

WORLD FOOD DAY 16 OCTOBER 2020

Respect and protect the rights of the Agro-food workers – make EU agriculture and food systems more sustainable and just

Europe needs a fair, transparent, and sustainable food supply chain that can benefit everyone. In recent decades, there has been an increased process of consolidation on both the distribution and production side of the agri-food chain. This has created major imbalances giving a few large multinationals and retailers excessive power over the global food supply chain. These imbalances in the food chain have major impacts on the most vulnerable ones, namely agricultural and food workers, as well as small farmers.

COVID-19 has dramatically reminded us about the fragility and strategic importance of agriculture and food production. While in the beginning of the pandemic some governments in the EU went desperate to counteract labour shortages, to ensure food supply and food security in Europe, it became clearer to all how essential Agro-Food workers in Europe are.

Labour shortages in agriculture are not only the result of travel and border restrictions, but they are above all a long-term consequence of the unacceptable working and employment conditions that characterise the agriculture sector in Europe, with over 4 million agricultural workers working under illegal or informal conditions.

Agro-Food workers, that were classified essential during this current Covid-19 pandemic, have shown astounding dedication and resilience during these difficult times providing Europe with food. However, despite this new consideration, evidence shows that their living and working conditions remain poor in several Member States, with many employers still failing to provide workers with adequate protection from the risk of infection. With their daily work, they also contribute to the environmental sustainability of our agro-food system, tackling hydrogeological instability, land degradation and soil erosion. Their role is vital also for the preservation of rural areas.

The EU has now the chance to rethink the European agro-food sector, making it more sustainable and fairer for all actors, including the most vulnerable ones.

Effective initiatives, including binding measures are urgently needed to raise labour and social standards of agro-food worker.

EU agriculture and food system must become more sustainable and respect workers' rights both in law and in practice.

On the World Food Day EFFAT reiterates its top demands for Agro-Food workers:

1. A more social Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) that provides the end of CAP subsidies for employers not respecting workers' rights and not complying with applicable working conditions resulting from relevant collective agreements as well as EU and national social and labour law as well as ILO Conventions (see [EFFAT demands](#))
2. Address the imbalances in the food supply chain and uphold respect for workers' dignity (See [EFFAT demands](#) on F2F and [EFFAT demands](#) on raising standards in the meat sector)