specializing in the recruitment, transport and management of waged agricultural workers whilst others are much less formal.

An essential characteristic of labour contracting arrangements is that the workers concerned do not have a direct employment relationship with the person or enterprise for which they perform work. In the majority of cases, the contracted workers remain the employees of the labour contractor. In some other cases, the workers may only be supplied to the workplace by the contractor and have no recognized employment relationship with either the user enterprise or the contractor. This gives rise to a number of practical and legal difficulties.

Where a worker is employed by a labour contractor and performs work for a user enterprise, the role and functions of an employer are actually shared between the contractor and the user. The contractor might pay the workers, provide transport

to and from work and may in some cases provide workplace supervision. The user enterprise often determines the work to be done and the hours of work, and establishes the general terms and conditions of the worksite including in relation to occupational health and safety standards. This often means that the worker is uncertain about who her/his employer is, and thus about how to claim employment rights. These situations result in a lack of legal clarity around the employment relationship.

In some instances the system of labour contracting is abused. The provider of labour may not be a proper enterprise, but an intermediary of the supposed user enterprise, intended to conceal the user's identity as the real employer. This is a deliberate attempt to avoid the responsibilities of the employment relationship and as such is a fraudulent practice. Workers are particularly vulnerable in these situations; there are many well documented cases of the abuse of workers by so-called "labour contractors", such as asking for commissions, over-charging for transport, housing and food, holding back wages and imposing debt slavery.⁷⁷

Labour contracting is also occurring increasingly across borders in a variety of forms, some of which may be on the edge of legality or in the "grey zone" between the legal and illegal movement of persons.⁷⁸

A US study of agricultural injuries notes: "The increasing use of farm labour contractors represents an additional regulatory challenge for health and safety especially among migrant farm workers. The high degree of dependence of farm workers on the contractor for employment, transportation, housing and other amenities may hinder willingness to report work-related conditions."⁷⁹

There are growing demands from trade unions for effective regulation of labour contractors and of the terms and conditions under which contract labour is hired and supplied. An example is given in Part III, section 2.18.

The ILO has been concerned with the vulnerability of workers in labour contracting arrangements for many years; this is reflected in the conclusions of successive ILO Tripartite Sectoral Meetings and an ongoing discussion at the International Labour Conference. A General Discussion on the Scope of the Employment Relationship was held in 2003 and a further discussion was held in 2006 with a view to the preparation of an ILO Recommendation addressing issues relating to disguised employment.⁸⁰

2.5 Hours of work

Hours of work for waged agricultural workers tend to be long compared with other sectors, often over 45 hours per week, and remain largely unregulated.⁸¹ Hours tend to vary due to a variety of factors such as, for example, seasonal and climatic conditions, peak periods of sowing and harvesting.

Adequate working time arrangements which can both limit overall daily, weekly and annual working time and meet the specific conditions of agricultural work cycles are, for the most part, still to be designed, negotiated and implemented.

An important breakthrough in this respect is Article 20 of the ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No.184) on hours of work which states: "Hours of work, night work and rest periods for workers in agriculture shall be in accordance with national laws and regulations or collective agreements". This is the first time in an ILO Convention that the connection between hours of work, rest periods, night work, and health and safety on the job has been made, reflecting modern thinking and research on issues which were too often neglected in the past.

2.6 Housing and living conditions

Because many agricultural workers live where they work, their lives and occupations are inseparable. There is a close link between housing, worker well-being and productivity.^{IX}

Housing of agricultural workers is characterized by inadequate and overcrowded installations, no heating, poor ventilation, deficient sanitary facilities and non-potable drinking water, which enhance the spread of communicable diseases such as upper respiratory tract infections, influenza and tuberculosis.⁸² Living conditions on many farms and plantations remain inhuman, with workers living in tents, makeshift plastic huts/shacks or hostels for long periods. Poor housing also contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS; such as male workers living in hostels away from their families, or families sharing overcrowded living quarters.

Examples of housing on plantations in Kenya illustrate some of the problems. Under Kenyan law, the companies have to provide housing for permanent staff. An ILO visit found that housing facilities in a number of plantations were in need of repair and upgrading so as to improve the living standards of workers, and some of the older houses required outright replacement. In some estates, workers were housed in rows of brick-built quarters with shared toilet facilities and water points, whereas in others, grass-thatched mud houses were still common.⁸³ In some estates, workers complained of poor or non-existent sanitation, made worse by the congestion in the living quarters. In the lower-grade housing estates, one pit latrine was shared by several families, while drainage systems were non-existent in a majority of the cases. In some instances, employees had to draw water from nearby rivers and streams due to the absence of piped water. Cases of waterborne diseases were cited frequently among the workers living in such situations.⁸⁴

Casual workers are rarely provided with plantation housing. Many are migrants who live in shanties near the estates without even the most basic sanitary facilities. The hygiene situation in these settlements can be deplorable, as witnessed by frequent outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, malaria and dysentery. Provision of decent housing on farms and plantations has been an issue, historically, on which trade unions have negotiated with farm and plantation employers. In some countries, employers are obliged by law to provide housing or a housing allowance to employees. However, when the accommodation is part of the remuneration package, this has often meant that workers are not free to change employers, as they would lose their housing. Also, they would lose their accommodation on retirement. Laws giving workers more secure housing rights on farm housing,

^{IX} The ILO's Committee on Work on Plantations, for example, has recognized this link since its inaugural meeting in 1950.

including retirement provisions, have been introduced in a number of countries. Many unions, however, argue that wages should be sufficient to allow workers to buy on the housing market, like other citizens, and to live where they choose.

2.7 Transport of workers

In many countries, agricultural workers are transported over long distances on a daily or seasonal basis from their living quarters to places of work. All too often, large numbers of workers are packed in open trucks and vehicles never intended for the transport of human passengers. Weight limitations are disregarded and safety conditions ignored. There are many examples of serious road accidents involving such transport. It is often unclear whether such accidents are covered by employment injury insurance.

2.8 Occupational health, safety and environment

Improving occupational health, safety and environmental (OHSE) standards for agricultural workers and small farmers, including regulation and enforcement (see “labour inspection”, in the next section), must be included as one of the key components of sustainable agriculture. Furthermore, there must be recognition that improving health, safety and environmental standards for workers can help protect and improve standards of public and environmental health, consumer food safety, and environmental protection, especially with regard to exposure to pesticides and other agrochemicals.

Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous occupations to work in, along with mining and construction. Waged agricultural workers face a wide range of hazards at work including, for example, dangerous machinery, unsafe electrical wiring and appliances, livestock-transmitted diseases, falls from heights, and exposure to toxic pesticides. The ILO estimates that there are some 355,000 on-the-job fatalities each year. It is estimated that half of them occur in agriculture, the sector with half of the world's workforce. Waged agricultural workers and farmers also suffer disproportionately among the estimated 270 million occupational accidents and 160 million occupational diseases each year. Each day, an average of 6,000 people die as a result of work-related accidents or diseases.⁸⁵

Agricultural work - and this is one of its most distinguishing characteristics - is carried out in a rural environment where there is no clear distinction between working and living conditions, unlike the case of the factory or office worker. As a result, agricultural workers and their families face extra dangers such as exposure to pesticides. Furthermore, the poverty experienced by waged agricultural workers and small farmers can contribute to increased risks of work-related ill-health due to bad diet and malnutrition.⁸⁶

Many of those killed, injured or made ill are women workers. They are especially at risk because they are often employed on a part-time or casual basis and receive less training and instruction, often do repetitive work which can result in musculoskeletal problems, and face reproductive hazards as a result of exposure to pesticides.⁸⁷ Child labourers are also at risk - each year, 22,000 children are killed on the job,

many of those in agriculture. An immediate priority is to eliminate all forms of hazardous work carried out by child labourers in agriculture.⁸⁸

The type of employment relationship can also have a significant impact on health, safety and environmental practices. Kenyan trade unionists say subcontracting arrangements on plantations have made it difficult to tackle certain health and safety problems. For example, women weeders were regularly exposed to pesticides while at work, but there was little the union could do since the subcontractors who engaged the women were not bound by the collective agreement with the plantation company.⁸⁹



Human suffering cannot be assigned a monetary value, but the economic losses associated with poor occupational health, safety and environmental standards can. High levels of deaths, accidents and ill-health resulting in lost workdays and increased medical expenses have a considerable negative impact on agricultural productivity and place enormous social and financial burdens on enterprises. The ILO estimates that four per cent of Gross domestic product (GDP) is lost due to fatalities, accidents and work-related diseases.⁹⁰ A safe, healthy and environmentally conscious workforce is an essential element of a profitable and sustainable agricultural industry.

For trade unions, workplace organization and representation are the keys to maintaining and improving health, safety and environmental standards in the workplace. Legally appointed and empowered worker health and safety representatives (safety reps) are the backbone of trade union organization on health and safety at work. They are the eyes and the ears of trade unions on workplace occupational health and safety problems and play crucial roles in reducing fatalities, accidents and ill-health at work. Many deal with workplace environmental issues as well. These safety reps help protect workers, the public and the general environment.⁹¹

However, on many farms there are no safety reps due to the small scale of these enterprises, their scattered nature, and a general lack of resources and technical support. Even on larger farms and plantations, where safety reps are selected or elected

by the workers, or the legal right to do so clearly exists, safety reps may only have limited scope to improve occupational health, safety and environmental standards, due to a lack of training and technical support.

Article 8.1(b) of the ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No.184) gives workers the right to select their own workplace safety representatives. However, to turn this right into reality, what are termed "roving safety representative schemes" need to be put in place, based on external worker representatives who visit agricultural undertakings in a given geographical area.⁹² (see Part III, section 2.6)

Worker representatives on legally-constituted, joint worker-management health and safety workplace committees (safety committees) also play a vital role in maintaining OHS and even environmental standards. Such committees are only found in larger workplaces (generally, those with 50 employees or over). Safety committees deal with ongoing problems, and look at longer-term solutions on a joint problem-solving basis.⁹³

2.9 Labour inspection

To provide advice to both employers and workers, to administer social and labour policy, and to supervise and enforce labour legislation and standards, effective national systems of labour inspection are required. Labour inspection is a public function, a responsibility of government, best organized as a system, within the context of a larger state system.⁹⁴

The ILO Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No.81) sets out the basic international standards, supplemented by the ILO Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No.129) which take into account the special characteristics of the agricultural sector.

