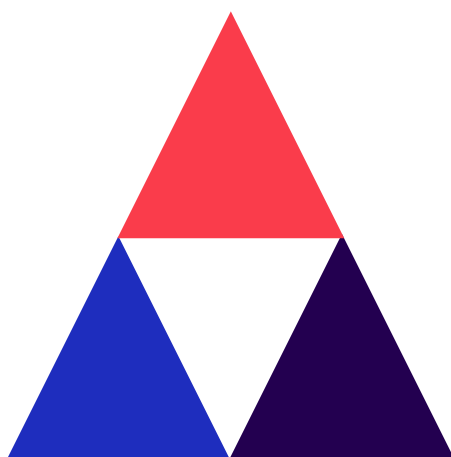




► Note on the proceedings

Technical meeting on the promotion of decent work and a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning in the food and beverage industry (Geneva, 27–31 January 2025)



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► Introduction

The technical meeting on the promotion of decent work and a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning in the food and beverage industry was held from 27 to 31 January 2025. At its 350th Session, in March 2024, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization endorsed the convening of this technical meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss challenges and opportunities associated with promoting decent work and a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning, within the food and beverages industry, with a view to adopting conclusions, including recommendations for future action.

At its first sitting, the meeting adopted the timetable and the points for discussion. The meeting held five plenary sittings, including four devoted to deliberate on the points for discussion.

In accordance with article 6 of the [Standing orders for technical meetings](#), the Chairperson of the meeting was Ms Monica Vimbayi Hanga (Minister-Counsellor, Permanent Mission of the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations). At its first sitting, the meeting elected three Vice-Chairpersons as follows:

Government group

Vice-Chairperson: Ms Nilufarkhon Kamalova (Uzbekistan)

Employers' group

Vice-Chairperson: Mr Mario Montero Pérez (Cámara Costarricense de la Industria Alimentaria, Costa Rica)

Workers' group

Vice-Chairperson: Mr René Kouwenhoven (Trade Union Confederation (FNV), Netherlands)

The Secretary-General of the meeting was Mr F. Hagemann (Director of the Sectoral Policies Department) and the Deputy Secretary-General of the meeting was Ms Y. Arai (Deputy Director of the Sectoral Policies Department). The Executive Secretary was Mr E. Beytullayev. Ms M. Fortuny (Head of the Forestry, Agriculture, Construction and Tourism Unit) provided overall guidance and support during the meeting. The Coordinator of secretariat services was Ms M. M. Than Tun. The representative of the Office of the Legal Adviser was Mr T. Geckeler.

The meeting was attended by 88 participants, including 29 Government representatives and advisers (from 19 Member States), together with 21 Government observers (from 12 Member States), as well as 12 Employer and 10 Worker representatives and advisers and observers, and 11 observers from intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and invited international non-governmental organizations. Women represented 58 per cent of the participants.

► Consideration of the draft guidelines

I. Opening speeches

1. The Secretary-General of the meeting opened the meeting and introduced Ms Monica Hanga as the Chairperson appointed for the meeting. She was the Minister's Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Zimbabwe in Geneva, focusing on labour, humanitarian and migration issues.

2. The Chairperson welcomed the participants to the meeting on the promotion of decent work and a just transition in the food and beverage industry. She noted that participants had a unique opportunity to share experiences and lessons learned in addressing employment and labour challenges in an industry that played a critical role in ensuring food security and nutrition. She emphasized that the sector had undergone significant transformations with far-reaching implications for the world of work. Despite its socio-economic importance, the sector often faced decent work deficits, including underemployment, limited access to rights, inadequate working conditions and informality. She highlighted the industry's pivotal role in addressing the environmental impact of food production and stressed the importance of aligning environmental priorities with economic and social goals. She underscored the need to create sustainable production environments and enable workers to thrive through access to skills, training and decent working conditions adapted to ongoing transitions.
3. The Secretary-General of the meeting provided an overview of the meeting, highlighting the essential role of food and beverage sectors and their challenges. He stated that social dialogue was a cornerstone for finding solutions that worked for all stakeholders. Through social dialogue, governments and social partners could shape a future of work that supported economic growth, created decent jobs, protected workers, and advanced social justice and a just transition. The meeting provided an opportunity to examine the industry through the lens of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, underpinned by international labour standards and principles and based on social dialogue. The meeting aimed to adopt conclusions and recommendations through tripartite consensus, which would guide the ILO constituents and the industry in the coming years.
4. The Executive Secretary provided an overview of the [Report for discussion](#) (TMFBI/2025), which focused on the food and beverage sector, encompassing the processing, manufacturing, and packaging of food and beverages. It excluded upstream activities related to raw materials production and downstream food and beverage services. Examples in the report referred to the broader agri-food systems, of which food and drink manufacturing was an integral part. These examples highlighted the interconnected nature of food production activities and the critical role that the food and beverage industry played in advancing the transition towards sustainable food systems. He noted that the employment data and trends provided in Chapter 2 demonstrated the role that the food and beverage sector and the wider agri-food systems played as a major source of employment, especially in developing and emerging economies. In most countries, the food and beverage industry was one of the largest manufacturing sectors in terms of employment. In 2022, it employed more than 79.9 million people – or 2.3 per cent of the global workforce. An analysis of production trends captured in Chapter 3, showed notable increases in food and beverage output and value added in all regions over the past years, with more space dedicated to analysing the situation in the surging African region.
5. The remaining sections of the report analysed employment and labour issues from a decent work perspective, covering employment creation, fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection, social dialogue and a just transition. Particular attention was devoted to migrant workers, who faced challenges in exercising rights and accessing decent work opportunities.
6. The Government representative from Malawi inquired about the regional balance of social dialogue examples in the report. The Executive Secretary explained that examples of good practices from various regions were included throughout the different sections of the report, assuring that efforts were made to ensure regional balance. The meeting provided an excellent opportunity for the participants to share other diverse practices from their countries and regions that could be integrated in future reports and the meeting's outcomes.

7. The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that the report was comprehensive and acknowledged the sector as a significant source of employment and economic activity. He highlighted the need to leverage opportunities for promoting decent work and a just transition while responding to current and future situations, trends, shifts and concerns. Creating decent work and achieving a just transition required promoting an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, especially for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The food and beverage industry was a diverse ecosystem, and the conclusions drawn must reflect these differences by providing recommendations for policies that addressed the sector's unique needs and adapted to specific realities. Employers reaffirmed their commitment to the fundamental principles and rights at work, emphasizing their essential role in creating more and better jobs. Formalization was critical in emerging and developing countries, where informal employment dominated key sectors. Skills development was essential to successfully advance a just transition across different regions. He called on the Office to present short, balanced, and concrete draft conclusions, prioritizing areas of consensus and rooted in social dialogue.
8. The Worker Vice-Chairperson underlined the effects of the climate crisis on jobs and livelihoods. The global food system was failing to deliver food security due to inequality of access and food waste, and it was responsible for over one third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. It was essential to move towards a low-emissions food and water system where no one was left behind. Governments, employers' and workers' organizations should actively engage in collaborative efforts to incorporate policies for a transition towards environmental and social sustainability, as recommended in the ILO *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* and the ILO's *Policy Guidelines for the Promotion of Decent Work in the Agri-Food Sector*. Just transition measures were needed to ensure that workers affected by the transition were not left behind. He stressed the importance of the ILO Guidance on Just Transition and the Decent Work Agenda. Skills development, lifelong learning, training, and quality apprenticeships were crucial for equipping workers to succeed in a sustainable future. Promoting equality of opportunity, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, and addressing gender-based occupational segregation were crucial. Governments should ensure adequate working conditions, safety and health at work, and access to social protection for all food and beverage workers. His group's goals included engaging with companies and governments to develop action plans for just transition, strengthening labour law and workers' rights, ensuring investments in training and education, securing existing jobs, focusing on occupational safety and health risks, and addressing workplace discrimination, harassment, and violence.
9. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that urgent action was needed to implement socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable practices to build food systems that could feed the world's growing population. For governments, the agri-food sector, of which the food and beverage sector was a critical part, was of paramount importance. In many countries, the agri-food sector made a significant contribution to employment and export earnings. It was also closely interconnected with many other sectors of the economy. Addressing the employment and labour challenges facing the different segments of the food supply chain and building sustainable and resilient food systems required concerted efforts. Shifting to environmentally sustainable economies offered opportunities for decent work and social justice but also led to challenges such as job losses, skill gaps and increased inequalities. It was essential to discuss how to support the creation of quality jobs and sustainable enterprises in the food and beverage industry while addressing its environmental impacts and other socio-economic issues.
10. The Government representative of Brazil recognized the importance of the sector for employment, economic development and food security. He noted the need to invest in skills development and lifelong training. Brazil was working on strengthening its training programmes

and improving working conditions through reinforced labour inspection. Social dialogue was key to advancing decent work and sustainability in the sector.

11. The Government representative of Malawi stressed that her country paid particular attention to advancing decent work in the sector. Malawi's growing young population generated pressure on the Government to create jobs. The subregion was exposed to challenges related to climate change and needed to implement mitigation measures.
12. The Government representative of Indonesia noted that her country was committed to promoting decent work, protecting workers and supporting social dialogue. Indonesia was working on improving labour conditions, including occupational safety and health, to ensure that all workers had access to labour rights. Negotiation between employers and unions was encouraged to ensure that workers' rights were upheld. Indonesia was implementing labour market reforms to address the causes of informality and requested technical assistance from the ILO to design labour policies and capacity-building programmes on just transition, green jobs, upskilling, social dialogue mechanisms, and occupational safety and health protection for workers.
13. The Government representative of Spain agreed that the industry faced challenges related to labour shortages and climate change. These led to trends such as automation and the need to adapt policies and training to provide workers with new skills and promote mobility. Discussions on lifelong training and education were needed, as well as measures to address the challenges faced by workers, particularly youth and women. Labour standards and decent working conditions had to be upheld.
14. The Government representative of Uzbekistan stressed the need to adapt to emerging needs and address skills gaps in the sector, which was essential for sustainable growth. Regular assessments of training policies were key to responding to market needs. Employers and workers had to be prepared for future challenges related to the green transition, such as developing climate-smart and resource-efficient systems, creating green jobs, implementing certification standards, improving workforce mobility and lifelong learning, and organizing initiatives for women, youth and marginalized groups. Targeted policies could help create a future where all workers enjoyed decent working conditions, fair wages and sustainable livelihoods.
15. The Government representative of Niger said that 70–80 per cent of the country's population lived on agriculture. Niger did not face a labour shortage but a lack of investment and enterprises. Many workers used artisanal methods and needed training and upskilling. The country required help to modernize the sector and increase its productivity. He called for employers and companies to invest in Niger and overcome financial barriers. The perception that investments in Niger were risky had negative impacts on the country's development. The transition to formality was one of the country's priorities.
16. The Government representative of Spain referred to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were already several years old. He emphasized his preference for looking at the changing work environment and increasing need for sustainability in the context of the Decent Work Agenda.
17. The representative of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) stated that IFAD recognized the pivotal role the food and beverage sector played in transforming global food systems. The industry ensured food security and nutrition and provided livelihoods for millions of people, including women, youth and marginalized groups. The midstream activities of food processing, manufacturing, and packaging represented critical linkages between agriculture and consumption. They offered a unique opportunity to create decent work, foster inclusive economic growth, and contribute to a just transition toward sustainable and resilient food systems. IFAD

prioritized creating employment opportunities for rural youth in Africa and integrated agribusiness hubs through its programmes, focusing on skills development, lifelong learning, inclusive opportunities and supporting just transitions.

