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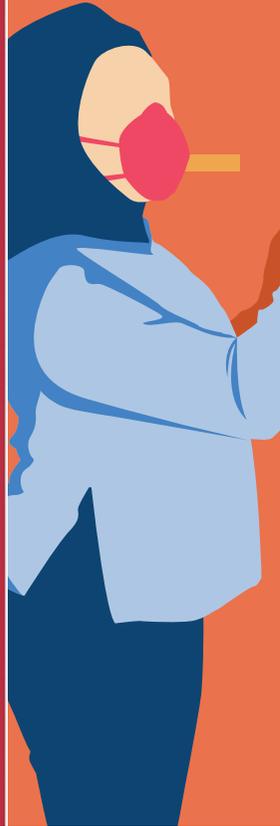


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A Call for a Fairer CAP



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EFFAT

EU Elections 2024

EFFAT calls for a Fairer Europe for Workers #CallingEU

A Call for a Fairer CAP



What are we talking about?

At least 10 million people are employed in European agriculture, mainly as seasonal workers, and other precarious statuses. The lived experience of many of them remains one of struggle, and deprivation.

At least 10 million people are employed in European agriculture, mainly as seasonal workers, day labourers or in other precarious statuses. Despite providing us with the food we need every day, the lived experience of many of them remains one of struggle, deprivation and human rights abuses. Inhumane working conditions, poor pay, long working hours, high levels of undeclared work and substandard housing are just some of the daily hardships faced by agricultural workers in Europe. Workers often fall victim to widespread exploitation, including gangmaster practices and other forms of modern slavery. The recent intensification of natural disasters linked to climate change has worsened the working conditions and increased job insecurity for many of these essential workers.

On the occasion of the last reform in 2021, the EU institutions introduced 'Social Conditionality' and other important social elements into the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). For the first time, agricultural workers and compliance with labour rights were included in the CAP, which accounts for around a third of the EU budget.

Despite this undeniable success, nearly 4 million agricultural workers are still affected by violations of workers' rights or abuses related to undeclared or informal employment. Agricultural work remains one of the most insecure, poorly paid and dangerous jobs in Europe.

Although Social Conditionality has been a major achievement, major improvements are still needed to ensure that CAP effectively addresses the conditions of agricultural workers in Europe.

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Major improvements are still needed to ensure that Social Conditionality works in practice and that CAP effectively addresses the conditions of agricultural workers in Europe.

The next CAP reform will take place during the next EU mandate. It is imperative to keep up the momentum and demand that one of the EU's oldest and most important policies delivers for one of the most challenging and precarious sectors of the economy.

Why is EU action needed?

Social conditionality in CAP requires Member States to impose administrative sanctions, in the form of a reduction or total exclusion from CAP direct payments, on agricultural employers who do not comply with a given set of EU labour standards. However, social conditionality risks lacking pragmatism and effectiveness if it is not accompanied by effective, dissuasive and proportionate sanctions as required by the new EU rules.

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Labour inspectorates in most Member States are understaffed and under-resourced.

Moreover, Social Conditionality requires an effective control system as sanctions apply following existing monitoring of working conditions. Evidence shows that such controls in the agriculture sector are poor, ineffective and scarce. Labour inspectorates in most Member States are understaffed and under-resourced. In some countries, labour inspections cover much less than one per cent of the total number of CAP beneficiaries.

In addition, the CAP does not take into account the level and quality of work carried out in the sector. Direct payments, which account for more than 2/3 of the current CAP budget, continue to be allocated mainly based on eligible hectares and the number of animals. To date, there are no criteria for the allocation of direct payments that take into account a social dimension (e.g: the number of farm workers employed or the quality of employment.)

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Direct payments to employers continue to be allocated mainly based on criteria that don't consider the number of workers and the quality of employment.

Regrettably, only a limited number of training and education programmes target specifically agricultural workers, hindering career development, job satisfaction, job retention and the attractiveness of the sector, with adverse effects on the health and safety of agricultural workers.

Career development in Agriculture is hindered by the lack of education and training.

How can the EU act?

In the run-up to the next EU elections, EFFAT puts forward the following measures to advance a fairer Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and enhance the effectiveness of Social Conditionality. These objectives can be realized through:



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1. Strengthening Social Conditionality:

- Ensuring effective, dissuasive and proportionate sanctions:** Without effective sanctions, social conditionality is a weak tool. The Commission must ensure that all Member States apply effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions which must be based on the kind of workers' rights violation and on its severity, extent, duration, reoccurrence and intentionality. The implementation of social conditionality must be closely monitored by the European institutions. While sanctions must be decided at the national level, EFFAT calls on the European Commission to work with the European social partners and Member States to develop a coordinated system of sanctions across Europe and to achieve greater harmonisation based on the severity, extent, permanence and/or recurrence and intentionality of non-compliance (see here the [EFFAT proposal](#) on sanctions)

- Setting binding targets for inspections:** To detect infringements and impose sanctions, the CAP should introduce a minimum binding target for inspections of beneficiaries, which will sufficiently increase the frequency of inspections in the sector in all Member States. Inspections should also be carried out using digital tools and crossing relevant data as demanded by EFFAT
- Extending the scope of Social Conditionality ensuring it applies also as an ex ante mechanism:** The scope of social conditionality should be extended to include new and old EU Directives and regulations including those dealing with adequate minimum wages, equal treatment, gender pay transparency, health and safety. Member States should be entitled to extend the scope of social conditionality including national legislation as considered appropriate.

Strengthening Social Conditionality is the way forward.

Including the level and quality of employment as a criteria for the allocation of direct payments is paramount.

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2. Broadening the criteria for direct payments:

The level of direct payments to farmers should be based not only on the number of eligible hectares and animals, but also on the level and quality of employment, wages and social security contributions paid. In this way, the CAP could make a significant contribution to combating undeclared work in the sector and would effectively promote good employment and growth in rural areas.

3. Carrying out training for agricultural workers:

The provision of CAP-funded education and training programmes for agricultural workers should be made compulsory for Member States at a certain level, as Member States currently allocate very little funding to such measures.

CAP provided training for agricultural workers will improve the attractiveness of the sector.



EFFAT is the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions, also representing domestic workers.

As a European Trade Union Federation representing 116 national trade unions from 37 European countries, EFFAT defends the interests of more than 25 million workers towards the European Institutions, European employers' associations, and transnational companies.

EFFAT is a member of the ETUC and the European regional organisation of the IUF.

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