Labour inspectorates work to secure the enforcement of the legal provisions relating to conditions of work and the protection of workers while engaged in their work, such as provisions relating to hours, wages, weekly rest and holidays, safety, health and welfare, the employment of women, children and young persons and other connected matters. Inspectors also supply technical advice and information to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with the legal provisions. Labour inspection systems vary, with some countries having, for example, specialized health and safety inspectorates.

Labour inspectors in many countries also have an important role in overseeing the observance of trade union rights, the protection of legitimate workers' representatives (e.g. safety reps), and the effective operation of statutory bodies designed to engage in social dialogue.

Labour inspectors in many countries are also charged with the task of providing training for worker representatives on all issues related to labour protection. If the inspectorate does not organize this training itself, inspectors will regularly participate in training activities organized by other parties.

In many countries labour inspection, however, appears to be a low priority. The

difficulty of effectively organizing a minimum presence of labour inspectors in large territories which lack resources cannot be underestimated. Many countries have too few labour inspectors for the adequate discharge of their duties in all economic sectors.

Labour inspectorates in agriculture in developing countries face special difficulties. First, even where legislation applies to agriculture, there are too few inspectors in these countries to ensure even a token appearance at more than a tiny proportion of workplaces. The larger the plantation or the more remote the agricultural activity, the greater the problem. Second, agricultural inspectors in these countries often receive inadequate training. Third, many inspectors complain of inadequate resources, particularly for transport, so that they are unable to travel to more remote farms and plantations.⁹⁵

2.10 The HIV and AIDS Epidemic

AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) is a disease caused by destruction of the immune system by a virus called HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). HIV and AIDS is a workplace issue, not only because it affects the workforce, but also because workplace health, safety and environmental training on this condition can play a vital role in limiting the spread and effects of the epidemic.

In 2004, some 37.8 million people were living with HIV; AIDS killed 2.9 million in 2003. According to the FAO, 95% of people living with HIV - and dying of AIDS - are in developing countries. The overwhelming majority are the rural poor, and among them women figure disproportionately.⁹⁶ The 2004 UNAIDS Report⁹⁷ estimates that the proportion of HIV-affected women has steadily increased. Latest figures show that in Africa there are 13 infected women for 10 infected men. The epidemic is undoing decades of economic and social development and causing rural disintegration. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV and AIDS is depleting the region of its food producers and farmers, decimating the agricultural labour force for generations to come.

AIDS has killed around 7 million agricultural workers since 1985 in the 25 hardest-hit countries in Africa, while the most affected African countries could lose up to 26 percent of their agricultural labour force within two decades.⁹⁸

As the disease hits at the most productive age groups generally, most of the 40 million people infected with HIV are in the prime of their working lives.⁹⁹ At least 25 million of those infected with HIV are workers aged 15 to 49. The effects are momentous - on workers and their families, enterprises, and national and regional economies. The impacts on rural populations, their livelihoods, their farming systems, and on food security have been especially severe.¹⁰⁰ The disease affects the world of work in many ways:

2.10.1 Households

- growing burden on women workers as they have to earn a livelihood while at the same time caring for sick family members and even neighbours;
- in agricultural communities, increasing number of households are headed by children, as the parents have died from the virus and extended family networks cannot always cope with the sheer numbers of orphans;
- increasing pressure for AIDS orphans to be allowed to work in agriculture to cover the costs of their remaining on the farm or plantation and to pay school fees. However, there is a very real danger that these children will be exploited and their health put further at risk by exposure to occupational health and safety hazards;¹⁰¹
- rural communities bearing a higher burden of the cost of HIV and AIDS as many urban dwellers and migrant labourers return to their villages when they become sick;¹⁰²

2.10.2 Farms and plantations

- loss of valuable work skills and experience;
- falling productivity in industry and agriculture, and rising labour costs due to labour shortages;

2.10.3 Workforce

- cutting the supply of labour and reducing income for many workers;
- discrimination against people with HIV, often resulting in dismissal;
- other ways in which HIV and AIDS affects rural workers include through changes in their ability to access and control productive assets and resources.¹⁰³

Evidence indicates that vulnerability to HIV and AIDS is rooted in the social, economic, political and cultural landscapes. As discussed above, one of the most important factors of vulnerability is gender. HIV and AIDS is also a workplace issue in agricultural estates: research has shown that poor housing and living conditions play an important part in the transmission of the disease. A family or group of families may share one room, and in certain instances spouses are not allowed to live together on the premises. Seasonal labour migration results in a high concentration of men living in labour camps without their families. This was said to contribute to the habit of extra-marital sex (mostly by male spouses).¹⁰⁴ All these practices coupled with poor working conditions and low wages have accelerated the spread of the disease among the workers. Access to information and health services is poor and people are unlikely to know how to protect themselves from infection.

Poor conditions of work and low wages have driven many workers into behavioural patterns that increase the risk of infection and transmission of the disease such as involvement in commercial sex, sexual favours etc.

The ILO has issued a Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS and the world of work.¹⁰⁵ The Code states that governments "should ensure coherence in national HIV/AIDS strategy and programmes, recognizing the importance of including the world of work in national plans..." Employers, meanwhile, "should consult with workers and their representatives to develop and implement an appropriate policy for their workplace, designed to prevent the spread of the infection and protect workers from discrimination related to HIV/AIDS". In addition, an education and training manual on the Code has also been published.¹⁰⁶

2.10.4 The FAO response to HIV/AIDS

In spite of the fact that up to 80% of the people in the most affected countries depend on agriculture for their subsistence, most of the response to the epidemic has come from the health sector. Effective solutions rely on the agricultural sector and its capacity to reduce people's vulnerability to acquire the disease. The agricultural sector is in a strong position to assist in both the prevention and mitigation of the consequences of HIV/AIDS. Moreover, it has a responsibility to those people who depend on agriculture for their survival.

The FAO recognizes the urgent need for action to be able to respond effectively to the impacts of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural livelihoods and is currently developing a comprehensive HIV/AIDS strategy for the agriculture sector.

The FAO's focus on HIV/AIDS is on the prevention of the further spread of the epidemic and on the mitigation of its effects through a concerted response from the agricultural sector. FAO recognizes that HIV/AIDS is a determining factor of food insecurity as well as a consequence of food and nutrition insecurity.

Since 1988, FAO has been studying the impact of HIV/AIDS on agriculture, food security, nutrition and farming systems. In recent years, the FAO's role in combating AIDS has become even more critical due to the fact that the epidemic creates a significant institutional capacity gap in the affected countries, especially as regards agricultural staff and service organizations, national agricultural research organizations and institutions in higher education and training, as well as in local informal institutions (www.fao.org/hiv aids).

The FAO's Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme (IP), initiated in 1998, is currently focusing on an interdisciplinary investigation of the impacts of HIV/AIDS on agricultural production and food security, with the goal of identifying possible response strategies for the agricultural sector. Case studies on the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods on Namibia, Uganda and Zambia, have been conducted by the IP, pointing to the implications for the policy environment.

From the case studies, it is clear that HIV/AIDS has a negative impact on rural livelihoods, especially through the depletion of the asset base of households affected by the disease. In Zambia, the study showed that the AIDS-related death of people in productive age groups has led to an increase in households fostering orphans, which places an additional burden on these households and creates additional demands on the active members' labour time. These households have very few coping capacities to re-establish self-sustaining livelihoods. Some of the coping responses adopted, such as the sale of productive assets and the removal of children from school, increase household poverty in the long term, and exacerbate the feminization of poverty in Zambia.

In response to the growing number of orphans and widows, the Gender and Population Division (SDW) of FAO, together with the World Food Programme (WFP) and other partners, have piloted in some African countries Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS), designed specifically for vulnerable HIV/AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children, and Adult Farmer Field and Life Schools

(AFFLS), designed to target poor households affected by HIV/AIDS, and especially adults in women-headed households.

HIV/AIDS also contributes to increase the vulnerability of households and their capacity to react to external shocks, such as drought, floods and fluctuations in market prices. IP stakeholders identified a wide range of possible interventions to respond to the epidemic, such as the promotion of labour-saving technologies, improving nutrition, encouraging labour pooling arrangements, and reinforcing community-based mechanisms to preserve local knowledge and diversify livelihoods.

General recommendations on how to respond to the epidemic are: mainstreaming HIV/AIDS, developing multi-sectoral responses and introducing social protection. The main challenges are clear, especially since HIV/AIDS-related illness and death bring additional costs associated with decreased household labour and increasing health care expenditure.

These in turn lead to a slow depletion of asset-based wealth and affect long-term food security, while marginalizing the affected households, excluding them from processes of reform.

Among the response mechanisms that would need to be developed are social protection policies, defined as strategies to alleviate poverty or reduce vulnerability, such as pensions, employment schemes, and interventions to increase safety nets, as well as advocacy of a stronger role for the private sector, given its vested interest in a healthy and productive workforce.

In terms of the implications for farming systems, a way of coping with weakened and reduced labour is the adoption of less labour-intensive cropping patterns and animal production, such as low-input agriculture, lighter ploughs and improved seed varieties.¹⁰⁷

2.11 Health and sustainable agriculture

2.11.1 The size of the problem

Due to the hazardous nature of agricultural occupations and the often remote location of farms and plantations, medical care is a critical employment benefit for agricultural workers. Through collective bargaining, trade unions, especially in plantations, have been able to negotiate with employers for better health care for their members than would otherwise be available. However, lack of public health facilities in rural areas is an aspect of sustainable agriculture which needs to be addressed.



At the global level, health conditions in developing countries have improved spectacularly over the last 40 years. However, the WHO estimates that around one billion poor people have been excluded from the global health revolution and would benefit from development programmes. Agricultural waged workers make up a significant percentage of that billion. The children of agricultural waged workers will also often be especially vulnerable to the childhood diseases of poverty, such as diarrhoea, acute respiratory infections, malaria, measles and perinatal conditions. Most if not all of these diseases are closely linked not only to poverty but also to lack of sustainable development in rural areas.¹⁰⁸

Furthermore, three billion people, over half the world's population, lack access to proper sanitation, one billion lack access to safe drinking water and 40% of the world's population face water shortages.¹⁰⁹ Over 800 million people who live in rural areas lack access to adequate and safe water.¹¹⁰

2.11.2 Gender and medical or health care

The link between gender, poverty and health is equally strong. Seventy per cent of the 1.2 billion people living in poverty in 2000 were female. Estimates over a 20-year period indicate that the increase in the numbers of poor rural women in 41 developing countries was 17% higher than the increase in poor men. Protein energy malnutrition is significantly higher in women in South Asia, where almost 50% of the world's undernourished reside. Half a million women die unnecessarily from pregnancy-related complications which are exacerbated by issues of poverty and remoteness.¹¹¹ Almost all of these problems link directly or indirectly to the lack of sustainable agricultural development and the marginalization and vulnerability of women working in agriculture.