18. The representative of the World Bank stressed that jobs were the surest way out of poverty. Increases in labour income had been the main driver of poverty reduction over the past four decades. Economies that enabled workers to make optimal use of their skills and efforts saw labour productivity increase, translating into higher earnings and better working conditions. Many people in emerging markets and developing economies were still “working poor,” stuck in low-productivity jobs where they did not earn enough to escape poverty or be resilient to shocks. Furthermore, due to demographic trends, most new workers would enter labour markets in places where labour productivity was lowest over the next three decades. The lack of productive jobs was exacerbated by limited employment opportunities, particularly for women. Food and beverages represented a strategic sector for the jobs agenda in emerging markets and developing economies. It was a labour-absorbing sector that provided employment to countries with a limited industrial base. Companies tended to invest more in training and technology transfer, enhancing worker productivity. It was one of the most accessible industries for core-skilled workers, particularly women and youth. Integrated jobs strategies could unlock the sector’s potential, comprising policies supporting production, people and places. There was a need for better jobs that allowed workers to be more productive, earn more, escape poverty, learn, access other jobs and be fulfilled. Recognizing that need, the World Bank placed the jobs agenda as its top priority.
19. The representative from the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) welcomed the acknowledgement that structural changes in the food and beverage sector required thoughtful, negotiated and deliberate long-term responses. She highlighted the promotion and realization of freedom of association and collective bargaining as essential rights to support green and socially just transitions, identifying the need for dialogue at the enterprise, national and international levels. She pointed out that agriculture was a high-risk sector for human rights abuses, including forced labour, and that food and beverage enterprises played a crucial role in addressing these risks. She discussed the importance of legislation such as the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive in supporting these efforts, emphasizing that meaningful stakeholder engagement should complement, not replace, other fundamental approaches like collective bargaining, activism by human rights defenders, and advocacy for improved policies and regulations. She welcomed the recognition that enterprises could support just transitions through responsible purchasing practices, stating that purchasing companies must share supply chain responsibility to achieve decent labour standards. She called for joined-up and inclusive efforts to ensure the food and beverage industry thrived by attracting and retaining a skilled workforce, increasing productivity and maintaining decent working conditions. This included supporting small and medium-sized enterprises to improve competitiveness while promoting just transitions and ensuring that workers were included in dialogue processes. She emphasized the need to address the precarious situations of many workers, including informal, seasonal, women, and migrant workers, through gender-responsive approaches that understood intersectionality.

II. Introductory technical panel

20. The Secretary-General of the meeting convened a technical panel with representatives from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Trade and Development (UNCTAD) with the aim of further informing the discussions of the technical meeting. The panel underscored the Office’s goal of strengthening partnerships across the broader multilateral system. The Secretary-General asked each representative to provide an

overview of the latest social, economic, and environmental trends influencing the food and beverage industry.

21. Ms Marion Jansen, Director of the Trade and Agriculture Directorate at the OECD, presented four key trends impacting the broader agri-food sector, including the food and beverage industry. She reported a long-term decline in employment within the agri-food sector, aligning with the decreasing contribution of agriculture to GDP in OECD countries. Ms Jansen highlighted a highly segmented labour force characterized by lower levels of formal education and training. She identified a significant skills mismatch, with both overqualification and under-qualification prevalent in the sector. Additionally, she discussed the increasing adoption of labour-saving technologies, which require higher skill levels and present challenges for workforce management.
22. Ms Teresa Moreira, Head of the Competition and Consumer Policies Branch at UNCTAD, addressed the global trade dynamics affecting the food sector. She described food markets as complex and highly globalized, noting high concentration in several segments that lead to elevated consumer prices. She pointed out the limited and asymmetric market information, which restricts actors from maximizing their added value. She also discussed the impacts of climate change, environmental concerns, and governance issues on the sector, creating both challenges and opportunities for workforce skills development. She also mentioned the difficulties faced by developing countries in diversifying their economies due to heavy reliance on commodity exports. Ms Teresa Moreira explained that UNCTAD focused on assisting developing countries in integrating the global economy, with particular emphasis on Africa, Asia, Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean. She highlighted the increasing impact of trade disruptions on food security, exacerbated by recent crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Food markets were complex and globalized, and high market concentration in several segments had resulted in elevated consumer prices. Markets often involved small farmers and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, especially in developing countries. Challenges such as asymmetric market information and limited infrastructure (for example storage facilities) prevented all actors from optimizing their potential. Climate change, environmental concerns, social and governance issues further compounded the difficulties faced by these sectors. Technological advancements could both negatively and positively affect the workforce, necessitating upgraded skills. Developing countries remained import-dependent and struggled to reduce commodity dependence due to economic diversification challenges. They had more fragmented markets with small producers and were more exposed to extreme events due to climate change. Market reforms needed to address these issues. While mergers and acquisitions might improve efficiency and consumer welfare, they often led to the closure of plants and factories, negatively impacting the workforce. She emphasized the importance of balancing efficiency with workforce considerations in developed and developing economies.
23. The Secretary-General invited the panel to comment on labour and skills shortages in the agri-food industries.
24. The representative from OECD acknowledged that labour and generational renewal remained critical concerns in the agri-food sector across OECD countries. She highlighted the importance of improving the sector's attractiveness to younger generations, emphasizing the need for marketing strategies that promoted the sector's modernization and sustainable potential. The dilemma of the industry was to strive to achieve two major SDGs: producing more while at the same time producing more environmentally friendly. It was key to align education and skills training with sectoral demands and tackle the lack of formal education opportunities in agri-food industries. Initiatives such as Japan's smart agriculture programme and the Netherlands' green education strategy encouraged technological adoption and provided managerial training to

workers in the sector. She concluded by stressing the importance of formalizing skills training and fostering innovation.

25. The Secretary-General asked the panellists to share insights on how to ensure fair, competitive, and inclusive food markets based on UNCTAD's experience with competition policies.
26. The representative from UNCTAD elaborated on UNCTAD's role in supporting developing countries through trade, investment, technology and competition policies. She highlighted the cross-cutting nature of competition and consumer protection policies, which promoted market efficiency and consumer welfare. Highly concentrated food markets often resulted in higher prices, reduced access for small producers, and challenges for the workforce. Merger control regimes were thus key to monitor and regulate market concentration and prevent anti-competitive practices, hence the importance of ongoing efforts of regional and international collaborations, for example, the African Market Observatory, to study market dynamics and develop appropriate interventions. She concluded by emphasizing the need for cross-sectoral collaboration to address challenges in the agri-food sector, including competition, environmental sustainability and labour issues.
27. The Secretary-General invited both speakers to discuss potential collaboration among the ILO, OECD, and UNCTAD to support workers in the food and beverage industries.
28. The representative from OECD suggested leveraging OECD's relationships with Worker and Employer representatives to establish formal or informal linkages for collaboration. Two events were coming up in 2025: the Global Forum for Agriculture in October focusing on generational renewal, and an event dedicated to agri-food supply chains. She encouraged participation to foster dialogue and explore shared priorities.
29. The representative from UNCTAD proposed greater information-sharing and collaboration, particularly in technology-related initiatives. UNCTAD's programmes supporting skills development for small enterprises and entrepreneurs, as well as forums such as the Global Commodities Forum and e-Commerce Week, could address labour and training concerns.
30. The Worker Vice-Chairperson was surprised about the panellist's view on the lack of attractiveness of the food and beverage sector and asked the panellists to share reasons behind that. The representative of the OECD explained that the lack of attractiveness of the sector for youth was, among others, related to the lack of willingness of the youth to make investments in the sector. Inflation and an increasing need for investments related to, for example, sustainability, would lead to reducing the sector's attractiveness. The representative of UNCTAD shared that their findings indicated that younger individuals tended to be increasingly open to sustainable consumption choices, including food and that despite the higher prices. Information, education, increased awareness-raising play a key role. She believed that younger generations needed motivation to join the industry, which was however not impossible.
31. The Employer Vice-Chairperson underlined the added value of the food and beverages industry to agricultural production. The representative of the OECD stated that OECD's emphasis on agriculture was related to the Committee's decision, which traditionally worked on agriculture rather than on the food and beverages industry.

III. Point by point discussion

Discussion of point 1

How have the major drivers of change in the world of work, notably technological changes, demographic shifts, globalization and climate change, affected the food and beverage sector? What are the resulting challenges and opportunities for the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda in the sector, taking into account the specific circumstances of countries at different stages of development, especially developing and emerging economies, and other relevant factors? And what policies, measures and practices have proven effective to seize the opportunities and address the challenges, including across supply chains?

32. The Worker Vice-Chairperson stated that the food and beverage sector played an important role in job creation, employing over 79.9 million people in 2022. However, the sector faced significant environmental and labour challenges, including decent work deficits, skills mismatches, the impacts of climate change, the need to reduce energy and water consumption, and difficulties workers faced in exercising their fundamental labour rights, especially migrant workers. Additional challenges included adverse impacts from precarious employment, low wages, gender-based occupational segregation and discrimination, violence and harassment, occupational safety and health risks, and job destruction from automation. These challenges had been amplified by globalization, technological change, climate change and the financialization of the industry. Strengthening labour laws and workers' ability to freely access their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining was essential. Social dialogue and collective bargaining must play a central role in upskilling, training, mitigating adverse impacts of new technology, and taking a gender-responsive approach. Robust due diligence by enterprises in line with international instruments was crucial, including engaging with unions as rightsholders. The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) engaged with MNEs and concluded international framework agreements to ensure the exercise of enabling rights. There were opportunities for workers, unions, governments and companies to work together to address the impacts of technological change, demographic shifts, globalization and climate change, including through negotiating international framework agreements.
33. The Worker representative from Spain emphasized that migration had always taken place and would continue, so it was desirable to manage it in the best possible way for both migrants and the host society. Spain needed millions of people from other parts of the world to sustain the country, as the birth rate had been below replacement level since the 1980s. Migrant workers must be guaranteed the same human, labour, social and citizenship rights as others. Trade unions had information centres for foreign workers to advise on labour and immigration rights and prevent discrimination in the workplace. However, irregular migrants, estimated between 500,000 and 700,000, faced increased vulnerability and exploitation, especially in agriculture. Plans were needed for welcoming and integrating immigrants, regularizing migration flows, and protecting workers' rights regardless of immigration status. Effective labour inspections were necessary to detect rights violations and apply penalties. Political consensus on migration management was essential. The full exercise of freedom of association and collective bargaining rights must be guaranteed for all migrant workers. More resources and easier access to Spanish nationality through regular channels were needed, while organizing migration flows to banish xenophobia and racism. Adequate organization of flows was fundamental to preventing migrant exploitation and protecting conditions for all workers.

