

The effects of severe meteorological conditions on Agriculture

Joint statement of the European social partners in Agriculture

The evidence that the consequences of global warming are severe and potentially catastrophic, has become more compelling than ever over the past 30 years. We witnessed rapidly spreading fires destroying vast areas of land, heavy hailstorms destroying crops and floodings damaging villages and fields.

As part of the productive ecosystem, our sector is only responsible for a portion of the emissions. However, it is the most affected by adverse climate conditions, not only on yields but also on overall affectation of rural infrastructures and working conditions.

Global warming is a global phenomenon that poses major challenges for farmers and workers.

Firstly, global warming has a direct impact on the working conditions and business operations. Extreme heat and greater sun radiation pose immediate and long-term health risks for farmers and workers. Heat-related illnesses and skin diseases are increasingly acknowledged occupational health problems among workers in the green sectors.¹

Technical and organisational measures such as adaptation of working schedules, access to drinking water, longer breaks, and protective equipment (primarily collective and in secondary order personal protective equipment) are becoming essential for workers' well-being and health. These measures are necessary to reduce the risks associated with working under extreme temperatures.

Global warming is impacting on business operations and crops production too with major repercussions on income and food security. Growing and harvesting periods seem to shift and fall shorter which poses challenges in terms of planning and yields. In addition, natural disasters as floods, heavy rains, and droughts pose further major losses to farmers.

At the same time, mitigation measures as envisaged in the EU Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy will lead to major structural changes in the agricultural sector with great impact on farmers and agricultural workers, such as changes of modes of production, potential job losses and new skills requirements, especially in a market dominated by skills shortages. For such measures to be accepted and supported by workers and farmers, we need a Just Transition that is delivering for the agricultural community.

The main objective of Just Transition is striking the EU Green Deal ambition while creating quality occupations and protecting people's jobs and income, so that no one is left behind. To achieve this, EFFAT and GEOPA firmly believe that any environmental policy needs to embed strong social considerations. This includes rigorous socio-economic impact assessments, sufficient resources tightened to social programs and the full involvement of social partners in the governance of the

¹ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU OSHA). 2020. Review of the future of the agriculture and occupational safety and health. Available at: [Review of the future of agriculture and occupational safety and health \(OSH\) - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications-and-reports/review-of-the-future-of-the-agriculture-and-occupational-safety-and-health)

transition. EFFAT and GEOPA also reiterate the importance of Social Dialogue in the sector and call on national authorities to support it in a timely and effective manner.

Moreover, risk assessment as an instrument to assess the workplace-related risks and take appropriate preventive measures shall, therefore, not be seen as a mere formality but shall be reinforced. EFFAT and GEOPA have developed with the support of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) an Online interactive Risk Assessment (OiRA) tool in the agriculture sector to increase the occupational safety and health (OSH) standards in the sector while simplifying the compliance requirements for employers.

In the light of the above, the European Social Partners in Agriculture call on the EU Institutions and national governments to:

- Work on an initiative in collaboration with the social partners on safe working conditions under extreme temperatures and weather events to protect health and safety, jobs and income of the agricultural community. This initiative should also include full compensation **to employers and farm workers** for workdays lost due to extreme weather events.
- Act on Just Transition with the inclusion of social considerations. This includes rigorous socio-economic impact assessment at local level to assess the impact on jobs, income and skills of any environmental policy and to guarantee the necessary resources and full involvement of social partners.

EFFAT and GEOPA commits to place Just Transition as a permanent item of the forthcoming work programmes of the European Social Dialogue Committee for Agriculture with the aim of establishing a common approach and a joint strategy on these issues.

The European Social Partners in Agriculture commit to continue their work on the mitigating the effects of severe meteorological conditions on agriculture as part of the current and futures Work Program of the European Social Dialogue Committee for Agriculture² and especially in the framework of the EU-funded Safe Habitus project.

For EFFAT:



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² For instance Point 2 (*Follow up of the implementation of the social dimension of the CAP*) and Point 4 (*Health and safety at workplace*) bullet points one and two (*Exposure to heat and priority access to water: dissemination of recommendations and best practices in the sector; Disseminating the OiRA tool of EU OSHA for Agriculture*)