2.11.3 Medical and health care on plantations

On plantations, employers have traditionally provided basic medical care in the form of dispensaries or clinics which are able to treat minor illness or injury. However, very little health and education data specific to plantations is available to establish any measure of progress.¹¹²

Furthermore, lack of essential medicines is also a common problem in many countries. The WHO estimates that over a third of the world's population lacks access to essential medicines. Many of those concerned live in rural areas.¹¹³

2.11.4 Hygiene provision and welfare services

Lack of hygiene facilities, especially when working in the fields, is another problem. Workers and often their children are at risk. Parents often bring their children to the fields because there is a lack of day-care services for children in rural areas. Therefore infants and young children are exposed to some of the same occupational hazards as their parents, even if they are not working. Workers and children are also at high risk of contracting parasitic and other infectious diseases because of the poor sanitary conditions in the fields and in their housing facilities.¹¹⁴

2.12 Social security schemes and benefits

Social security is defined as being composed of contribution-based social insurance schemes and tax-financed social assistance. In their most comprehensive form,

social security systems aim at providing nine types of benefit, namely, medical care, sickness and maternity benefits, family benefits, unemployment benefits, employment injury, invalidity and survivors' benefits, and old age benefits.¹¹⁵

One of the key global problems facing social security now is the fact that more than half of the world's population, workers and their dependents, are excluded from any type of social security protection.¹¹⁶

The problem is particularly acute in agriculture. ILO data show that fewer than 20% of the world's agricultural workers are covered by one or more of the nine standard contingencies.¹¹⁷ As high levels of poverty and income fluctuations are characteristics of waged workers in agriculture, they are especially vulnerable economically when loss of wage-earning power occurs in event of death, injury, ill health, invalidity or natural disasters.

Even where there is assured legal coverage for agricultural workers, many social security programmes fail to reach all or some of the target group, and some potential beneficiaries fail to make good use of the benefits available.¹¹⁸

Few developing countries are able to provide comprehensive social security coverage with regard either to the contingencies or to the population covered. For these countries, improving social security protection is a key development objective.

For rural populations, the standards contained in the ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No.184) represent an important step forward.

Article 21 states:

- 1) *In accordance with national law and practice, workers in agriculture shall be covered by an insurance or social security scheme against fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries and diseases, as well as against invalidity and other work-related health risks, providing coverage at least equivalent to that enjoyed by workers in other sectors.*
- 2) *Such schemes may either be part of a national scheme or take any other appropriate form consistent with national law and practice.*





PART III:

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF AGRICULTURAL WORKERS TO SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD SECURITY, & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The future contributions of waged agricultural workers and their trade unions to sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development are potentially very large and virtually untapped.

Part III provides examples of the contributions that waged agricultural workers are already making - both as workers and as citizens - to sustainable agricultural production, world food security and sustainable development. It describes how their trade unions are supporting their efforts and seeking to increase their contributions to civil society in this area. The examples demonstrate how workers and trade unions are meeting the new challenges by interacting, cooperating, and sometimes creating partnerships, with employers, governments, agricultural and rural development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, science and research institutions, agricultural banks and credit institutions and civil society organizations and groups.

1 How trade unions can contribute to sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development:

Key points

Trade unions can use their workplace representation and structures, organizational abilities, experience of collective bargaining, technical know-how and education and training programmes, as well as their political commitment, to enhance their contributions to the achievement of sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development. Ways in which they can do this include:

- launching union campaigns at workplace, community, local, national, regional and international levels;
- using union structures, institutional capacities and networks to enhance their contributions to sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development issues;
- using union branch organizations and committees to raise worker awareness of, and commitment to, sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development;
- negotiating "sustainability clauses" as part of collective bargaining agreements with farm and plantation employers. Workers have a vested interest in the long-term profitability and sustainability of the enterprises in which they work;
- ensuring that worker safety representatives also deal with environmental issues;
- encouraging joint worker-management health and safety workplace committees to also address environmental, sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development issues;

- adapting union education and training programmes for grassroots members, shop stewards, safety representatives, safety committee members, and union officials to incorporate training on sustainable agricultural production, food security and sustainable development. At the moment, these are "buzzwords" which do not mean anything to the vast majority of grassroots agricultural workers and even leaders;
- using national tripartite structures and procedures - involving government, employers and trade unions - to promote these issues. Also, making use of parliamentary and legislative processes to ensure, for example, policies and standards on these issues;
- encouraging inter-regional cooperation between unions, and promoting these issues in appropriate regional fora and processes;
- encouraging international cooperation between unions, and promoting these issues in appropriate international fora and processes;
- strengthening links between agricultural workers and their families and local communities on these issues;
- networking and alliance building with non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations;
- building links and alliances with agricultural producer organizations.

2 Examples of the contributions of worker and their trade unions to SARD, food security, and sustainable development

2.1 Framework agreements between trade unions and multinational enterprises

A framework agreement is an overarching agreement directly negotiated between a company and a trade union on labour rights, standards and employment throughout all parts of the company's operations.

In 2001, the IUF and the Coordination of Latin America Banana Workers' Unions (COLSIBA), for example, signed a framework agreement with Chiquita, a multinational banana company.¹¹⁹ According to the agreement, Chiquita will respect core labour standards, and will require its suppliers, contract growers and joint venture partners to respect these same standards. There is also provision for joint evaluation and monitoring to ensure that labour standards are being met.

2.2 Supply chains in agriculture, codes of conduct, ethical trading initiatives, and fair trade labelling

Trade union work on supply chains in agriculture, codes of conduct, fair trade labelling and ethical trading initiatives includes:

2.2.1 Codes of conduct

Over the past decade or so there has been a substantial growth in work on corporate social responsibility. Initially, this interest was driven by civil society organizations (CSOs) concerned about environmental and child labour issues. More recently, this has expanded to a wider interest in working and social conditions in producer countries. Many companies responded to these concerns by issuing unilateral codes of conduct which often had little basis in accepted international norms, e.g. International Labour Standards, and which were little more than publicity stunts.

The international trade union movement responded by issuing a model code of conduct based firmly on international labour standards, which trade unions could use to challenge companies and to negotiate more genuine codes.

However, many international trade unions, including the IUF, prefer to enter into direct negotiations with the companies through framework agreements as described above.

2.2.2 Agricultural examples - IUF and cut flowers

The cut flower sector is characterized by extensive use of (young) women workers on seasonal contracts, heavy use of pesticides, problems of waste disposal and high water usage. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the North were quick to raise concerns about flower production - especially but not exclusively the environmental costs. The flower industry responded by issuing a plethora of unilateral codes of conduct.

To address the problem of unilateral codes, the IUF, working with affiliates and several NGOs in a body called the International Flower Co-ordination drew up a model International Code of Conduct for the Production of Cut Flowers.¹²⁰ This Code is based firmly on International Labour Organization standards. Importers, especially in Germany and the foundation that sets the environmental standards for the Netherlands-based flower auction, were targeted to convince them to accept the International Code of Conduct. Workshops were held for East African trade unions on the International Code of Conduct and how to use it to organize workers and to improve their working conditions. A Training Manual for shop stewards on how to use the Code has been developed.¹²¹

Further negotiations with the flower producers have led to the introduction of a Fair Trade in Flowers and Plants scheme coordinated by an industry body, Union Fleurs.

The work around promotion of the International Code of Conduct for the Production of Cut Flowers has highlighted the many problems that IUF affiliates have with codes of conduct, even those drawn up multilaterally and based on ILO standards. The evidence so far is that it is very hard for trade unions in producer countries to use codes of conduct to improve working conditions. To date, there are no examples of a code, even with freedom of association as its cornerstone, leading to the formation of a new union. Some unions have been able to use the code to establish new branches but this is still fairly exceptional and there are some examples of improvements in living and working conditions, especially when a union has been able to append the code to its collective bargaining agreement.

2.2.3 Ethical Trading Initiative

The Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) is a UK-based membership organization of companies, trade unions and NGOs which was established in 1998 to identify and promote good practices in the implementation of codes of conduct. The ETI has its own base code¹²² negotiated by all members and based on International Labour Standards. All stakeholders agree that the ETI base code was developed as a tool to achieve positive change on the ground.

The ETI aims to enhance the private sector's contribution to sustainable development by encouraging business practices that embrace social, environmental and financial responsibility. Ethical supply chain management is a critical aspect of responsible business in developing countries.¹²³

The IUF is participating in the ETI at board level and has also been involved in pilots in the agricultural sector, e.g. horticultural products and bananas.

2.2.4 Fair-trade

“Fair-trade is a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions, such as securing the rights of, marginalised producers and workers - especially in the South”. “Fair-trade” is therefore a recognized term for agreements between producers in developing countries and commercial buyers who wish to purchase and market products based on stable and “just” or “fair” prices and production criteria which respect labour and environmental standards.¹²⁴ Fair trade aims to increase producers' access to markets, improve their incomes, and ensure that their production is based on sustainable development principles.

The Fair-trade Labelling Organizations International (FLO), for example, sets common criteria for fair trade tea, coffee, cocoa, honey, orange juice and bananas. FLO works mainly to label goods from small farmers, but in the tea and banana sectors there are also plantations, and the IUF's concern has been to understand fair trade's impact on employed workers and how fair trade can help them both in organizing trade unions and in improving living conditions, without undermining collective bargaining.

2.3 Workers promote Integrated Production and Pest Management

Integrated Production and Pest Management (IPPM) is a way of growing crops that maximizes control of pests by their natural enemies - pests, parasites and pathogens (diseases), integrated with other crop husbandry measures. This management technique aims to keep pest populations below economically damaging levels and to restrict pesticide use to amounts that are economically justified and reduce risks to human health and the environment.