34. The Employer Vice-Chairperson emphasized that the food and beverage sector had undergone significant transformation due to technological advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, and climate change, presenting both challenges and opportunities. The sector was predominantly composed of MSMEs, many operating informally in emerging economies, while MNEs experienced distinct impacts due to their scale and resources. The interconnected nature of the sector meant challenges in one segment affected the entire industry. Strategic and tailored approaches were necessary to address regional disparities and the sector's unique structural characteristics, supporting the Decent Work Agenda and enhancing resilience and sustainable growth amidst global changes. Key economic drivers included demographic changes, reshaping the workforce; globalization, introducing complexities and risks; climate change, significantly impacting the sector, especially in developing countries; and technological innovation, boosting productivity but with uneven adoption across regions and enterprise sizes. Embracing change and advancing a just transition required governments, in consultation with social partners, to prioritize skills development and lifelong learning as a shared responsibility, aligned with the 2021 ILO resolution concerning skills and lifelong learning. Widespread informality in the sector, particularly in low- and middle-income regions, undermined productivity, sustainability, and competitiveness while limiting innovation, technology adoption, and workers' access to social protection, fair wages and career advancement. Addressing informality required coordinated efforts to promote formalization and strengthen workforce skills. The sector's productivity and resilience were influenced by factors driving innovation, sustainability, and competitiveness, creating a growing demand for skilled labour. Continuous workforce development and reskilling were necessary to adapt to emerging technologies and practices. Skills mismatches and shortages, along with uneven adoption of new practices across regions, placed significant pressure on stakeholders. Targeted and coordinated efforts were essential to address skills gaps, promote regional equity, and prepare the workforce to meet the sector's evolving needs, enhancing competitiveness, fostering resilience and sustainability, and contributing to inclusive economic growth and the promotion of the Decent Work Agenda.
35. The Government Vice-Chairperson emphasized that for governments, decent work in the agri-food sector was essential due to the food and beverage industry's potential to create decent and green jobs, particularly in developing countries. Demographic shifts and climate change were the most pressing challenges. The sector was a diverse ecosystem of enterprises, particularly MSMEs, with high levels of informal employment and labour migration. Many workers lacked fundamental labour rights and social protection, especially informal and migrant workers. Addressing the growing youth population in developing countries was a key priority, requiring policy options for youth employment, skills development and labour market opportunities. Given the high proportion of women workers in the sector, gender-sensitive policies were essential. Climate change negatively affected food prices and value chains, especially in developing and emerging economies. Technological changes and the digital divide between developed and developing countries required urgent attention. The growth of food systems in many countries was constrained by various obstacles faced by enterprises, including the lack of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development and limited access to investments and finance. Investing in agricultural research, technology, logistics, lifelong learning, reskilling, upskilling, expanding access to financial markets, promoting decent work and youth employment were critical for fostering sustainable and resilient food systems.
36. The Government representative of Brazil acknowledged that the food and beverage sector in Brazil had been significantly impacted by major drivers of change. New technologies had enhanced productivity and efficiency but required workforce upskilling. Brazil's rapid demographic transition was changing consumption patterns and creating new demands. Climate change was affecting crop yields and agricultural production. Key challenges included continuous

workforce upskilling, ensuring decent working conditions for migrant and temporary workers, and adapting production systems to mitigate climate change. Opportunities emerged, such as creating higher-skilled jobs, green job growth, improved working conditions through automation, and enhanced productivity through technology adoption. Brazil had implemented policies and practices, including vocational training programmes, improving working conditions for vulnerable groups, and supporting the transition of MSMEs from the informal to the formal economy. Continued efforts and collaboration among government, industry, and workers' organizations were necessary to fully address challenges and capitalize on opportunities.

37. The Government representative of Indonesia acknowledged that technological advancements, demographic shifts, globalization, and climate change had reshaped the food and beverage sector, bringing challenges and opportunities. Digitalization had transformed production, logistics, and consumer interaction, but the digital divide remained a challenge, especially for MSMEs and workers with limited access to technology and skills. Programmes had been implemented to address the gap by improving digital and technical skills. Indonesia's growing workforce and expanding middle class had driven demand for diverse, high-quality products, but high informality limited social protection and decent work opportunities. Laws and training initiatives focused on formalizing jobs and equipping workers, particularly youth and women, with the necessary skills. Global demand for Indonesian food and beverage products offered growth potential, but challenges such as competition, cost pressures and working conditions persisted. Regulations and international partnerships aimed to enhance competitiveness while promoting ethical labour practices. Climate change had disrupted agricultural supply chains, and national initiatives promoted sustainable practices and supply chain resilience while creating jobs. Key challenges included informality, gender disparities, occupational safety enforcement gaps and skills development deficits. Opportunities included strengthening enforcement of labour, food safety, and environmental laws; expanding skills training; promoting ethical and traceable supply chains; and supporting MSMEs. Indonesia reaffirmed its commitment to advancing the Decent Work Agenda through robust policies, innovative programmes, and partnerships, calling for strengthened international cooperation and knowledge-sharing.
38. The Government representative of Malawi emphasized that creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, with the support of social partners, was essential for the food and beverage sector to thrive. Adequate infrastructure investments, particularly in quality inputs, technology, and efficient transport and logistics systems, were critical. For countries in the Global South, significant investments in technology adoption were necessary. Investing in skills development programmes and lifelong learning, including multiskilling, upskilling, and reskilling, particularly for youth and agriculture-based economies, was a game-changer, addressing gaps and fostering workforce readiness. Vocational training centres needed to expand their offerings to include agriculture-based and food and beverage-related skills. Social dialogue was vital to foster collaboration between stakeholders, and strengthening and enforcing fundamental principles and rights at work was essential for ensuring adequate protection in the sector.
39. During the second round of interventions, the Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that the conclusions of the meeting should be specific to the issues of the food and beverages industry and not go beyond those.

Discussion of point 2

In view of the evolving skill needs and skill gaps, what policies and strategies have been effective in building and maintaining a qualified and skilled workforce for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, enterprise development, full and productive employment and decent work in the sector? What can be done to ensure that skill development and lifelong learning, and other relevant policies and measures, advance a just transition, and increase the green skill capacity and capability of employers and workers in the food and beverage sector?

40. The Employer Vice-Chairperson reported that achieving a just transition remained a global priority, though employment and skills challenges varied across regions, particularly in the food and beverage sector. The critical role of skill development and lifelong learning in adapting to changing demands, promoting inclusive economic development and advancing sustainability was emphasized. The sector's diversity in regional disparities, levels of economic development, enterprise sizes, environmental impact, and technology use underscored the need for tailored strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Key strategies included promoting an enabling business environment for sustainable enterprises, investing in skills, access to finance, social dialogue, addressing informality and gender inclusion. The need for tailored strategies to address disparities and ensure innovation, productivity, and competitiveness in the evolving food and beverage sector was highlighted.
41. The Worker Vice-Chairperson emphasized the importance of workplace cooperation, collective bargaining and social dialogue. A 2009 bipartite meeting had reaffirmed freedom of association and collective bargaining as fundamental rights that empower workers. The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and global union federations had signed numerous international framework agreements with transnational corporations (TNCs) to secure union and collective bargaining rights. Challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers in the food and beverage sector were identified, stressing the need for improved working conditions, living wages and occupational safety. Companies were urged to build sustainable organizational models addressing environmental and demographic transitions. Skills development, particularly vocational education and lifelong learning, was deemed essential for workers' socio-economic inclusion and the sector's sustainability. Elements of an effective skills system were outlined, including anticipating skill needs, engaging stakeholders, ensuring accessibility and equitable financing. Companies were urged to address skills gaps in areas such as food safety and occupational safety, and governments were called upon to invest in technical and vocational education and training (TVET), in line with the Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208). Inclusive skills programmes were deemed necessary to close the gender pay gap and support marginalized groups, such as women, indigenous workers and youth. The importance of skills development for green jobs was emphasized, and governments were called upon to expand green apprenticeships and invest in curricula for early career learning. Partnerships among governments, industry, and educational institutions were vital to designing inclusive training programmes. Social protection measures, such as unemployment benefits and gender-responsive compensation, were necessary to safeguard livelihoods during the transition. Collaboration among stakeholders through skills councils or committees, adherence to the *ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, and policies that promote decent work, labour rights, sustainable practices and equity were called for. The need for a greener, inclusive future that leaves no one behind was emphasized.
42. A Worker representative from Argentina asserted that gender equality was a fundamental human right and objective. Despite progress, women faced challenges like overrepresentation in

informal work, unequal care burdens, gender-based violence and persistent labour divisions. Societal models perpetuating inequality were criticized, and statistics showing women's disproportionate vulnerability were highlighted. Structural disparities in labour participation were noted to drive inequalities such as the pay gap and digital divide. Training and lifelong learning were deemed critical to developing a sustainable food industry, but it was argued that these must address women's barriers to ensure equality. Policies empowering women through access to training, reskilling, and upskilling programmes to reduce occupational segregation and bridge gaps were called for. The need for a work environment with a gender perspective, particularly in health and safety, as part of achieving decent work and a just transition was emphasized. Collective action by governments, employers, and workers to build a fairer, more inclusive and sustainable society was called for.

43. The Government Vice-Chairperson emphasized that all governments aim to achieve decent work, sustainable economic growth and social justice to ensure a just transition for everyone. The importance of national employment and capacity-building strategies, aligning training programmes with technological, green and digital needs was stressed. Well-functioning labour inspectorates, labour standards, and monitoring mechanisms were acknowledged as essential for updating national action plans and linking them to just transition goals. Two key pathways for sustainable development were identified: promoting social dialogue at national, company, and international levels to address skills gaps and demographic challenges, and fostering public-private partnerships to connect training institutions with labour market needs, ensuring skills align with industry demands. The need for governments to develop education systems that address current challenges such as climate change, waste management and digital transitions was highlighted. The involvement of the private sector, including recruitment agencies and company-led training programmes, was acknowledged as crucial for lifelong learning and professional development. Community development and gender-sensitive approaches were key to ensure inclusivity, particularly for rural and vulnerable populations. The importance of these measures in promoting sustainable development, creating job opportunities and ensuring a just transition for all was underscored.
44. The Government representative of Brazil emphasized the importance of developing and maintaining a skilled workforce in the food and beverage sector to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Key initiatives already implemented included promoting apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities in partnership with the industry to bridge the gap between education and employment and supporting SMEs through agricultural parks that provide infrastructure and services to food processing companies, boosting productivity and ensuring compliance with labour and environmental standards. To ensure a just transition towards greener practices, Brazil proposed integrating green skills into vocational and technical training curricula, supporting research and adoption of green technologies, providing incentives for companies investing in sustainability, enhancing labour inspections to uphold environmental and labour standards, and developing retraining programmes for workers affected by the shift to greener practices. Brazil reaffirmed its commitment to collaborating with global partners to build a resilient, sustainable, and inclusive food and beverage sector that contributes to economic growth while addressing climate change challenges.
45. The Government representative of Spain reflected on the challenges posed by demographic, geopolitical, and climate changes, which were driving transformations in the food and beverage industry and accelerating technological advancements. He emphasized the need to strengthen social dialogue between workers, employers, and social agents to address these shifts in the labour market, identify emerging job typologies, address changes in existing jobs, and ensure a fair and just transition for affected workers. He highlighted the importance of government

leadership in incentivizing lifelong training policies tailored to the evolving work landscape, particularly for vulnerable sectors, and equipping workers with skills in sustainability, digitalization and new technologies. Special attention had to be paid to the needs of young and older workers in adapting to new realities. He underscored the importance of building on advancements in collective bargaining, promoting decent work, ensuring equal treatment, and safeguarding labour market gains, deeming these measures essential for preparing the workforce to meet the challenges and opportunities in the evolving food and beverage industry.

