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***Time for a CAP that upholds the respect for workers' rights! Time for social conditionality!
Trade unions judge it unacceptable and misleading to refer to workers' rights as red tape***

A new harvesting season has started but very little has changed for agricultural workers in Europe: undeclared work, poverty wages, deplorable health and safety standards, and unsanitary housing remain recurrent challenges in farm workers' everyday lives, despite the essential role they are playing throughout this disgraceful pandemic. Against this background, the EU Institutions have the immediate opportunity to show that they have stopped overlooking these long-standing issues by agreeing on a CAP reform that includes a social conditionality mechanism. Linking CAP subsidies to the respect of workers' rights would not only be ethically correct and easily applicable, but it would also significantly contribute to improving working conditions in one of the economy's most precarious sectors.

Following the adoption of a broad social conditionality mechanism in the European Parliament's first reading position last October, the Commission presented three different options in early February. Regrettably, only one of them is on social conditionality, while the others have nothing to do with the crying need to link CAP subsidies to respect for workers' rights.

Meanwhile, several Member States are still opposing social conditionality often referring to misleading and false arguments. A group of 13 countries led by Austria issued a joint proposal at the end of February saying that "any form of additional 'conditionality' would enormously increase administrative burdens." The advanced proposal is that CAP's Farm Advisory Services (FAS) provide farmers and workers with information on working conditions: a clear attempt to replace social conditionality with something weak and ineffective.

During the last AgriFish Council (22-23 March), the Portuguese Presidency submitted and discussed with Agriculture Ministers an additional proposal that builds on the one led by Austria.

Kristjan Bragason, General Secretary of EFFAT, the European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions, announces that unions will not stand back: *"If we want the new CAP to help in raising labour standards in agriculture, there is no alternative to social conditionality. After everything agricultural workers have done to put food on our tables throughout a global pandemic, we cannot accept employers denying workers' rights and still receiving public funding."*

Regarding the claim of some employers and certain governments that social conditionality would create additional red tape and bureaucracy, he clarifies: *"There is a growing misleading narrative around social conditionality. It is shameful to refer to 'new red tape' when talking about workers' rights. This claim is even wrong since social conditionality refers to already applicable working conditions. Moreover, as demanded by the European Parliament, existing bodies responsible for checking workers' rights violations would be involved, without incurring new burden for CAP controllers. Social conditionality is just about connecting the dots, making a major part of the EU budget conditional on respect for workers' rights. Let us not forget that the same already applies for environmental standards and animal welfare. Are workers worth less than animals and plants?"*

There is a growing support for the inclusion of social conditionality in the next CAP reform. In an [Open Letter](#) promoted by EFFAT and co-signed by more than 300 organisations and personalities, signatories call on national Agriculture Ministers, the Commission, and the European Parliament to include social conditionality in the final deal on the next CAP reform currently under trilogue.

Ahead of the next trilogues, EFFAT reiterates its call towards co-legislators to back this broad demand for social justice and fairness in agriculture.