The four key principles of IPPM¹²⁵ are:

1. Grow a healthy crop, and conserve a healthy soil;
2. Conserve natural enemies - pests, parasites and pathogens;
3. Observe the crop on a regular basis;
4. Farmers and agricultural workers are the experts in pest control.

Agricultural workers often say, “We know that chemical pesticides are bad for our health and that of our families and communities. So what are the alternatives? How do we stop using these poisons?”

One answer is to ensure workers are trained to understand and use IPPM techniques. Normally, it is only farmers who receive IPPM training, especially through

an educational method called "Farmer Field Schools" (FFS). The FAO has been promoting the use of such techniques through farmer field schools in its country programmes throughout the world. The FAO's integrated pest management programme (IPM) has been particularly successful in Asia and in 1993, the FAO inter-country programme on IPM rice in Asia organized a global IPM meeting to introduce its successful IPM approach to interested policy makers from other regions. Consequently, the FAO, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Environmental Programme established the Global Integrated Pest Management Facility in 1995. This joint programme is housed in the FAO and is the main international agency promoting IPPM worldwide

The IUF is now working with the Global IPM Facility to train agricultural workers in IPPM techniques, using the FFS method.

Field Schools mean that workers, like farmers, go into a field to study how a crop grows, to learn to identify harmful insects, diseases and weeds, and to learn to identify how to protect and encourage beneficial insects. The workers then draw up their own agro-ecology plan for that particular crop and field, setting out how to grow a healthy crop and how to protect it from pest and disease attack and weed competition by non-chemical means.

Equipped with this new knowledge, workers can then negotiate clauses requiring use of IPPM programmes in collective bargaining agreements with employers. The aim is to give agricultural workers knowledge and skills on IPPM so that when instructed by an employer or manager to use a toxic pesticide, they can point out that IPPM techniques provide a safer way of controlling the weed, insects or diseases. Safer for themselves and the supervisors, the managers, the community and the environment and for the crop (which may then be sold at a premium price).

Pilot IPPM courses - the first ever of their kind for waged agricultural workers - were held in 2001 for agricultural trade unions in Tanzania (TPAWU) and Uganda (NUPAW and NUCMAW). The unions concerned also invited some NGOs and organic farmers' organizations to join the courses. Training was given by professional IPPM trainers provided by the Facility. The pilot training is ongoing, with a view to expanding it to other unions and countries.

2.4 Workers promote improved health, safety and environmental standards for pesticides

To improve workplace occupational health, safety and environmental standards, especially targeting fatalities, poisoning, ill-health and pollution resulting from intensive pesticide use, the IUF started a Global Health, Safety and Environment Project in 1998. The Project aims to build the capacities of affiliated national unions and the IUF's regional and international networks to tackle occupational hazards within the context of promoting integrated production and pest management and sustainable agriculture. Health, Safety and Environment, A Series of Trade Union Education Manuals for Agricultural Workers have been developed by the IUF and ILO, which are also designed for use by small farmers and non-governmental organizations.¹²⁶

Training targets grassroots members, worker health and safety representatives, worker representatives on joint worker-management health and safety workplace committees, and branch and national union officials and committee members.

To date, seven participating African agricultural unions in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda have each trained a core of trainers from among their members. These trainers run regular training courses for the target groups working in cocoa, coffee, flower, horticultural, sugar, tea, and tobacco production. Results of the training include improvements in workplace OHSE standards, recruitment of new members, and the unions having new influence at national level on OHSE laws and policies.

The Project also supports the IUF's campaign with its national affiliates to ensure ratification and implementation by governments of ILO Convention No 184 on safety and health in agriculture.



There is also close cooperation at local, regional and international levels with the Pesticides Action Network (PAN).^x In Latin America, IUF and PAN have signed a cooperation agreement and are working together, for example, to ban toxic pesticides. In East Africa, the IUF's agricultural affiliate unions in Tanzania and Uganda are working to help develop the PAN network in other anglophone African countries.

At the international level, the FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, adopted by the FAO Conference in 1985, identified the shared responsibilities of governments, industry, users and international and non-governmental organizations in all aspects of pesticide distribution and use, and formulated voluntary standards of conduct for each party. The Code is highly relevant to farmers and agricultural workers in developing countries since they use pesticides in their farming activities. In 1989, the principle of Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure was included in the Code, whereby international shipment of a chemical that is banned or severely restricted (in order to protect human health or the environment) should not proceed without the agreement, where

^x The Pesticides Action Network is an international coalition of citizens' groups who oppose the misuse of pesticides and support reliance on safe, ecologically sound alternatives. Established in 1982, PAN currently links over 400 organizations in some 60 countries, coordinated by 5 Regional Centres. International website: <http://www.pan-international.org>

such an agreement exists, or contrary to the decision of the relevant authority in the importing country. The IUF was active in helping in the 2000 revision of the Code.¹²⁷

The principle of PIC is now incorporated in the UN's Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade which is jointly administered by the FAO for pesticides, and the United Nations Programme for the Environment (UNEP) for industrial chemicals. The IUF represented the trade unions internationally in the negotiations to develop the Rotterdam Convention and continues to participate in the meetings of the governing body for the Convention, as well as promoting its ratification and implementation at national level.¹²⁸



The IUF has also been active in helping set up and participating in the work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS),^{XI} in which both the FAO and the ILO actively participate. The Forum is a body where governments, intergovernmental organizations, industry, scientific bodies, trade unions and public-interest NGOs meet to:

- develop and coordinate policies on the environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals
- provide advice and make recommendations to governments, intergovernmental organizations, industry, trade unions, scientific bodies, and public-interest NGOs

The IUF is also currently representing the international trade unions on the IFCS Steering Committee.¹²⁹

The IUF has also been active in another international initiative related to Agenda 21 to develop National Profiles to Assess the National Infrastructure for Management of Chemicals. The IUF participated in the working group developing the format for the Profiles. IUF agricultural affiliate unions in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda have participated in the development of their countries' National Profiles. They are now helping to implement the resulting action plans, in order to improve national pesticide health and safety standards for the benefit of agricultural workers and farmers, local communities, the environment and consumers.¹³⁰

^{XI} The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) is the post-United Nations Conference on Environment and Development political forum set up in 1994 to develop new international partnerships for dealing with chemical risks, based on implementing Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 on Environmentally-Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals.

2.5 Worker and-pesticides industry: Joint training on pesticides

The IUF's Global HSE Project is working with Crop Life International (CLI), the international trade association of the transnational pesticide manufacturing companies, to jointly train agricultural workers - and even management - on pesticide hazards and risk management prevention and control measures. The IUF and CLI each provide one to two trainers per course, who then jointly train workers and management. Pilot courses began in 2000 for two trade unions in Uganda, NUPAW and NUCMAW, and have continued on a regular basis since then.

This cooperation arose in large part from an ILO ACTRAV-sponsored study¹³¹ in 2000 of the pesticide industry's voluntary "Safe Use" training project in Guatemala. The IUF was especially critical that the industry project did not provide training for waged agricultural workers or their trade unions, and that the training needed to be based on solid education and training methods and less presentational in style.¹³² The IUF presented the findings to the CLI's Annual Conference in 2001. Further discussions between CLI and IUF then led to the joint work described above.



2.6 Tripartite cooperation to develop schemes for roving safety representatives in agriculture

Considering the close relationship between occupational health, safety and environmental standards and productivity, ensuring healthy and safe work practices through joint efforts is an area of potential cooperation between employers and trade unions. Much is to be gained in terms of workers' well-being and enterprise productivity.¹³³

2.6.1 South Africa

An example of tripartite cooperation - government, employers and trade unions - is a project to develop a roving safety representatives scheme in South African agriculture, based on the system legally operating in Sweden. The project aims to develop safety rep schemes to cover small to medium-sized agricultural undertakings, and to boost the provision on larger farms and plantations.

Roving safety representatives have the same legal powers as ordinary safety reps except that they can visit farms where they themselves are not employed. Based on common goals shared by workers, trade unions and employers, roving safety representatives help raise awareness, provide information, and advise on problems at the workplace in order to prevent and reduce fatalities, accidents and ill health.

In June 2002, the Swedish trade union Kommunal, in cooperation with the IUF, funded a six-person South African tripartite delegation visit to study the Swedish roving safety representatives scheme. The visit by the government, agricultural trade union and agricultural employers' representatives aimed to (a) see the roving safety representatives scheme in action on Swedish farms; (b) promote understanding about the way the union-nominated roving safety reps works, and their legal rights and duties - in particular, the contribution of each of the stakeholders to the system; (c) learn about the training programmes for roving safety reps, what back-up support is needed and from whom, and how the system is financed; and (d) develop ideas about how the scheme - or parts of it - could be applied in South Africa. Tripartite discussions are now underway to set up pilot RSR schemes in three regions in South Africa, and Kommunal and the IUF are continuing to facilitate the process.¹³⁴

2.6.2 United Kingdom

The United Kingdom's government agency, the Health and Safety Executive, stated publicly in 2001: "There is strong evidence that workplace-based safety representatives make a positive contribution to improving health and safety standards. We need to know whether similar expertise can help to improve employee consultation and health and safety at workplaces that currently do not enjoy the benefit of safety reps."¹³⁵

To examine the effectiveness of trade union appointed roving safety representatives in agriculture, trained mainly by the trade union, compared with professional health and safety advisers, the Health and Safety Executive funded an 18-month research project. The project was initiated through the tripartite (Health and Safety Executive) Agricultural Industry Advisory Committee, and managed by the Agricultural Development Advisory Service (ADAS).¹³⁶

The agricultural workers' section of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) fully participated in the project. They selected the eight volunteer worker roving safety reps and helped train them, in cooperation with ADAS.¹³⁷ The employers' organization, the National Farmers Union, also cooperated in the project.

Around 100 volunteer farms were identified and an initial health and safety status review was conducted to establish a baseline. The farms were then divided into three groups.

One group of some 40 farms was visited by the eight worker roving safety reps, each of whom made some four visits to a given number of farms in their respective areas. The second group of 40 farms was visited by the professional advisers (ADAS staff). The remaining 20 farms were a control group and received no visits. At the end of the process, there was a final status review of the farms in all the groups.¹³⁸

The project found that roving safety representatives had proved to be effective. However, securing access to employees, an important criterion for encouraging greater worker participation in improving health and safety standards, proved problematic in some instances.¹³⁹

2.7 Environmentally sustainable development

Especially since the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, trade unions around the world have become more active on environmental issues, and on networking and building alliances with other groups.¹⁴⁰

For example, the Labour Environmental Alliance Society (LEAS) in Vancouver, Canada, involves workers directly in environmental issues by linking workplace issues and the environment and making the connection between health and the environment. It also works to foster understanding of the labour movement among environmentalists. LEAS has an extensive network of over 50,000 workers, environmentalists and social justice activists who have found common ground.