46. The Government representative of the United Republic of Tanzania highlighted the country's commitment to developing a skilled workforce through its national development frameworks, including the National Development Vision 2025, which aimed to achieve middle-income status by emphasizing skilled labour as essential for economic transformation. She reported improvements in education quality, vocational training, and technical skills development to align with labour market demands, and the National Education Policy's focus on expanding access to quality education at all levels while aligning educational outcomes with labour market needs through the promotion of TVET. Significant reforms undertaken in TVET included updating curricula to meet industry requirements, improving facilities, and fostering partnerships between the government, private sector, and educational institutions to provide internships, apprenticeships and job placements. Policies addressing employment challenges, particularly among youth, such as the National Employment Policy, supported entrepreneurship through access to finance, mentorship, and better alignment of skills supply with labour market demand via labour market information systems. Green skills development initiatives, including programmes promoting sustainable farming practices, energy efficiency workshops, and waste management training in the food and beverage industry, were emphasized. She underlined the need for lifelong learning through continuous professional development programmes, incentives for companies investing in employee training, and community-based programmes for skill-sharing among small-scale producers, stressing that skills development policies must incorporate sustainability to foster economic growth while ensuring environmental stewardship.
47. The Government representative of Indonesia emphasized the country's efforts to enhance value addition, industrial competitiveness, and economic growth in the food and beverage sector, as outlined in the medium national development plan for 2025-2029. She highlighted the sector's significant contribution to the manufacturing GDP and employment, while noting challenges such as aligning workforce skills with technological advancements, sustainability and global competition. Initiatives implemented by Indonesia to address these challenges included the "link and match" programme launched by the Ministry of Education, which aligns vocational education with industry needs through internships, curriculum adjustments, and certifications in areas such as food safety, Halal production, and green practices, and the role of the national professional certification agency in ensuring that workforce skills meet national and global standards. Indonesia's focus on lifelong learning and promoting green skills for a just transition was detailed, with programmes such as the preemployment card initiative offering reskilling and upskilling opportunities, with training in sustainable practices like food processing, packaging and waste management. Green industry certifications encouraging companies to adopt eco-friendly technologies while training workers in energy efficiency and waste reduction were stressed, and specific programmes, like the sustainable cocoa production initiative, were cited as examples of integrating environmental sustainability with workforce development. Social inclusion and gender equity were emphasized, highlighting initiatives such as *Mekaar*, which provide financial support and digital skills training to empower women in the food and beverage sector, particularly within micro, small and medium enterprises. Indonesia's commitment to aligning policies with industry needs while fostering sustainability, resilience, and inclusivity in the food and beverage sector was acknowledged.

48. The Government representative of Malawi reported that her country was implementing the Malawi Agenda 2063, which included a 10-year plan focused on human capital development, encompassing skills development for youth, women and people with disabilities. This initiative was highlighted to extend to the food and beverage sector to ensure a skilled workforce capable of contributing to its growth. The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Institutes, offering tailored training programmes targeting marginalized groups and aiming to transition individuals from the informal to the formal sector, were mentioned. Enforcing legal provisions and promoting fundamental principles and rights at work, including occupational safety and health, to protect workers in both the formal and informal sectors was emphasized. The Government's internship programme, providing graduates with hands-on experience and on-the-job training in various sectors, including food and beverage, was noted. The importance of public-private partnerships in supporting the food and beverage sector, as it largely operated within the private domain, was stressed, and efforts to collaborate with private institutions and expand traditional TVET programmes to include curricula specifically targeting the food and beverage industry, particularly for the youth, were acknowledged. These initiatives were explained to aim at building a skilled, inclusive workforce while strengthening the industry's capacity for sustainable economic growth.
49. The Government representative of Morocco emphasized the critical role of the agri-food industry in driving economic growth and addressing skills gaps, particularly in digital adaptation and environmental practices. Several policies and strategies implemented by Morocco to develop a skilled workforce in this sector were reported, including the establishment of specialized training centres in collaboration with the private sector, offering adaptive programmes that integrate digital and environmental skills; new training modules on cybersecurity and the green economy introduced in 2024, alongside efforts to restructure key sectors such as agriculture; the launch of regional training centres to address local needs, and e-learning platforms providing over 2,000 e-modules; and workplace training programmes developed to combine theory and practical skills, equipping young people with operational expertise in the field. Morocco's focus on green skills, citing the Green Generation strategy and sustainable agriculture initiatives to promote environmentally respectful practices, was highlighted, and reskilling programmes for modern agricultural techniques and clean energy were sustained to have been implemented. Efforts to promote fair access, including specific training programmes for women and youth in rural areas, fostering their inclusion in the agri-food supply chain, with examples such as female cooperatives in food processing, were acknowledged. Partnerships with organizations such as the ILO, FAO, the EU, and national enterprises were acknowledged to have supported vocational training and the green transition.
50. The Government representative of Uzbekistan highlighted the country's efforts to modernize the vocational education system through close cooperation with international organizations, employers and educational institutions. Strengthening tripartite cooperation was identified as a key priority, enabling the introduction of new standards and approaches that meet international requirements. The introduction of a voucher system was noted to provide young people with greater freedom in mastering in-demand professions, and the development of dual education and workplace-based learning systems was emphasized, providing students with practical experience and guaranteed employment upon completion. Cooperation with international organizations was acknowledged to support the transformation of the country by implementing global best practices, enhancing instructors' qualifications, and developing educational infrastructure. Key challenges in the food processing industry were identified, including sustainable production and food security, digitalization, development of human capital, international quality standards and export, climate change adaptation, cooperation with international partners and environmental packaging. Coordinated efforts from the Government,

private sector, international organizations, and educational institutions were deemed necessary to address these challenges and ensure the sector's steady growth and global market position.

51. The Government representative of Türkiye highlighted the country's contributions at both national and global levels, demonstrating its commitment to fostering social dialogue, sustainable development, and international cooperation. At the national level, the effectiveness of the tripartite social dialogue mechanisms was demonstrated through recent meetings and working groups focusing on improving working conditions, and a notable example was the cooperation in the sugar subsector, with social partners collaborating to establish national occupational standards and vocational qualifications. The launch of an authorized vocational qualification centre in 2023 was highlighted as pivotal in providing training and certification for workers, including on occupational safety and health. An example of global level action was the Istanbul agreement on the export of Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea, which facilitated the delivery of essential food supplies to low-income countries and reduced global grain prices. Türkiye's efforts at both national and global levels were acknowledged to highlight the power of social dialogue, collaboration, and innovation in addressing contemporary challenges.
52. The Government representative of Mali emphasized the challenges faced by the country, including insecurity, climate change, and demographic developments, which have affected the Government's efforts to promote work and self-employment for youth and women. Several policies were highlighted, including the National Employment Policy aimed at fighting poverty and providing access to stable and better-paid jobs, professional training through skilling and apprenticeships for young people, and the national observatory for employment and training, which identifies skill needs and implements professional training courses in collaboration with business groups. The agency for the promotion of youth employment was noted to facilitate access to markets and credit, develop an entrepreneurial spirit among young people, and provide technical skills training. Measures to protect and promote the agricultural sector and agri-food SMEs were acknowledged, encouraging self-employment and ensuring consumer protection and food security. The need to assist producers in adopting necessary skills to meet international standards and compete with international products was emphasized, linking agriculture and the industry to benefit the population through job creation.
53. The Government representative of Tunisia highlighted the context of the agri-food sector in Tunisia, which is considered a strategic sector for food investment, employment and exports. The sector was noted to be privileged, prioritized and organized by regulations related to health and safety at work, trade exchanges, fiscal protection and food security. Programmes for industrial stakeholders for the promotion and, the quality upgrading, and financing for research and development were mentioned as forms of government support. Tunisia monitors job quality through the "supervision rate" indicator, which represents the proportion of salaried executives occupying higher-level positions that was identified as low, with a target to increase this rate to 20 per cent by 2030. The establishment of technical centres in agri-food business to provide training in health and food security and ensure technological progress was highlighted. In Tunisia, the labour supply exceeds the demand in the labour market, particularly for young graduates, and the phenomenon of brain drain due to the migration of skilled workers abroad was acknowledged, with the Government encouraging the self-entrepreneurship to retain trained and skilled young people through assistance in promotion and investment in the food supply chain. In Tunisia, the labour framework is aligned with three main stakeholders: governments, trade unions, and professional workers' associations, with several agreements having been signed to promote decent work and establish the minimum wage in the private sector. Collaboration with international partners through support programmes to raise technological skills, develop further skills, and work on just transition and energy transition was emphasized.

Discussion of point 3

What recommendations can be made for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members, namely governments, employers' and workers' organizations, regarding the promotion of decent work and a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning, in the food and beverage sector?

54. The Worker Vice-Chairperson emphasized the food and beverage sector's crucial role in job creation and the transition to sustainable food systems, stressing that the process must align with the principles of decent work and fairness for all. Citing the ILO *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* (2016), it was highlighted that the shift to a sustainable economy must support decent work, social inclusion, and poverty eradication. The Vice-Chairperson underscored the importance of collective bargaining between employers and unions to address the introduction of new technologies, including AI, and to mitigate their impacts with a gender-responsive approach. Employers were also encouraged to collaborate with workers on transition action plans, including divestments, investments and acquisitions. Reference was made to the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct (2023), emphasizing the need for upskilling and reskilling programmes to prepare for societal, environmental, and technological changes, including automation, digitalization and sustainable development. The importance of governments aligning with ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190) was emphasized, which mandates the adoption of laws requiring employers to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace, noting that the measures should be integrated into occupational safety and health (OSH) management systems. The need for governments to collaborate with workers and employers to promote an inclusive transition to formality, prioritizing direct permanent employment and preventing informalization, was stressed. The Vice-Chairperson made several recommendations for the ILO's future actions, including promoting the ratification and effective implementation of international labour standards, building the capacity of ILO constituents to engage in effective social dialogue, collecting good practices and data on various topics, conducting research on existing and emerging OSH risks, strengthening the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations, preparing a blueprint to assist in negotiating over the introduction of new technology, organizing regional tripartite meetings, and setting up a food and beverage production just transition task force.
55. The Worker representative from Pakistan shared a best practice demonstrating successful collaboration between a union and a company to negotiate changes that protected jobs while benefiting the company. The company had introduced new technology and digitalization, but half of the existing workforce lacked the skills to operate the new machinery. Through collective bargaining, the union and management introduced technical education programmes, training and certifying the existing workers within three months, securing their jobs and maintaining the company's efficiency. The union also negotiated access to further technical education for workers, supported by the company, to ensure a skilled workforce for the future. Additionally, to implement a Collective Bargaining Agreement clause to increase women's hiring in technical roles, the union and management reached out to technical institutes and recruited former female students into apprenticeship programmes, leading to their employment in better-skilled, better-paid technical jobs. The practice demonstrated a practical approach to collective bargaining, successfully negotiating a just transition that both protected jobs and benefited the company.
56. The Employer Vice-Chairperson emphasized the critical role of the food and beverage sector in driving economic activity and job creation, especially in emerging and developing economies. To fully leverage this potential, stakeholders must embrace change by ensuring that laws, policies,

and regulations support resilience, agility, and preparedness. These measures should prioritize social and environmental sustainability through innovation, sustainable eco-solutions and advanced skills development. The importance of creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, particularly MSMEs, which dominated the food and beverage sector, was highlighted. Specific recommendations included digital skills development, industry-led initiatives, formalization of employment and social dialogue. The ILO was urged to assist with implementing skills strategies tailored to industry demands and expanding regional knowledge-sharing platforms to foster innovation and sustainability in the sector. The focus should be on concise and actionable recommendations, promoting an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, especially MSMEs. Public-private partnerships could address workforce challenges, with vocational training and lifelong learning initiatives helping workers adapt to evolving industry demands. Employers' organizations had a role to play in providing training and fostering innovation to bridge skills gaps.

57. The Government Vice-Chairperson acknowledged the importance of promoting decent work and social dialogue at the sectoral level. Governments, with ILO support, should lead efforts to strengthen weak institutions and address challenges such as informality, lack of social protection and gender inequality. The need to combat informality, promote social protection, enhance skills development and strengthen labour inspection systems was stressed. Leveraging ILO technical assistance to design inclusive, gender-responsive programmes and using existing and new platforms to attract investments in skills development and technology transfer were proposed.
58. The Government representative from Brazil provided recommendations to promote decent work and a just transition in the food and beverage sector, including tailored vocational training, social dialogue, collective bargaining, formalization, sustainability, equal opportunities, and strengthening labour inspection systems and best practice exchanges.
59. The Government representative from Spain stressed the importance of linking decent work, just transition, and lifelong learning to address the challenges posed by climate change, demographic shifts and technological advancements. The role of social dialogue, just transition measures, lifelong learning and decent work standards was emphasized.
60. The Government representative from Malawi aligned with earlier speakers and highlighted the importance of skills and technology transfer, transition to formality, OSH compliance and regional forums.
61. The Government representative of Indonesia addressed the session, emphasizing the need for the ILO's support in promoting decent work and supporting the transition agenda in the country. A series of recommendations were proposed, including the promotion of inclusive skills development, advancing transition policies to mitigate climate risks, strengthening labour rights and social dialogue, promoting gender equality and inclusion, adopting sustainable business practices, and establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
62. The Government representative of Nigeria agreed with the points raised by the spokesperson of the Government group and identified bottlenecks in the implementation of guidelines, particularly in the food and beverage industry, which is dominated by multinationals. The ILO was called upon to focus on what is happening on the ground, urging attention to multinational enterprises (MNEs), their social responsibilities, and their impact on labour practices, including child labour. The importance of strengthening social dialogue institutions at the national level, adopting a more region-specific approach, addressing disparities in access to training opportunities, redesigning curricula to meet the demands of the emerging labour market, and setting clear timelines and accountability mechanisms was emphasized.

63. The Government representative of Niger expressed alignment with the statements made by the spokesperson of the Government group and other colleagues, particularly Nigeria and Malawi. The potential of Africa, the continent's commitment to promoting decent work, social justice, and worker protection, and the various incentives offered to businesses were emphasized. The need to prioritize job creation, shift the global narrative about Africa, and focus on shared goals was stressed.
64. The Employer Vice-Chairperson presented some final remarks, acknowledging the valuable contributions from all stakeholders and sharing several key observations. The importance of recognizing the food and beverage industry as a sector primarily composed of micro and small enterprises (MSMEs), which face diverse challenges depending on their geographical location, was emphasized. The need for policies that support a just transition for MSMEs, particularly in terms of skills development and innovation, was underscored. The significance of formalizing businesses and workers, the role of technology in driving productivity, the need for fair migration laws, the importance of tripartite dialogue, and the role of governments in developing educational policies aligned with industry needs were highlighted.
65. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted the interlinkage of many discussion points and the challenges in identifying actions to reduce unemployment and informality, establish skilling programmes and address just transition. The need for governments to consider macroeconomic measures together with other policy measures, support social dialogue, promote public-private partnerships and highlight ways to increase international assistance was stressed. Consideration of creating a coalition that could support countries in different situations and take into account the diverse conditions in different regions of the world was suggested.
66. The Government representative of Nigeria appealed to the Working Party on Conclusions to carefully decide which ILO instruments to mention and whether they should be referred to in text or added as part of an annex, as having clarity on this in the conclusions would help assign responsibilities at the national level.

► Consideration and adoption of the draft conclusions and recommendations

67. At its third sitting, and in accordance with the provisions of article 13 of the Standing Orders for technical meetings, the meeting set up a Working Party to prepare draft conclusions taking into account the various views, proposals and suggestions made during the discussion in the meeting.
68. The Working Party was chaired by the Chairperson, Ms Monica Hanga (Government of Zimbabwe), and was composed of the following members:

Government members

Uzbekistan:	Ms Nilufarkhon Kamalova (Vice-Chairperson)
Indonesia:	Ms Mariska
Morocco:	Mr Mohamed Bouchtaoui
<i>Adviser:</i>	Mr Said Bhija
Spain:	Mr Fernando Miranda Sotillo

Employer members

Vice-Chairpersons: Mr Mario Montero Pérez
 Ms Christell Arnaud
 Mr Santiago Oneto
 Mr Jose Arroyo

Advisers: Ms Natalie Privee Boudeger
 Mr Luis Rodrigo Morales

Worker members

Vice-Chairpersons: Mr René Kouwenhoven
 Mr Stan Gacek
 Mr Bert Paterson
 Ms Shruti Patidar

Advisers: Ms Sarah Meyer
 Ms Burcu Ayan
 Mr Alex Praça

69. The draft conclusions, as revised by the Working Party, were submitted to the meeting for adoption at its fifth sitting.

Draft conclusions and recommendations

Opportunities and challenges the promotion of decent work in the food and beverage sector

Proposed paragraph 2

70. Paragraph 2 was adopted as amended.

Proposed paragraph 3

71. The Workers and Employers made amendments to paragraph 3, but the Government group preferred the original office text.
72. The Employer Vice-Chairperson was not comfortable with removing their amendment, as they believed it added clarity and coherence. They wanted to refer specifically to all transformations of the industry that had occurred. In their view, the first sentence of paragraph 3 would be about transformations, and the subsequent two sentences would discuss challenges faced by the industry.
73. The Worker Vice-Chairperson proposed to add “challenges arising from” after “transformations in recent decades due to”. The revised text would read: “The food and beverage sector has undergone important transformations in recent decades due to challenges arising from globalization, demographic changes, environmental degradation, climate change, and geopolitical crises.”
74. The Employer Vice-Chairperson expressed their preference for the paragraph to only discuss transformations, with the following paragraph discussing challenges. They did not want to discuss challenges in this paragraph, as it could give an overly negative view of the sector.
75. Following some clarification, the Employer Vice-Chairperson suggested a compromise: “The food and beverage sector has undergone important transformations in recent decades. The sector faces challenges and opportunities arising from...”

76. The Worker Vice-Chairperson appreciated the compromise and agreed with the proposed text.
77. Regarding the second sentence of paragraph 3, the Employer Vice-Chairperson thought that adding “economic and sustainable” to explain growth added detail and helped qualify what growth meant. They also did not want to make the paragraph overly negative, noting that the concerns of workers were addressed in the last sentence.
78. The Government Vice-Chairperson wanted the original office text or something similar: “The food and beverage sector has undergone important transformations in recent decades. The sector faces challenges and opportunities arising from globalization, demographic changes, environmental degradation, climate change, and geopolitical crises while transformations driven by technological advances often serve as drivers of growth.”
79. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed deleting “while” before “transformation” and having a separate sentence: “Transformations driven by technological advances often... economic and sustainable growth.”
80. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed but wanted to add at the end, “but automation might also result in job loss, inequality, more insecure employment, and uncertainty for workers”. They emphasized that this was about discussing some downsides along with the upsides, providing a balanced view.
81. The Employer Vice-Chairperson disagreed with that view on technological change, seeing it as a positive development. They argued that technology could create or transform jobs and change the world of work. They cautioned that listing the impacts of transformations would be endless and not provide an accurate view of the situation.
82. The Government representative of Nigeria asked the Office to provide a new draft. The Executive Secretary, on behalf of the Office and considering the views of all groups, proposed the following revision: “The sector faces challenges and opportunities due to globalization, demographic changes, environmental degradation, climate change and geopolitical crises. Transformations driven by technological advances can serve as drivers of economic growth and sustainable development, but may pose further challenges to creating and sustaining decent jobs in the sector and addressing inequalities.”
83. The paragraph was adopted as amended.

Proposed paragraph 5

84. The Employers’ proposal to add “promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work” was supported by the Workers. The Government Vice-Chairperson agreed.
85. On the second part of the first sentence, the Workers proposed “women, youth and other vulnerable groups”, which was supported by the Governments.
86. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed rephrasing to “women and persons in vulnerable situations” and adding “youth”. The Worker Vice-Chairperson disagreed, arguing that “vulnerable situations” was arbitrary, while “vulnerable groups” could be defined.
87. The Government Vice-Chairperson agreed with the Employers’ suggestion. The Employer Vice-Chairperson referred to the ILO Centenary Declaration’s use of “persons in vulnerable situations”, cautioning against lists that could be discriminatory.

88. The Worker secretariat requested the Office's view, noting that other Office documents referred to "vulnerable groups". The Employer secretariat clarified that it was the situation, not the person, that made someone vulnerable.
89. The Government Vice-Chairperson proposed "women, youth and persons vulnerable to decent work deficits", but then withdrew the proposal. The Worker Vice-Chairperson wanted to return to the original office text.
90. The Employer Vice-Chairperson agreed with the office text, and the paragraph was adopted as drafted by the Office.
91. Regarding the last sentence of the paragraph, the Employers added "Member States" and deleted "including in global supply chains" (the word "global" was added by the Workers). The Government Vice-Chairperson preferred the original text.
92. The Employer Vice-Chairperson wanted to exclude "including in global supply chains", arguing that the obligation to comply for companies was normally national and should not go beyond their legal obligation or jurisdiction. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed with the Government to revert to the original text.
93. The Employer Vice-Chairperson explained that a company had to comply with national standards, but other companies in the supply chain in different states were subject to different national standards, making it impractical to have the same rights across the supply chain.
94. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed: "application in national law by Member States including in supply chains are crucial..." and deleting "supply chains" at the end of the sentence.
95. The Worker Vice-Chairperson requested Office consultation on the Employers' amendment. The Deputy Secretary-General clarified that either formulation was acceptable but had different meanings. The Worker and Government Vice-Chairpersons wanted to revert to the office text.
96. The sentence being reconsidered was: "The ratification of relevant international labour standards and their effective implementation and application in national law are crucial for ensuring rights at work for all workers in the food and beverage sector including in supply chains."
97. The Employer Vice-Chairperson maintained their position to exclude "including in supply chains". An Employer representative explained that when discussing the implementation of labour standards in national law, it was within the jurisdiction of national laws, but including supply chains would go beyond national jurisdiction and be difficult to implement.
98. Another Employer representative agreed with the national supply chain logic but noted examples of national legislation being extrapolated to entire supply chains in other countries.
99. The Worker Vice-Chairperson requested legal advice from the Office, noting they had agreed to remove the word "global". They gave an example of a small baker in a village also having a supply chain.
100. The Government Vice-Chairperson emphasized that supply chains were essential for their group and should not be deleted. The Worker representative wanted to understand if international labour standards were applicable to supply chains.
101. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed paragraph 6

- 102. The paragraph was supported by the Employers and Workers. The Government Vice-Chairperson wanted to revert to the original text.
- 103. The Worker Vice-Chairperson also wanted to revert to the original text. The Employer Vice-Chairperson did not withdraw their amendments.
- 104. The Worker Vice-Chairperson reiterated their preference for the office text. The Government Vice-Chairperson also preferred the office text.
- 105. The Employer Vice-Chairperson stated that employers' organizations could only promote, not guarantee rights at work, as that was outside the scope of what they could achieve.
- 106. A Worker representative wanted to keep the original text, believing it was the governments' responsibility to guarantee rights at work. The Government Vice-Chairperson agreed that it was governments' obligation to guarantee rights at work.