The Society's main focus is on eliminating toxins from the workplace and community. It is especially concerned about the impact of pesticides in food and the effects on workers and consumers, notably children. It runs educational workshops with the British Columbia Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress as well as working with citizen, environmental and consumer groups. One of its member organizations, Farmfolk/Cityfolk, is a national leader on food issues. The Society is also involved with local and coastal fishers on issues of sustainable fisheries, food distribution and fish habitat, and water quality protection.¹⁴¹

An international labour foundation promoting trade union interests in sustainable development, SUSTAINLABOUR, was established in October 2004 in cooperation with the Spanish government, with the participation of UNEP, ILO and major national and international trade union organizations working actively on sustainable development issues. Based in Spain, the objectives of the foundation are to examine major challenges and opportunities and problems facing trade unions in this field, and to develop networking, capacity-building and training programmes at the regional level. It will develop country profiles from a labour perspective through research and measurement, designing of national campaigns and corporate assessments. At the workplace level, it will develop methodologies for workplace assessments and training methodologies on clean development mechanisms. In particular, it will continue and reinforce work started by the International Trade



Union Network on Sustainable Development which culminated in the strategic participation of over 400 trade union representatives in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, on issues such as SARD good practices, clean water, sanitation and human settlements and other topics affecting workers throughout the world. In particular, SUSTAINLABOUR will follow up on sustainable development and the social dimensions of globalization. One of the major aims of the trade union foundation is to make effective input and to follow the current discussions and preparations for the Commission on Sustainable Development, which meets annually at the United Nations in New York.

2.8 Food safety and food security

The IUF aims to promote food safety and food security, based on its historical and statutory commitment to "actively promote the organization of the world's food resources for the common good of the population as a whole."¹⁴²

2.8.1 Food safety

An example of trade union action on food safety, which aimed to protect both workers and consumers, was the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) involvement in the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)^{XII} crisis - the "mad cow" disease crisis - in the livestock industry in the UK in the 1990s.

^{XII} Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) is a type of disease found in cattle. Scientific opinion now believes this disease can be transmitted from cattle to humans through consumption of BSE-contaminated beef and offal. In humans this produces a variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), which is always fatal, so no safe threshold limit can be set. It is not contagious.

In response to the crisis, the TGWU advised its members on the health and safety implications, particularly in relation to Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and made considerable efforts to avoid job losses. The union also called for a public enquiry into the causes of BSE and the link with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, for the monitoring of food safety and hygiene to be moved from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Department of Health and the Health and Safety Commission, and for independent research work to examine the risks of contracting Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease for workers in the farming and food industries. The union also made representations to the UK government and the European Commission on these issues.¹⁴³



2.8.2 FAO Food Safety & Quality Standards

The FAO's Food Quality and Standards Programme is concerned with the maintenance and improvement of the quality and safety of foods at the international, regional and national levels. It promotes the establishment and operation of national regulatory frameworks compatible with international requirements, in particular those of the Codex Alimentarius Commission.^{XIII}

It also provides technical advice and assistance for capacity-building of food control systems and programmes at national and local levels to ensure food quality and safety throughout the food chain. It provides scientific assessments of food safety risks and related guidance to the Codex Alimentarius Commission and to countries. This includes the assessment of food additives, chemical and microbiological contaminants, naturally occurring toxicants, residues of veterinary drugs and foods derived from modern biotechnology.

^{XIII} The Codex Alimentarius Commission was created in 1963 by FAO and WHO to develop food standards, guidelines and related texts, such as codes of practice, under the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. The main purposes of this Programme are protecting the health of the consumers; ensuring fair practices in the food trade; and promoting coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations.



The FAO's capacity-building in the area of food safety includes policy advice on specific issues; institutional development and/or strengthening; review and updating of food legislation; harmonization of food regulations and standards with Codex and other international regulatory instruments; training of technical and managerial staff in different food safety related disciplines; and studies and applied research on specific food-related subjects. Capacity-building also includes the organization of national and regional workshops and seminars on food safety related matters and the development and dissemination of manuals, guidelines, training materials and other tools needed to support food control and food safety development programmes (FAO www.fao.org/es/ESN)

The FAO clearly plays a key role in promoting food safety and quality internationally, but to date, there has been little international trade union involvement in this work. Improving FAO-trade union cooperation on food safety issues and their impact on food trade could be a potential area of work to be developed in the future.

2.8.3 Food security

Although waged agricultural workers comprise 40 percent of the agricultural labour force and play a major role in food production, many of them are amongst the most vulnerable to food insecurity. Promoting increased food security for waged agricultural workers, their families and communities would be a significant step towards more sustainable agriculture, and it could be a major area for future FAO-ILO-IUF cooperation and joint work.

Food security, as defined by FAO, WFS Plan of Action (1996), exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Vulnerability to becoming food insecure encompasses the full range of factors that place people at risk of food insecurity and is therefore a critical component of the food security equation since it helps explain the process through which people become food insecure. The degree of vulnerability of individuals, households or groups of people to food insecurity is determined by their exposure to risk factors and their ability to cope with or withstand stressful situations.

2.8.4 The FAO and food security

The FAO's specific work on promoting increased food security is of particular relevance to waged agricultural workers and their trade unions.

For example, the FAO's Food Security and Agricultural Project Analysis Unit (ESAF) has undertaken a series of studies on vulnerable groups to improve understanding of who the food-insecure and vulnerable are, where they are located and, why they are vulnerable and what can be done to address their needs and concerns at different levels. The studies were conducted on Nepal, Guatemala and Vietnam.¹⁴⁴ Similar studies are ongoing in India in the states of Orissa and Himachal Pradesh.

By adopting a livelihoods-based approach to assessing, monitoring and mapping vulnerability to food insecurity in Nepal, this study sought to identify and understand why certain groups of people with the same livelihood, living in a relatively wide geographic area (beyond the household or community level), are food-insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity. The SLA looks at how people combine their tangible and intangible assets to reach their livelihood objectives and how their success in reaching these objectives is mediated by the policy and institutional environment within which they are embedded and influenced by the shocks and trends to which they are exposed. Because the SLA is multi-sectoral, using it as an analytical lens allows us to take into account the many factors that influence vulnerability to food insecurity, thereby allowing analyses to go beyond the traditional focus on food availability and include dimensions of access, utilization and stability. The SLA also provides a way of looking at macro-, meso- and micro-linkages, thereby accounting for the fact that household well-being is determined by household-level factors but also by meso- and macro-level factors such as national economic development. This helps to identify appropriate types of food security interventions. The participatory principles of the SLA mean that the perspectives of all stakeholders, including those whose vulnerability we are concerned with, are included in the analysis.¹⁴⁵



The summary of the study in Nepal identifies agricultural labourers as one of the food-insecure groups and shows that increased vulnerability to food insecurity is dealt with by changing livelihoods strategies, which have particular reference to rural employment patterns, as engagement in the labour market as a coping strategy was very common.

Other coping mechanisms that were adopted were: changing expenditure and consumption patterns, borrowing money and food, selling assets, intensified use of common property resources, migrating in search of wage employment, changing livelihoods or seeking employment locally as wage labour, changing social identity. Many households from the seven vulnerable livelihood groups profiled depend on seasonal and long-term migration to supplement their traditional source of income. In most cases, working men from the household migrate to other parts of Nepal or India to find employment as wage labourers. Rural service providers, marginal farmers, porters and agricultural labourers all indicated that seasonal and/or long-term migration is important to their survival.

Groups that are vulnerable to food insecurity are obliged to change livelihoods or seek employment locally as wage labourers, switch jobs, sometimes on a long-term basis, when the availability of work in their traditional occupation is limited. In addition to migration to other areas, households with insufficient agricultural production or income to make ends meet also look for local wage opportunities. Some marginal farm households try to rent additional land for cultivation as sharecroppers once they have met the obligations of their regular contract. When faced with periods of reduced or low demand for their services, many rural service providers and porters search for work as daily labourers. Some types of rural service providers have changed their main livelihood to agriculture or wage labour to cope with reduced demand for their services.

2.9 The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Initiative

In 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the FAO's Director-General, with Governments and civil society Major Groups launched the SARD Initiative, a multi-stakeholder framework designed to support the transition to people-centered sustainable agriculture and rural development and to strengthen participation in programme and policy development. The ILO's Director-General, also expressed his organization's support for the Initiative.

The SARD initiative is led by civil society, supported by governments and inter-governmental agencies, and facilitated by FAO, in recognition of its role as Task Manager for SARD. At the WSSD, over 65 governments and civil society organizations from 90 countries expressed support for this initiative, with the expectation that FAO could be an appropriate and neutral convener. In 2003, the SARD Initiative was selected as one of the Director General's twelve high visibility programmes and in 2005, in its 19th Session (April 2005), FAO's Committee on Agriculture "agreed that the SARD Initiative is an important instrument for fulfilling FAO's responsibility as UN System Task Manager for WSSD follow-up on implementation of Chapter 14, Agenda 21" and "welcomed FAO's continued support [...]", demonstrating that the Initiative responds to issues identified in FAO governing bodies as requiring support through FAO.

The Major Groups are those established by the Agenda 21 programme which was agreed by governments and stakeholders at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, 1992. They are: agricultural workers and their trade unions, farmers, business and industry, non-governmental organizations, indigenous peoples, women, children and youth, scientific and technological community, non-governmental organizations, and local authorities.

The SARD Initiative was developed to move beyond simply cataloguing successful case studies and it is now intent on multiplying the number of successes by fostering interactions between Major Groups at all levels and the relevant institutions of governments and international non-governmental organizations, and international governmental organizations.

In order to help eradicate poverty, to reduce the vulnerability of rural people and to increase their self-reliance, the objectives of the SARD Initiative are to:

- Build the capacities of rural communities, organizations and networks to better access resources, promote fairer conditions of employment in agriculture, and adopt innovative practices for SARD
- Strengthen the cooperative relationships and work among Major Groups
- Contribute to the implementation of Agenda 21, Chapter 14 on SARD, as well as the SARD-related elements of the Millennium Development Goals and the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation.

The IUF is acting as the Major Group focal point for agricultural workers and their trade unions in the SARD Initiative. In particular, it is taking the lead on developing ideas and activities to promote fairer conditions of employment in agriculture, which is one of the three major thematic areas of the Initiative. This report is in part a contribution to this programme.

FAO organized an Electronic Forum on Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (the SARD E-FORUM), between 24 June 2002 and 17 August 2002, in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, with the aim of promoting SARD and developing SARD implementation initiatives related to the following areas: Access to Resources; SARD Good Practices, Principles and Case Studies; and Fair Conditions for Employment in Agriculture.

Of these, the discussion on fair conditions for employment in agriculture was closely linked to the contribution of agricultural workers to SARD and it aimed to solicit a variety of perspectives and insights on fair employment in agriculture and the role of waged agricultural workers in sustainable agriculture; build an experience base of successful cases related to improving the conditions of waged agricultural workers and their contributions to sustainable agriculture; and identify consensus points on how to achieve fair employment conditions for agricultural workers. The outputs included: consensus on leading issues regarding fair employment for agricultural workers; documentation of successes related to agricultural workers and sustainable agriculture and rural development; and key action areas for the future related to fair employment in agriculture.

A variety of topics were identified as crucial to addressing the issue of fair conditions of employment, including the question of child labour and young workers in agriculture, international standards, especially freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, non-discrimination in employment, the abolition of forced labour, and the elimination of child labour, and specific ILO standards on agriculture that cover safety and health, labour inspection, rural workers' organizations and plantations; health, safety and environmental standards in agriculture; community-oriented models for employment; fair employment in agriculture and the WSSD (especially through promotion of policies that recognize employment as central to poverty reduction, and initiatives to increase labour productivity, the level of decency of work and income-generating capacity).

The SARD campaign on fair employment focuses on Major Group efforts (in cooperation with other stakeholders) to strengthen economic and social standards/conditions of SARD with respect to promoting fair conditions of employment in agriculture for permanent workers and temporary and/or seasonal (migrant) workers, wage-dependent smallholders, self-employed farmers working as contract labourers, self-employed workers employed as contract labourers, and sharecropping, through the improvement of health, safety and environmental standards for farmers and agricultural workers, and fairer conditions of employment for women in agriculture (see www.fao.org/sard/initiative_en.html).

2.10 The World Food Summit and follow-up

Trade unions representing waged agricultural workers have taken a keen interest in efforts to achieve food security. In the run-up to the World Food Summit (WFS) in 1996, the 13th FAO/International Trade Union Consultation focused on food security, and how trade unions could contribute to the Summit and in the implementation of the WFS Plan of Action.

The consultation recommended that trade unions participate in the “dialogue at the national, regional and global levels that has been launched on food security in preparation for the World Food Summit” and “provide information to their constituencies, ... contribute feedback to the Plan of Action and technical papers which were prepared for the Summit, and.....identify areas for cooperation in the Plan of Action”¹⁴⁶.

The FAO took steps to promote the participation of trade unions in the policy dialogue on food security in the preparatory processes of the WFS, notably by preparing, in cooperation with trade unions and other organizations, the document *Partners for Food Security*. Intended as a contribution to the WFS process, this document brings together the trade unions' mandates, strategies and experiences in promoting food security, and their positions and views on the key issues addressed by the WFS and the Plan of Action. It presents possible areas for cooperation in implementing the WFS Plan of Action.¹⁴⁷

The trade unions expressed their readiness to bring the views and positions of their membership on food security issues to the attention of policy makers at country, regional and international levels. As an example, they pointed to the participation

of trade unions and farmers' organizations in the Latin American and Caribbean Movement for Food Security and in drawing up the Managua Declaration of 1995 in which governments, people's organizations and NGOs pledged to work together on strategies for achieving food security in the region. Some trade unions indicated their capacity to engage in research on food security issues and to act as channels for the dissemination of research and information.

The trade unions also indicated that cooperation at local and national levels between governments, cooperatives, trade unions and other sectors of civil society is key for meeting the needs of the food insecure. Areas for cooperation include: provision of social welfare and safety nets and integrated programmes for sustainable agriculture and rural development.

The IUF participated in both the 1996 and the 2002 World Food Summits. It has also acted as the focal point for trade unions in the International Non-governmental Organizations/Civil Society Organizations Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty and Food Security. This body is coordinating and promoting NGO/CSO follow-up to the World Food Summit: Five Years Later, 2002. The IUF has written a section on workers' rights for the proposed International Code of Conduct on the Right to Adequate Food which the NGOs/CSOs put forward as one of the main outcomes of the Summit, and on which the FAO has now set up a working group.

2.11 Elimination of child labour in agriculture

Trade unions have conducted campaigns, programmes and activities to promote decent work in agriculture and to use their collective strength, through either collective bargaining or grassroots action, to eliminate the use of child labour. The aim is to ensure that children have a chance to live in a safe environment, particularly one free from hazardous work, and to have access to school, so that they can achieve their full potential.

Trade union work to eliminate use of child labourers in agriculture includes:

2.11.1 National level

The Brazilian agricultural workers' union, CONTAG, has been at the forefront of the fight to stop child labour. In 1993, in partnership with the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the union started a "Child Workers' Action Programme" in 88 municipalities where there were large numbers of rural workers.

The Action Programme produced 10,000 copies of a booklet on the rights of rural working children and provided five training courses for 150 union leaders and monitors on how to improve provisions in collective bargaining agreements on the prohibition of child labour. Seven highly successful radio programmes aimed at awareness-raising were produced and broadcast on CONTAG's network of 160 local radio programmes.¹⁴⁸



In rural areas in Kyrgyzstan, almost 100% of children work before and after school in the fields. Low prices for agricultural products mean that small farmers cannot afford to hire adult labour. A joint project of the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV) and the IUF is training trade union representatives in rural areas on child labour issues with a view to helping eliminate the most hazardous forms of child labour in cotton, rice and tobacco production. The Kyrgyzstan Agricultural Workers Union, an IUF affiliate, has well-developed infrastructures in all regions of the country which helps with project implementation.

The project also aims to help small farmers to increase productivity and income so that they will be able to hire adult workers - a measure which will also help reduce rural unemployment and migration. Furthermore, the union owns small plots of land in all seven regions, which it uses to train small farmers. It also uses its land as a guarantee (collateral) to secure bank credits for farmers who wish to convert to more sustainable forms of agricultural production and for developing micro-credit cooperatives for union members.¹⁴⁹

In Ghana, the General Agricultural Workers Union has been able to negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the Ghana Oil Palm Development Company which contains the following clauses: "The management is committed to the eradication of child labour in and around the plantations, and within the country as a whole" and "The management shall, in conjunction with the Union take necessary action to ensure that child labour is absent from within and around the plantation".¹⁵⁰

2.11.2 Sectoral level

The IUF has signed an agreement with the International Tobacco Growers Association to work together to eliminate child labour in the tobacco industry. The IUF's training and education programmes have enabled affiliates to secure collective bargaining agreements which commit employers to eliminate the use of child labour. A Foundation for the Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco has now been set up, comprising tobacco manufacturers and trade unions.¹⁵¹

In 2001, following media revelations about the use of child slave labour in cocoa production in some West African states, the IUF and several NGOs began talks with the main companies and organizations in the global cocoa and chocolate industry.¹⁵² The discussions resulted in the establishment in 2003 of the International Cocoa Initiative: Working towards responsible labour standards for cocoa growing, based on a joint Foundation like the one in the tobacco sector. The Foundation is focusing initially on the elimination of child labour in West African cocoa production.¹⁵³

2.12 HIV/AIDS prevention

Trade union work on HIV/AIDS prevention is expanding rapidly. For example, the Tanzanian Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU) has written an HIV/AIDS Code of Practice for plantation workplaces with the help of an Irish NGO.¹⁵⁴

Agricultural unions are also promoting the ILO Code of Practice on HIV/AIDS which provides workers, employers and governments with global guidelines - based on international labour standards - for addressing HIV/AIDS and its impact at the enterprise, community and national levels where most infections occur.¹⁵⁵

In preparation for an international union campaign on HIV/AIDS, the ICFTU has been mapping the activities being undertaken by trade union organizations around the world as part of the fight against HIV/AIDS.¹⁵⁶

2.13 Land reform

It is not clear whether and to what extent waged agricultural workers are considered to be stakeholders in land reform. Despite working on the land and helping increase its productivity, waged workers often do not benefit from the process of land reform. Indeed, land reform which ignores this large occupational group may lead to workers' losing their employment, housing and livelihoods, and even the right to work as migrant labour in a country, and so plunge this impoverished group even deeper into poverty and hunger.¹⁵⁷

At the country level, there are often no clear policies or guidelines as to what options are available for agricultural workers in case of land reform or redistribution.

The role played by agricultural workers' unions in addressing workers' issues in the process of land reform has so far been extremely limited, due to various constraints such as poor organizational, political, financial and technical capacity to effectively represent and forward the interests of their members.

This is particularly acute in countries such as Zimbabwe, Namibia or South Africa, where significant changes in land ownership have resulted in marginalization and dramatic losses and negative consequences for farm workers. Legislation and policy concerning land redistribution or accommodation or compensation for evicted farm workers are largely lacking. The South African White Paper on Land Reform 1996 was one exception, where issues of land tenure security and land redistribution were confronted. In South Africa, for example, workers have the right to benefit from land reform and are given land on farms where they work. However, as the ongoing Zimbabwean land reform shows, attention to the farm worker situation during land reform is critical.

To help improve the situation of waged agricultural workers as stakeholders in land reform processes, the IUF is now working with the International Land Coalition (ILC)^{XIV} to research and develop guidelines to:

- help ensure that policy makers consider waged workers and their trade unions as stakeholders in land reform and as potential beneficiaries;
- help policy makers ensure that "just transition" measures are put in place for workers displaced by land reform (i.e. where for whatever reasons they will not benefit from land reform by becoming small farmers), so as to guarantee some form of sustainable livelihood.