Proposed paragraph 7

- 107. Regarding the beginning of paragraph 7 on gender equality, the Workers wanted to revert to the original text.
- 108. The Employer secretariat believed "gender-responsive social protection" was the correct wording based on the recurrent discussion on social protection from the International Labour Conference. They suggested the Office look into what was best, as it encompassed more than just maternity leave.
- 109. The Workers and Governments wanted to revert to the office text. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed a small change: "advancing maternity social protection".
- 110. The Employer secretariat explained their earlier proposal of "gender-responsive social protection" based on the recurrent discussion.
- 111. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that the paragraph was about non-discrimination and that maternity protection was one of the largest areas where people faced discrimination. It was also pointed out that there was no such concept as "maternity social protection".
- 112. The Worker Vice-Chairperson requested to revert to the original text. A Worker representative mentioned that the discussion was about maternity protection, not maternity social protection.
- 113. The Government Vice-Chairperson suggested referring to the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), as it was more up to date, but emphasized that it was about government policy to ensure non-discrimination, not workers' or employers' policy.
- 114. The Worker Vice-Chairperson agreed with the Government. The Government Vice-Chairperson asked the Employers and Workers to respect the policy and national laws set by governments.
- 115. The Government representative of Morocco noted that governments had shown a lot of flexibility and patience and asked the social partners to be flexible as well.
- 116. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed paragraph 8

- 117. Regarding the beginning of paragraph 8, the Governments and Employers preferred the original version.

- 118. The Workers' group wished to keep their amendment and remove the Employers' amendment to add "basic" before "income security".
- 119. The Worker secretariat mentioned that there had been a meeting of experts on living wages at the ILO, which should be considered and included in the text.
- 120. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office.

What needs to be done to build and maintain a qualified and skilled workforce and advance a just transition in the food and beverage sector

Proposed paragraph 13

- 121. The Governments and Workers supported the amendment to include "enterprise, and workplace" after "at the centre of sector".
- 122. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed "sector and enterprise". The Workers and Governments agreed, and the paragraph was adopted as amended.

Proposed paragraph 14

- 123. The Governments and Employers wanted to retain "strategic public and private partnerships could be considered", but the Workers wanted to delete it.
- 124. The Worker Vice-Chairperson proposed replacing "partnerships" with "investments" to make it agreeable to their group. The Government Vice-Chairperson could not accept this, as "public-private partnerships" was a proper terminology that included investments.
- 125. The Employer Vice-Chairperson could not support the Workers' amendment, as it completely changed the proposal. They argued that "public-private investments" was not a well-known term, while "public-private partnerships" was commonly used.
- 126. The Worker representative counter-proposed "strategic partnerships could be considered". The Employer Vice-Chairperson insisted on keeping "public-private partnerships", as it was a well-recognized concept.
- 127. The Workers also proposed including "for employment protection, retention and creation" before "public-private partnerships". The Governments noted that the paragraph was not about employment protection and creation. The Workers withdrew their amendment.
- 128. The Workers noted that, public and private partnerships, as it reads in the name, exclude workers as important and necessary constituents. The use of PPPs also places the tripartite basis of the ILO under stress given that they leave workers' and their unions' input and voices behind. The use of PPPs therefore represents a long-term threat to the tripartite principles of the ILO.
- 129. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed paragraph 15

- 130. The Chairperson noted that during the working party, there had been discussion on using "curriculum on skills for green jobs" and asked if that was acceptable.
- 131. The Employer and Government Vice-Chairpersons agreed, although the Government Vice-Chairperson preferred the office text.

132. The Worker secretariat wanted to revert to the original text. The Government and Employer Vice-Chairpersons agreed, and the paragraph was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed paragraph 18

133. The Workers proposed an amendment, which was supported by the Governments:

Social dialogue at all levels has an essential role to play in developing policies and strategies that promote full and productive employment and decent work, address the jobs and skills gaps, foster innovation, manage the change and advance a just transition in the sector while finding win-win solutions, including through collective bargaining, for workers and employers and increasing the attractiveness of work in the sector.

134. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed a subamendment using language from the Centenary Declaration: “social dialogue, including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation has an essential role to play”. They proposed using this agreed-upon text.
135. The Government representative of Malawi questioned how collective bargaining fit into policy development. The Chairperson mentioned that in some parts of the world, collective bargaining could lead to policy development, so the words “where applicable” were initially added to be inclusive.
136. The Worker representative referred to the official ILO definition of social dialogue to explain the inclusion of collective bargaining and agreed with the Employers’ proposal.
137. The Government Vice-Chairperson also agreed, and the paragraph was adopted as amended.

Recommendations for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members

Proposed subparagraph 21(c)

138. The Employers proposed deleting subparagraph 21(c). The Workers wanted the original text.
139. The Employer Vice-Chairperson noted that this was an important point for their group and was still under review.
140. The Employer Vice-Chairperson explained that there was a document with a methodology for calculating the living wage, but it never generated a binding requirement or agreement on that type of living wage. They thought the Office’s suggestion went beyond the document’s scope. They recognized the importance of living wage policies and suggested referring to it in the Office’s work.
141. Instead, they proposed a new subparagraph under paragraph 23. The Employers suggested that if this was agreed, all pending items would be agreed upon by reverting to the office text.
142. The Worker secretariat agreed with the proposal of a new subparagraph under paragraph 23.
143. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that there was no consensus on living wages among their group but found it acceptable that the responsibility lay with the Office.
144. Subparagraph 21(c) was deleted, and a new subparagraph 23(k) was proposed.

Proposed subparagraph 21(k)

145. The Employers had proposed including public-private partnerships in the first sentence.
146. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed subparagraph 21(m)

- 147. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that all of paragraph 21 was about governments' responsibilities and wanted the original text.
- 148. The Employer Vice-Chairperson agreed to return to the office text, and the subparagraph was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed subparagraph 22(a)

- 149. The Employers proposed deleting "sectoral and enterprise level", which was supported by the Governments.
- 150. In relation to this subparagraph, the Workers proposed a new paragraph under 22(a):
 - ... engage in effective social dialogue, including through collective bargaining, regarding changes in business operations which would have major effects upon the livelihood of workers, in particular the closure of an entity or moves towards automation involving collective or large-scale lay-offs or dismissals to afford an opportunity for cooperation to mitigate the effects of such changes;
- 151. The Employers and Governments did not agree. The Worker secretariat representative withdrew the proposal for the new paragraph but incorporated some elements in 22(a): "After 'initiatives to advance decent work' add 'and employment security, especially given the impact of technological change, as well as'".
- 152. The Worker representative stated that if others agreed with this, they could agree to delete the proposed new paragraph.
- 153. The Employer Vice-Chairperson did not support this proposal. The Government Vice-Chairperson was okay with the Workers' proposal.
- 154. The Employer Vice-Chairperson found it difficult to talk about employment security, as it was challenging to guarantee if enterprises were facing challenges. They proposed deleting "and employment security" from the Workers' proposed text.
- 155. The Employer secretariat suggested: "initiatives to advance decent work and job creation".
- 156. The Government Vice-Chairperson agreed. The Worker Vice-Chairperson subamended it to "job creation and retention".
- 157. The Employer and Government Vice-Chairpersons agreed, and the subparagraph was adopted as amended.

Proposed subparagraph 22(b)

- 158. The Employers proposed deleting ", as well as provide training to their members", but the Workers and Governments preferred the office text.
- 159. The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed a compromise by adding "when applicable" after "as well as provide training to their members". They explained that employers' organizations often had resource constraints for such efforts, and their members varied in their abilities.
- 160. The Worker secretariat representative understood the reservations of employers' organizations but reminded them that the paragraph was about what both workers' and employers' organizations should do. Despite resource constraints, they believed providing training was their duty.

- 161. The Employer Vice-Chairperson argued that the proposed language reflected reality and suggested replacing “when applicable” with “with the support of the ILO”.
- 162. The Worker representative explained why they did not understand the Employers’ proposal, referring to a similar technical meeting on building materials in September 2024, where employers in that sector had committed to training.
- 163. The Government Vice-Chairperson understood the Employers’ concerns about capacity. The Worker Vice-Chairperson reiterated their preference for the office text, noting that adding “with the ILO’s support” made the provision of training conditional.
- 164. The Worker Vice-Chairperson emphasized that workers’ organizations also had resource constraints but believed providing training was part of their core functions. The Employer secretariat stressed that each sector was different.
- 165. The Worker Vice-Chairperson wanted to bracket the text. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office.

Proposed subparagraph 23(a)

- 166. The Worker Vice-Chairperson argued for keeping “constituents” as explained by the Office in the working party.
- 167. A Worker representative noted that it was the function of another ILO body at the International Labour Conference to determine what was relevant and up to date, which was outside the scope of this meeting.
- 168. The Government Vice-Chairperson was in agreement to keep “constituents”. The Employer Vice-Chairperson stressed the need for consistency and withdrew their amendment on “relevant and up to date”.
- 169. Regarding “ILO Members”, the Employer Vice-Chairperson disagreed with moving away from agreed-upon language.
- 170. A Worker representative expressed confusion, as “ILO Members” only referred to governments, while constituents also included workers and employers. They wanted workers to be included, as the subparagraph was about the ILO strengthening capacity.
- 171. After clarification from the Office, the Worker Vice-Chairperson wanted to revert to the original text. The Government Vice-Chairperson also preferred the office text.
- 172. The Employer secretariat requested using text from the recurrent discussion at the International Labour Conference, as the Employers were trying to stick to previously adopted wording.
- 173. Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as drafted by the Office. The Employers objected to not considering the inclusion of previously adopted language.

Proposed subparagraph 23(f)

- 174. A Worker representative noted that this was a follow-up by the Office and an important part of the meeting’s outcome. The research would be conducted by the Office, and the originally proposed text did not include workers, appearing as though research would only be done for advancing sustainable business models.
- 175. The Workers did not feel included in MSMEs, so they wanted the research conducted as a follow-up by the Office to also include workers.