2.13.1 **FAO study on waged agricultural workers and land reform in South Africa**

In 2004, the FAO undertook a study to investigate the role of agricultural workers' unions in the land reform process in South Africa. The FAO's mandate includes the establishment of an improved set of support arrangements and actions for agricultural workers and unions - as a relatively neglected set of agents who are seen as capable of making, and participating in, a deeper and more sustainable agriculture and wider rural development. This is inherently desirable in the context of large-scale structural changes in rural and agricultural economies, with the aim of understanding the circumstances and organization of South African agricultural workers and unions, the legislative environment which influences or supports their actions, and their actual or potential participation in policy-making and implementation, particularly in the unfolding of the country's land reform programme, as well as the constraints on their engagement with the agricultural labour community, farmers and government, and with the objective of developing concrete policy recommendations.

Recent trends in employment and labour changes in agriculture in South Africa are characterized by large-scale labour shedding in response to a rapid liberalization. In contrast to many other agricultural economies, skilled and semi-skilled labour, while decreasing on the commercial farms in aggregate terms, is coming to comprise a larger proportion of the workforce, as reliance on "casual" or informal workers is rapidly diminishing. South Africa's Land Reform Programme has a highly contested framework of priorities: restitution for those forcibly removed from their lands, tenure security for those presently on farms, and land redistribution. This last element is the vehicle considered most appropriate for investigation, and for agricultural workers - through their unions - to access in pursuit of a more sustainable agriculture and rural development. Agricultural workers' knowledge of the programme itself is very limited, and their trade unions have not been very engaged

^{XIV} The International Land Coalition (ILC) was formerly called the Popular Coalition for the Eradication of Poverty and Hunger.

in the process at the institutional level. Individual trade union officers sometimes provide support and advice to their membership on land reform issues, but there is no operational programme or funding for such union services. While there are instances of wholesale union support for land reform, there is also scathing criticism of the operation of schemes, while the public sector engagement with agricultural workers in support of accessing land reform options is limited.

Most union organizers and unions wish to pursue more active roles in support of land reform programmes on behalf of workers, but clearly lack the training and knowledge of policies and programmes. It is within this arena that the report recommends the following:

Many beneficiaries of land reform to date come from backgrounds very dissimilar to those of workers. Agricultural workers have virtually been excluded from land reform, and therefore from the potential benefits of productive agriculture. Therefore, it is recommended that agricultural workers' unions be supported to promote members' engagement for members in land reform process and as beneficiaries. The support could take the following forms:

- Promoting, through the introduction of capacity-building programmes into selected unions, a deeper understanding of the policies, instruments, arrangements and options in land reform and redistribution for union organizers. Such capacity-building should be programme-based, and should be devolved to a project-based approach thereafter, in a phased manner. Initial capacity-building should be of a knowledge-based/sharing nature.
- Extending this into a broadening of the base of services offered by unions, so as to promote a “development agent” or “broker” role between the possible beneficiaries of the land redistribution programme and the programme itself. It would also enable the union to effectively offer its members a menu of choices when faced with eviction, retrenchment or any expropriation of their workplace. Such capacity-building should clearly be designed to complement the work of the ministries in taking the land reform options to agricultural workers. Considerable developmental synergies can be realized with complementarities between the public and labour sectors, but are conditional on political feasibility, prior to the design of any forms of capacity building.
- As a consequence or outcome of the above, unions should be supported in more formally addressing the nature of communication with actors in the agricultural sector, with a view to broadening the base of discussions from labour issues to matters of common concern, which include land redistribution, and the unions should be seen as social partners in the land redistribution process.

The study suggests that in spite of policies for land redistribution that target workers, the involvement of unions has been limited, especially due to lack of information and resources and to political impediments, but also because land reform challenges the mandate and membership of workers' unions, since with land redistribution, workers become self-employed and potentially employers.¹⁵⁸

2.14 Building links between trade unions and agricultural producers' organizations

One of the key questions that agricultural trade unions have addressed from the 1990s onwards, especially in the light of the impacts of globalization and structural adjustment policies, is how to strengthen relationships between trade unions representing waged workers and small farmer organizations. Whilst there are many common issues that could unite the two groups, the relationships and interaction between waged agricultural workers and small farmers can pose dilemmas for trade unions. What happens, for example, when small farmers are employers? Equally, in the process of land reform, workers and farmers can end up fighting each other, especially in the absence of any arbitration system. Farmers take over the land and workers - often migrant workers, who have no right to stay in the country - lose their livelihoods.

To build links and alliances between trade unions and small farmers' organizations, the IUF ran a Land and Freedom Project from 1998-2005.¹⁵⁹ The Project aimed, for example, to ensure the common defence of legal rights, improved access to land, and greater influence on local, national, regional and international policies, and to counter the concentration of power of multinational enterprises in the agricultural sector. It developed models to help trade unions and small farmers to work more closely together, and to adapt trade union structures, rules and training programmes so unions can recruit small farmers as members.

In 1994, in the framework of the FAO's collaboration with international trade unions in support of the activities of rural workers' organizations in sustainable rural development, the FAO undertook a study on the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU) of Ghana.¹⁶⁰ The report focused on the organization of the self-employed rural workers and the rural development role of agricultural unions. A special focus of the union's activity was building partnerships with other organizations working in the rural areas and promoting the participation of women in trade unions, within the more general objective of increasing workers' participation in rural development.

GAWU was one of the first agricultural unions to address the problem of the decline in union membership in rural areas, and it proposed the strategy of establishing partnerships with other community-based organizations working locally. GAWU also aimed at opening its membership to all rural workers, including both wage-earners and the self-employed, so as to extend the role of trade unions beyond the worker-employer relationship and pursue broader goals such as agrarian reform and rural development. GAWU has played a rural development role through different interventions, such as support services targeted at the self-employed, group enterprise promotion, transfer of improved technology and techniques, economic support services and social and community development activities. However, the main challenges that GAWU encountered in its strategy were in the phases of the operationalization of its programmes.

Building networks and alliances between waged agricultural workers and small farmers, and the trade unions and producers' organizations that represent them, is key to ensuring the participation of these groups and organizations in national decision-making processes, and in achieving sustainable agriculture and rural

development. Increasing participation of workers and small farmers in these processes, and strengthening the institutions that represent them, can facilitate the creation of employment opportunities and access to employment, and help improve working conditions.

2.15 Understanding changing employment patterns in agriculture

The IUF and the International Land Coalition (ILC) have jointly produced an analytical report¹⁶¹ on understanding changing work patterns in agriculture in the Ugandan sugar industry with regard to: (a) full-time waged workers; and (b) temporary and/or seasonal waged workers, including self-employed farmers hired as wage labourers. The research aimed to improve understanding of the rapidly changing patterns of production, employment and work in agriculture in order to help the IUF and ILC to more clearly focus their respective work programmes, better target their resources, and give clearer indications of potential partner organizations.

The report found:

- ongoing downsizing of the permanent waged workforce on sugar company nucleus (i.e. directly managed) plantations;
- an increase in the number of waged workers on short-term contracts of employment on the nucleus plantation;
- increased use of casual waged workers on nucleus plantations;
- increased hiring of casual waged workers by self-employed farmers, producing sugar under contract as "outgrowers" to the sugar plantation companies;
- outgrower associations acting as labour contractors, hiring casual waged labour to work on the farms of its outgrower farmer members;
- increasing casualization of employment.

The combined effects of these changes for waged workers are growing job insecurity, lower rates of pay, poorer working conditions, increasing food insecurity and growing levels of poverty.



2.15.1 Trade unions and the informalization of agriculture

In 2005, the FAO finalised a study on the role of agricultural workers' unions in the process of the informalization of agriculture, with the aim to provide policy recommendations for the strengthening of rural institutions supporting agricultural workers and farmers.¹⁶²

The paper offers a case study of the experience with the unionisation of different categories of labour in the agricultural sector of the General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), of Ghana. GAWU now counts among its members: self-employed rural workers, subsistence farmers, waged workers in agriculture, casual labourers, and seasonal migrants. The strategy adopted by the union for expanding its outreach to non-conventional categories of workers, passed through the provision to its members of various services linked not only to farm production and income generating activities, such as training, micro credit, and other incentives, but also to the general livelihoods and well-being of the rural communities; which in turn support its advocacy role.

The research study analysed the experiences of and challenges faced by workers' unions in Ghana, and provided material and lessons that can be used for comparisons and policy recommendations in a broader context.

West Africa is characterized by fragmented land ownership, with a prevalence of small-scale farms which employ family labour with the addition of hired local or migrant labour in the peak season. In the case of Ghana, the main agricultural union (GAWU) has responded since the beginning of the 1990s to a labour market structure characterized by informal and casual labour arrangements, by trying to open its membership to different categories of labour, such as agricultural workers, small-scale farmers and migrant labourers. During the last decade, the union has provided a range of services linked to farm production and income-generating activities, and other social services for the well-being of the communities and has worked in partnership with a variety of community-level organizations. The case study evaluated this experience in a regional perspective.

The study recognised that global changes in the rural economy and in rural labour markets require deep adjustments also at the institutional level, such as in the organizational structure of the trade unions and in the definition of their role and mandate. Agricultural unions need to play different and innovative institutional roles to ensure that workers and small-scale farmers benefit from the changes in the organization of production in agriculture. The strengthening of the role of unions, together with that of other rural institutions, is critical in order to minimize the potential negative impacts of land reform and casualization of labour on the poorest groups, and therefore should be a priority in the design of poverty reduction policies.

After analysing, in a historical perspective, the changes occurring in agricultural production, the poverty trends and the experience of agricultural unions, with particular regard to the potential for its development and replication, the study offers interesting lessons and examples relevant to the changing role of unions in other contexts. The good practices emerging from the work GAWU has done to promote workers' rights are in the following areas: broadening the conceptual definition of workers, initiatives to improve livelihoods conditions, promotion of gender equality, and engagement in policy advocacy work. This investigation could be used for the analysis of unions' potential contribution to the improvement of the livelihoods of rural people.