- 176.** The Governments preferred the original text with the addition of social and solidarity economy entities and could be flexible with the Workers' proposals.
- 177.** The Employers understood the Workers' concerns and proposed: "...advancing sustainable business models for decent work" and deleting the other text proposed by the Workers. This would include all four pillars of decent work.
- 178.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson could not agree to the Employers' changes, as they already had agreement from the Governments on the previous version.
- 179.** Following further discussion that considered all paragraphs, the text was adopted as agreed in the working party with the inclusion of social and solidarity economy entities.

Proposed subparagraph 23(j)

- 180.** The Workers withdrew their proposal, and the subparagraph was adopted as amended.

Proposed new subparagraph 23(k)

- 181.** The Employers proposed a new subparagraph 23(k): "continue to provide upon request, support towards strengthening wage setting process in line with the conclusions of the meeting of experts on wage policies, including living wages (February, 2024)". The Employers suggested that if this was agreed, they would be flexible with reverting to the office text on all pending items.
- 182.** The Worker secretariat representative agreed with the placement and reference but amended it to: "continue to support constituents on the operationalization of living wages in line with the..."
- 183.** The Employer Vice-Chairperson proposed a slight change to the Workers' text: "continue to provide support upon request to constituents in the operationalization...", arguing that this was more flexible.
- 184.** The Governments agreed, and the new subparagraph 23(k) was adopted as amended.
- 185.** Following the adoption of subparagraph 23(k), the Employers, in a spirit of consensus-building, expressed their willingness to revert to the office text on all pending paragraphs, which were paragraphs 7, 8, 14, 15, 21(k), 21(m), and 22(b).
- 186.** The subparagraph was adopted as amended.

Appendix

- 187.** The Workers had proposed three new items to the appendix during the working party. The Government Vice-Chairperson noted that the Conventions added by the Workers were on rural and agricultural workers and hence would not be applicable. The Executive Secretary advised that some governments wanted to include the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), but the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11), might not be relevant for this sector.
- 188.** The appendix was adopted as amended with the deletion of Convention No. 11. The Employers wanted to clearly state their disagreement with including appendices in technical meetings' conclusions, as they did not like the practice of making lists, especially when some Conventions might not be relevant or widely ratified. In general, they did not feel it added value.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 189.** The technical meeting on the promotion of decent work and a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning, in the food and beverage industry unanimously adopted the conclusions and recommendations, as amended, as a whole.

► Closure of the meeting

- 190.** The Office expressed gratitude to all participants for their active engagement and contributions. The significance of the agreed document was emphasized, serving as a foundation for further implementation at national and enterprise levels.
- 191.** The Employer Vice-Chairperson acknowledged the significant progress made during the meeting, highlighting the adoption of the tripartite document. He expressed gratitude for the commitment shown by the governments, employers', and workers' representatives in fostering constructive dialogue and building consensus.
- 192.** The Worker Vice-Chairperson fully endorsed the text and expressed appreciation for the efforts and discussions that led to the adoption of the conclusions, which would benefit the entire sector, including workplaces, enterprises and workers. He emphasized the continued importance of improving the situation for all workers within the sector.
- 193.** The Government Vice-Chairperson welcomed the conclusions, expressing appreciation for the efforts, flexibility, and willingness of the constituents to listen to the governments' needs throughout the week.
- 194.** The Chairperson acknowledged the importance of the food and beverages industry, expressing gratitude for the adoption of the conclusions. She was pleased about the constructive approach taken by all participants during the meeting. The adopted conclusions, she noted, would provide crucial guidance for future action in the sector. She then declared the meeting closed.

► Conclusions and recommendations ¹

Opportunities and challenges for the promotion of decent work in the food and beverage sector

1. The food and beverage sector ² is one of the cornerstones of national and international food systems and plays an essential role in ensuring food security and nutrition. With every country engaged in producing food and drinks, the sector serves as an important source of livelihood, providing direct employment to some 80 million people, or 2.3 per cent of the global workforce. ³ In most countries, the food and beverage sector is one of the largest manufacturing sectors in terms of employment and contributes significantly to output and value addition. It often plays an important role in rural economies.
2. The food and beverage sector is a diverse ecosystem of subsectors and of enterprises of all sizes – from micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and national enterprises to large multinational enterprises (MNEs) and social and solidarity economy entities (SSE) – reflecting the heterogeneity of its activities.
3. The food and beverage sector has undergone important transformations in recent decades. The sector faces challenges and opportunities due to globalization, demographic changes environmental degradation, climate change and geopolitical crises. Transformations driven by technological advances can serve as drivers of economic growth and sustainable development, but may pose further challenges to creating and sustaining decent jobs in the sector and addressing inequalities.
4. Addressing the challenges while seizing the opportunities for advancing decent work and a just transition in the food and beverage sector requires both short and long-term strategies and effective measures at workplace and enterprise level and effective sectoral policies both nationally and internationally. This includes building a socially, environmentally, economically and sustainable sector in a way that contributes to the goals of decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty in line with the ILO *Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All* and the ILO *Policy Guidelines for the Promotion of Decent Work in the Agri-Food Sector*.
5. The food and beverage industry holds significant potential for creating decent and green jobs, especially for youth in developing countries. If realized, this potential can contribute to addressing important global challenges, including poverty, food insecurity, inequalities, environmental degradation and climate change. Tapping into this potential requires an increased focus on addressing the employment challenges, in particular skills shortages, skills needs or mismatches, systemic informality, and decent work deficits that the sector bears witness to, alongside other important social and environmental issues. Promoting decent working conditions through social

¹ In accordance with established procedures, these conclusions and recommendations will be submitted to the 355th Session of the Governing Body of the ILO (November 2025) for its consideration.

² For the purpose of these conclusions, the food and beverage sector refers to the processing, manufacturing and packaging of food and beverages and their distribution to retailers. The food and beverage industry is defined in accordance with United Nations, International Standard Industrial Classification of all Economic Activities, Revision 4, section C, “Manufacturing”, division 10, “Manufacture of food products”, and division 11, “Manufacture of beverages”, 2008.

³ ILO estimates based on ILOSTAT, 2022.

dialogue, including collective bargaining, in the sector, while fostering skill development and promoting lifelong learning opportunities, is essential to addressing labour shortages and encouraging the creation and economic growth of sustainable food and beverage enterprises. The ratification of relevant international labour standards and their effective implementation and application in national law are crucial for ensuring rights at work for all workers in the food and beverage sector including in supply chains.

6. Adequate policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks are needed to promote an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises in the industry, in particular MSMEs, to increase productivity and promote decent job creation.⁴Co While there are important differences across countries and regions, advancing decent work and creating an inclusive and equitable work environment in the sector requires the promotion of formalization and sustainable enterprises development that deliver decent and productive jobs which guarantee rights at work, in particular fundamental principles and rights at work, and access to universal, comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection. Investment by Member States in infrastructure such as roads, communications, digital facilities, and energy, particularly in rural areas which tend to lack basic services, can contribute to an enabling business environment, improve the functioning of labour markets and promote economic growth and decent work in the sector and beyond.
7. Ensuring gender equality and non-discrimination is essential. This includes ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, eliminating gender bias, advancing maternity protection, and promoting a work environment that is free from violence and harassment. Special attention needs to be paid to workers in vulnerable situations. The effective regulation of national and international recruitment and the ability of all workers to exercise their rights at work, regardless of the contractual arrangement, are essential for an equitable, sustainable and resilient food and beverage sector.
8. An effective means of supporting income security, access to healthcare and the enjoyment of many other social and economic rights throughout the life cycle, social protection strengthens resilience against the impacts of socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities and shocks and should be accessible by all workers, regardless of the nature of their employment status or working arrangements. Attention needs to be paid to the portability of social security rights of migrant workers.
9. While the automation and digitalization that have characterized the food and beverages sector's development in recent years led to important increases in productivity and created the potential to enhance workplace safety, ensuring occupational safety and health (OSH) remains a challenge. New technologies may bring new or additional risks to the workplace, while many operations continue to be performed manually, especially in the processing of meat, seafood and poultry. Promoting a preventive OSH culture through regular risk assessments, improved ergonomics, and effective training is critical to lowering the incidence of injuries and work-related ill health in the industry. Regulatory frameworks and enforcement systems, particularly labour inspectorates, need to be strengthened to effectively support these efforts. Regulatory frameworks must take into account emerging OSH and other hazards associated with new products and technologies.
10. New technologies, including artificial intelligence, have increased productivity and have brought important opportunities and challenges to the workplace. Strengthening effective social dialogue, including collective bargaining and workplace cooperation, is crucial to seize opportunities and address adverse impacts.

⁴ In line with the conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises of the ILC, June 2007.

11. Examples from different countries and regions illustrate the critical role that effective social dialogue at national, sectoral and enterprise levels plays in addressing employment and labour challenges when it is based on respect for freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining and on sound national policies, on strong social partners, on regular and timely exchange of information, and mutual trust, respect and understanding between the tripartite constituents. In addition to helping to build sound and constructive industrial relations, effective social dialogue is critical to promoting economic growth, a stable social environment and the four pillars of the ILO Decent Work Agenda.

What needs to be done to build and maintain a qualified and skilled workforce and advance a just transition in the food and beverage sector?

12. Given the differences in needs and priorities of countries at different stages of development, and of enterprises of different sizes, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the design and implementation of policies to build and maintain a skilled workforce and advance just transition. Food and beverage enterprises worldwide face challenges in attracting and retaining qualified and skilled workers for further innovation, technology adoption, and economic growth. Especially in developed countries, labour shortages generate increased interest in digital technologies, which can also help companies improve production processes and promote productivity growth and sustainability. New technologies can transform the nature of work in the sector and the skill requirements of the workforce, with an increasing need for workers in knowledge-based production roles. In developing countries, skills shortages and mismatches often constrain the sector and stem from limited access to quality education and training – a challenge that is exacerbated by a lack of technology transfer and a slower pace of technology adoption, limited financial resources and infrastructure. Globally, effective and inclusive skills and lifelong learning systems, encompassing robust skills needs anticipation systems and skilling, reskilling and upskilling programmes with a gender-responsive approach, are essential to ensuring the responsiveness of skills supply to the current and future needs of the sector, including those related to technological changes and sustainable natural resource use. They are crucial for safeguarding the sector's sustainability and economic growth, with decent work at its core.
13. The development and implementation of policy initiatives to address the skills needs of the food and beverage industry require the active involvement of social partners and should be at the centre of sector and enterprise specific policies and strategies. Such policies should support enterprises to move into higher productivity and value added operations and formalize, including by improving their access to knowledge, technology and finance while strengthening their capacity for innovation and the ability to comply with relevant environmental, labour, quality and food safety standards and investing in infrastructure. Targeted support, including access to finance and training programmes that prioritize technological and sustainability skills will help to bridge the gap between larger, typically well-resourced companies and MSMEs, which have limited access to capital and financial support. To improve retention rates and the sector's attractiveness, skills development and advancement of decent work in the food and beverage sector is critical.
14. Effective skill needs anticipation, monitoring and evaluation systems and skills development initiatives are also crucial for the industry's transition to environmentally sustainable practices. In this context, ensuring equitable access to training for all workers and employers is essential, paying particular attention to women and persons in vulnerable situations. Promoting the acquisition of skills, competencies and qualifications for all workers throughout their working lives is a joint responsibility of governments and social partners. Bridging the skills gap for informal economy workers to access and participate in skills development and lifelong learning

programmes to support formalizing those workers should be a priority. In this context, viable and equitable financing mechanisms should be identified. Strategic public private partnerships could be considered.