2.16 **Developing alliances between indigenous and tribal peoples and trade unions**

An ILO discussion document on initiatives between indigenous and tribal peoples and trade unions observes: "Until recent times indigenous and tribal peoples and the labour movement have ignored each other. Lack of interest and mutual distrust have characterized the relationship, if any, between these two groups".¹⁶³ The document goes on to explore possibilities for cooperation between the two groups. It notes: "What emerges clearly is that, in the current context of labour market deregulation and growing concern for degradation of the environment, there are grounds for joint ventures between the indigenous and labour movements".¹⁶⁴

Some examples of such cooperation include:

- In Panama, many of the banana plantations are located in areas where indigenous people live. The leadership of the main banana union in Panama, SITRACHILCO, comes from the indigenous people's community.¹⁶⁵
- The ILO programme to Support Self-reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Through Cooperatives and Other Self-help Organizations (INDISCO) aims to strengthen the capacities of indigenous and tribal peoples; help them design and implement their own development plans and initiatives through their own organizations, and ensure that traditional values and culture are safeguarded. INDISCO has set up national level consultative committees, for example, in India where trade unions are involved.¹⁶⁶

2.17 **Rural and migrant workers**

In 1999, in order to improve working conditions and security for rural workers, the Argentinian government legislated to set up the National Register for Rural Workers and Employers (RENATRE in Spanish).¹⁶⁷ This Register was established in cooperation with the agricultural trade union, UATRE, and four employers' organizations; and these organizations also help in its management. Upon registering, which is compulsory, a rural worker is issued with a Rural Worker's Card (*libreta del trabajador rural*). The Card offers workers and their families access to social security, education, health and retirement benefits, and can be used as a record to show that good labour relations have been maintained. To date, some 70,000 rural workers have joined the Register.

In 2002, the IUF World Congress approved a proposal of the IUF Agricultural Workers Trade Group's 3rd World Conference to begin to address the tremendous problem of migrant labour in agriculture by, inter alia, developing a charter of rights for migrant workers in the sector for unions to campaign around. A draft charter of rights for migrant workers in agriculture¹⁶⁸ was produced at an international union workshop in June 2003, organized by the IUF and IG BAU, a German agricultural trade union.

In the UK, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme is administered by the DEFRA (government department) and involves the National Farmers Union (employers) and the Transport and General Workers Union. The union seeks to ensure that these workers have the same rights and enjoy the same benefits as other workers in the industry. There are currently about 25,000 students, mostly from Eastern Europe, in the scheme.¹⁶⁹

2.18 Labour contractors

In the UK, "gangmasters" are similar to employment agencies and contract to supply seasonal labour to farms, horticultural establishments and pack houses and, more recently, to other industries. Many gangmasters abuse their workers through intimidation, underpayment and illegal deductions from wages. They also defraud the tax authorities.

The UK's Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) has for many years campaigned for the registration of gangmasters.¹⁷⁰ The National Farmers Union, the farm employers' association, has recently agreed to support the campaign, although the government has proved reluctant to embark on legislation to deal with this problem.

2.19 Water security, pollution and management

Globally, agriculture uses as much as 70% of all renewable water resources that are diverted for human use. The proportion is as high as 80-90% in developing countries.¹⁷¹

Access to water is critical for agricultural workers. People in the 40 poorest countries, more than half of which are in Africa, are obliged to meet all their water and sanitation needs on an average of 30 litres or less per day, far less than the 50 litres per day per capita that the United Nations says constitutes the absolute minimum for water needs. Incredibly, people in the nine poorest African countries are forced to live on an average of less than 10 litres per day.¹⁷²

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India, which also organizes waged workers, runs a water campaign aimed at improving access to safe and reliable drinking water supplies and increasing cultivatable areas. Improving the water supply in the villages has liberated many women from time-consuming and burdensome water collection whilst improving their health and that of their families.¹⁷³

In 2002, the Egyptian General Trade Union of Agricultural and Irrigation Workers hosted a two-day conference of agricultural trade unions from countries in the Nile basin and the IUF. The conference looked at measures to reduce pollution (especially from pesticides) and for ways to ensure the future of this major water source for many countries in East and North Africa. A statement was adopted calling for exchange of information among trade unions in the Nile basin and education and awareness-raising about water issues.

2.20 Organic agriculture

The Association of Agroecological Producers of Bella Unión (APABU) in Northern Uruguay consists of 150 producers of sugar cane and vegetables. Since 1999, the IUF's Latin American Regional Office (Rel-UITA) has been working with these producers, helping them build their organization and providing advice on ecological methods.

The Uruguayan agricultural workers union, SUDORA, and Rel-UITA have jointly established a pilot “union farm” for workers from orange growing farms in the Department of Salto. Orange growing does not provide full time employment for these workers. So the union farm allows these workers to cultivate small plots of land to supplement their livelihoods and provide income during the periods when unemployed. This project has turned into reality a long-standing dream of “land for food production”, and in the first stage, the workers and their families have been planting orchards. The project has financial support from the US Greengrants Foundation.¹⁷⁴

2.21 Literacy campaigns

Illiteracy is a major handicap for many rural workers, and trade unions work with governments, NGOs etc. to tackle this problem. For example, the Argentinian agricultural trade union, UATRE, runs literacy campaigns for workers in agreement with the Ministry of Education.

2.22 Savings and credit cooperatives

Savings and credit cooperatives established by trade unions provide an easy method for workers on low incomes to save money and to obtain small amounts of credit at reasonable interest rates. For example, through the ILO's COOPNET Programme, ten savings and credit cooperatives have been formed since 1998 by two African agricultural trade unions - TPAWU in Tanzania and NUPAW in Uganda – benefiting a total of 30,000 members.¹⁷⁵

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For agriculture and rural development to become truly sustainable and for global food security to be increased, the women and men who work daily to produce the world's food have to play even greater and more participative roles. The role of farmers in sustainable development is well recognized, and is firmly established as part of Agenda 21, Chapter 14. However, in the processes of sustainable agricultural development and improvement of world food security, both the needs and the contributions of the 450 million waged agricultural workers have been virtually overlooked to date. They are a huge and, in most regions of the world, a growing group of workers who account for over 40 per cent of the total agricultural labour force.

These workers, like farmers, are at the heart of the commercial food production system. Yet these working women and men remain largely invisible to policy and decision-makers in governments, agricultural and rural development agencies, intergovernmental organizations, science and research institutions, agricultural banks and credit institutions as well as in many civil society organizations and groups. They are hardly ever acknowledged in United Nations documentation outside of the ILO, or in rural development strategies. If they are never acknowledged, how can their needs as part of the core rural poor be assessed and programmes to eradicate their poverty and hunger developed? How can their already substantial contributions to sustainable agriculture and rural development and food security be expanded and strengthened?

Agriculture cannot be sustainable whilst over 40 per cent of the workforce suffer precarious employment and poor working conditions, and live in poverty. The problem is becoming even more acute as growing economic pressures are eroding the already low levels of protection of agricultural workers in terms of wage levels, employment security, health, safety and environmental standards, and social protection. Additional problems are posed by the fact that more and more women workers are being recruited on a casual basis and growing numbers of migrant workers are being hired. In order to make a living wage, it is common for the family of a migrant worker - including the children - to work on the farm or plantation. These "helpers", as they are often termed, do not figure on the payroll and their existence is not officially recognized by government agencies. Child labour remains a blight on the industry. Agriculture is also a dangerous industry and there is an urgent need to improve health, safety and environment standards in this sector, so as to prevent and reduce the large number of fatal and non-fatal accidents and cases of ill-health.

This report has shown that waged workers and the trade unions that represent and organize them already play an important, though unacknowledged and under-resourced, role in promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development, world food security and sustainable development. Given proper political, technical and financial support, they could play a much greater role in the future, and at the same time, move themselves out of the poverty trap.

Furthermore, it has to be borne in mind that, in reality, many small farmers are part farmer/part worker on a regular basis. Small farmers' incomes are based in part on sale of crops and livestock, and in part on wage employment, whether on a farm or plantation or in some other rural occupation. Therefore, a sustainable development strategy for agriculture has also to address the wage component of small farmers' income.

Successful sustainable development requires that both small farmers and waged workers are given considerably more attention as distinct groups, each with its own political, economic and social needs and contributions; that both groups figure in sustainable rural development strategies and programmes; and that more support is given to building and strengthening links between these groups in the interests of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

This is the challenge for international policymakers, for Agenda 21, for the implementation and success of the many plans coming out of the world summits, and for regional, national and local conferences and initiatives on making sustainable development a reality.

So how do we make agriculture and rural development more sustainable, enhance world food security, and eliminate agricultural poverty?

This report makes the following recommendations to Governments and the international community to help bring about the necessary changes:

RECOMMENDATION 1

Support the development and promotion of an Agenda for fair and decent work in agriculture in all relevant forums.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Support the application of the ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The FAO and international agricultural agencies must recognize waged agricultural workers as a group distinct from farmers, and must directly work with these workers and the trade unions that represent and organize them.

RECOMMENDATION 4

There must be recognition that waged agricultural workers and their trade unions (i) already play an important role in promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development, and world food security; and (ii) could in future play a much greater role in promoting these, given proper political, technical and financial support.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Strengthen cooperation between the FAO and ILO on issues of mutual concern arising from this report, notably occupational safety and health, poverty elimination, gender equality and HIV/AIDS.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Explore the possibilities for other specialised agencies to provide the technical, policy and financial support needed to increase the contribution of waged agricultural workers to SARD, world food security and sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Recognizing the importance of employment for pro-poor growth in rural areas, the FAO and ILO should encourage development partners to assist countries to mainstream employment into investment policy and poverty reduction strategies, including those focused on rural development.

Appendix 1

A decent work agenda for agriculture

Participants from more than 50 countries representing agricultural trade unions took part in an ILO Workers' Symposium on Decent Work in Agriculture, held in Geneva in September, 2003. They highlighted the critical importance of targeting agricultural growth and rural development in order to reduce poverty worldwide. They also made concrete proposals for action to address the situation. Decent work deficits are making agriculture the hardest-hit sector in terms of poverty, inequality and anti-trade union repression, according to participants attending the symposium organized by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV). Representatives from the IUF, FAO, WTO, UNCTAD, International Cooperative Alliance, TUAC and government agencies and non-governmental organizations took part in the proceedings. Background information and conclusions calling for concrete action to deal with increasing globalization and the impact on economic, social and political conditions affecting those working in agriculture can be found on the ILO website:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actrav/new/agsymp03/index.htm>

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- ¹⁶⁵ Personal communication from Gerardo Iglesias, IUF Regional Secretary for Latin America, Montevideo, Uruguay, 9 May 2003.
- ¹⁶⁶ INDISCO Information Sheet, ILO, Geneva, 2000.
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