15. The food and beverage industry faces considerable environmental challenges in all tiers of its supply chain, from raw material production to consumption. The creation of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, through relevant legislation and policy frameworks, that incentivizes enterprises to change their operations in ways that improve resource efficiency, and value addition, reduce pressure on the environment and make them greener, in line with the *ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All*, should be a priority. Investments for creating decent green jobs including quality apprenticeships programmes which foster recognized skills for green jobs hold significant potential, alongside sectoral policies that advance decent work and a just transition. Improving technical and vocational education and training programmes by investing in vocational training centres, green skills curriculum, early career learning pathways and apprenticeships routes for skills based on labour market needs is also necessary. Public policies will also be needed to support and encourage sustainable business models and social innovation in the sector, while providing an ecosystem for enhancing productivity and competitiveness. An innovation ecosystem would support and incentivize start-ups to develop and optimize technologies to reduce the industry's carbon footprint.
16. The greening of food and beverage enterprises may entail the promotion of responsible sourcing, energy and water efficiency, food-processing waste reduction and sustainable packaging. In implementing these measures, particular attention should be paid to the subsectors, regions, communities, workers and enterprises who might experience the hardest impacts of the transition. The role of social protection in cushioning the impact of the green transition on workers and equipping them with knowledge and skills for employment in green and low-carbon sectors warrants particular attention.
17. By embedding the ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, and sustainability into procurement decisions, the food and beverage industry can reduce its carbon footprint, while promoting fair labour practices and decent working conditions across supply chains. In addition, enterprises can support a just transition through responsible business practices that integrate considerations for full and productive employment and decent work and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights.
18. Social dialogue, including collective bargaining and tripartite cooperation, has an essential role to play in developing policies and strategies that promote full and productive employment and decent work, address the jobs and skills gaps, foster innovation, manage the change and advance a just transition in the sector, while finding win-win solutions for workers and employers and increasing the attractiveness of work in the sector.

Recommendations for future action by the International Labour Organization and its Members

19. Governments have the duty to adopt, effectively implement and enforce national laws and regulations, and to ensure that the fundamental principles and rights at work and ratified international labour Conventions protect and are applied to all workers in the food and beverage sector taking into account other international labour standards.
20. All enterprises have a responsibility to respect human rights including fundamental principles and rights at work, throughout their operations, consistent with the United Nations Guiding Principles

on Business and Human Rights, the Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration), as amended in 2022.

21. Governments, in cooperation with employers' and workers' organizations, where appropriate, should:

- (a) actively promote and engage in effective social dialogue, based on respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition to the right to collective bargaining, at all levels to forge social consensus on ambitious policies and measures for a just transition, job creation and decent and sustainable work for all in the food and beverage sector. Effective social dialogue should be inclusive of all enterprises and workers in the sector including migrant workers, on whom in many countries the sector heavily relies;
- (b) develop, through social dialogue, employment and/or sectoral policies and strategies reflecting the industry's needs and ensuring that all food and beverage workers enjoy decent working conditions and can exercise fundamental and other labour rights;
- (c) strengthen labour administration, including labour inspection, to ensure the effective application and enforcement of relevant laws and regulations, and strengthen the access to labour justice;
- (d) establish an environment for sustainable enterprises that enables them to grow, innovate, and advance decent work, establish and pursue environmentally sustainable business and production models, and ensure a just transition;
- (e) invest in the development, accessibility and uptake of technologies that can help enterprises enhance productivity, promote decarbonization and improve working conditions and occupational safety and health in line with international labour standards;
- (f) design targeted policy interventions that incentivize and reward action towards sustainability objectives;
- (g) develop and implement a comprehensive, conducive and resilient national framework on OSH comprised of a national OSH policy, system and programme, which is reflective of the needs of the sector, and build a national preventive safety and health culture;
- (h) address discrimination, violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, through effective legislation, regulations and policies that ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation including equal remuneration for work of equal value. Targeted measures should protect groups of workers who may be vulnerable to discrimination;
- (i) develop and implement policies and strategies, and support industry-led initiatives, that address skill needs in the sector through technical and vocational education and training, skills development and lifelong learning programmes, encompassing reskilling and upskilling, and ensure equitable access to such learning opportunities, paying particular attention to women, young people, migrant workers, and persons with disabilities. Effective initiatives require effective social dialogue and partnerships across labour, education and training institutions and the active involvement of the private sector. The institutional and technical capacity of public and private training institutions needs to be strengthened to ensure that they have adequate training facilities and qualified trainers to deliver quality training programmes that respond to the needs of the sector and contribute to a just transition, including by equipping trainees with green skills;
- (j) establish a well-functioning and inclusive system of recognition of prior learning, including with other countries to help advance decent working conditions for migrant workers;

- (k) provide universal access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection systems, including social protection floors, that strengthen resilience to lifecycle risks, crises, and economic and climate shocks, including potential adverse impacts of the green transition, while contributing to sustainable enterprises and robust, well-functioning economies.

22. Employers' and workers' organizations should:

- (a) strengthen their engagement in effective social dialogue, based on respect for freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, to develop and implement initiatives to advance decent work and job creation and retention, especially given the impact of technological change as well as just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning, in line with national legislation and policies and the ILO Guidelines on just transition;
- (b) raise awareness and share information, as well as provide training to their members about advancing decent work and a just transition in the sector.

23. The Office should:

- (a) promote the ratification and effective implementation of international labour standards, ILO declarations, instruments and tools relevant to the food and beverage sector, and strengthen the capacity of constituents to respect, promote and realize the fundamental principles and rights at work;
- (b) provide technical assistance to constituents to formulate and implement sectoral policies and initiatives that advance a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning, fostering innovation and new technologies that promote decent work in the sector;
- (c) strengthen the capacity of tripartite constituents to engage in effective social dialogue to promote decent work, formalization and enable a just transition in the sector;
- (d) strengthen the capacity of tripartite constituents to design and effectively implement gender-responsive and youth-centred skills development programmes including quality apprenticeships, on-the-job training, entrepreneurship training and lifelong learning initiatives focusing on core, digital, green and technical skills related to the sector. This would include the development of a guidance note on the impact of new technologies in the sector that would also support tripartite constituents in addressing any associated adverse impacts;
- (e) promote knowledge-sharing including through the collection and dissemination of good practices on formalization, skills acquisition, women's empowerment and a just transition to a socially, environmentally and economically sustainable food and beverage sector;
- (f) conduct action-oriented research on the opportunities and challenges for advancing sustainable business especially for MSMEs and social and solidary economy entities in emerging and developing countries, as well as on OSH-related risks in the sector;
- (g) promote the application of the ILO Guidelines on just transition in the sector;
- (h) design and implement development cooperation projects that give effect to the Conclusions and Recommendations including regional activities taking into account the diverse circumstances and priorities of its Member States and in line with ILO country programmes;
- (i) develop and strengthen partnerships to promote policy coherence through inter-agency initiatives;

- (j) support efforts of governments, employers' and workers' organizations to promote the principles of the ILO MNE Declaration in the sector;
- (k) continue to provide support, upon request, to constituents in the operationalization of living wages in line with the conclusions of the meeting of experts on wage policies, including living wages (February 2024).

► Appendix

A non-exhaustive list of ILO declarations, instruments and guidance and other international instruments to promote decent work and a just transition, including skills development and lifelong learning, in the food and beverage sector

International labour standards

Fundamental Conventions (and related Recommendations)

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), its 2014 Protocol, and the Forced Labour (Supplementary Measures) Recommendation, 2014 (No. 203)
- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and the Equal Remuneration Recommendation, 1951 (No. 90)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Recommendation, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146)
- Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 (No. 164)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190)
- Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 2006 (No. 197)

Governance Conventions (and related Recommendations)

- Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and the Labour Inspection Recommendation, 1947 (No. 81)
- Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122), the Employment Policy Recommendation, 1964 (No. 122), and the Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169)
- Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), and the Tripartite Consultation (Activities of the International Labour Organisation) Recommendation, 1976 (No. 152)

Technical Conventions (and related Recommendations)

- Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97), and the Migration for Employment Recommendation (Revised), 1949 (No. 86)
- Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)
- Social Policy (Basic Aims and Standards) Convention, 1962 (No. 117)
- Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964 [Schedule I amended in 1980] (No. 121), and the Employment Injury Benefits Recommendation, 1964 (No. 121)
- Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131), and the Minimum Wage Fixing Recommendation, 1970 (No. 135)
- Holidays with Pay Convention (Revised), 1970 (No. 132), and the Holidays with Pay Recommendation, 1936 (No. 47)
- Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971 (No. 135), and the Workers' Representatives Recommendation, 1971 (No. 143)
- Paid Educational Leave Convention, 1974 (No. 140), and the Paid Educational Leave Recommendation, 1974 (No. 148)
- Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141)
- Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142), and the Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143), and the Migrant Workers Recommendation, 1975 (No. 151)
- Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977 (No. 148), and the Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Recommendation, 1977 (No. 156)
- Labour Administration Convention, 1978 (No. 150), and the Labour Administration Recommendation, 1978 (No. 158)
- Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981 (No. 154), and the Collective Bargaining Recommendation, 1981 (No. 163)
- Protocol of 2002 (recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases) to the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165)
- Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158), and the Termination of Employment Recommendation, 1982 (No. 166)
- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159), and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983 (No. 168)
- Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161), and the Occupational Health Services Recommendation, 1985 (No. 171)

- Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Convention, 1988 (No. 168), and the Employment Promotion and Protection against Unemployment Recommendation, 1988 (No. 176)
- Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170), and the Chemicals Recommendation, 1990 (No. 177)
- Night Work Convention, 1990 (No. 171), and the Night Work Recommendation, 1990 (No. 178)
- Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174), and the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Recommendation, 1993 (No. 181)
- Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), and the Private Employment Agencies Recommendation, 1997 (No. 188)
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), and the Maternity Protection Recommendation, 2000 (No. 191)
- Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206)

Technical recommendations

- Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189)
- Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193)
- List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation, 2002 (No. 194)
- Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006 (No. 198)
- Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202)
- Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204)
- Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205)
- Quality Apprenticeships Recommendation, 2023 (No. 208)

Conclusions, declarations and resolutions

- *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-up*, 1998, as amended in 2022
- *ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization*, 2008, as amended in 2022
- *ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work*, 2019
- *Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy*, as amended in 2022
- Resolution concerning the third recurrent discussion on fundamental principles and rights at work, 2024
- Resolution concerning a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all, 2023
- Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on labour protection, 2023
- Resolution concerning the second recurrent discussion on social protection (social security), 2021

- Resolution concerning skills and lifelong learning, 2021
- Resolution concerning decent work in global supply chains, 2016
- Resolution concerning small and medium-sized enterprises and decent and productive employment creation, 2015
- *Conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises*, 2007

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- Conclusions of the ILO meeting of experts on wage policies, including living wages, 2024
- *Technical guidelines on biological hazards in the working environment*, 2023
- *Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector*, 2023
- *Guidelines on general principles of labour inspection*, 2022
- *General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment and definition of recruitment fees and related costs*, 2019
- *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*, 2015

Other international instruments

- *United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, 2011