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Decent work and informality in the agricultural sector in Latin America ►►► 2019-2023



**Executive
summary**



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► Overview

The agricultural sector in Latin America is key to rural employment, food security and foreign trade, but it continues to be marked by high levels of labour informality, low incomes and limited social protection.

Employment in the agricultural sector (which includes the subsectors of agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries) underpins much of the rural economic activity and supplies the value chains that guarantee food security in Latin America and other regions of the world. However, this sector faces structural informality characterized by low productivity, limited social protection, and environmental vulnerability, which limits employment opportunities and the exercise of fundamental labour rights for millions of people.

This persistent combination of precarity and informality limits the sustainability of progress towards decent work and highlights a structural paradox: even though Latin America and the Caribbean is the world's main net food-exporting region, the food security remains unequal and large parts of the population remain vulnerable.

Against this backdrop, a key question arises: how can the sector's productive potential be harnessed to create decent and sustainable employment? The report **"Decent work and informality in the agricultural sector in Latin America. 2019–2023"**, jointly developed by the ILO and FAO, shows that there is no single formula for addressing the employment challenges in the agricultural sector.

The region is highly heterogeneous, both between countries – in terms of productive structures, productivity levels, and degree of formalization – and within countries, where large agribusiness enterprises coexist with small family subsistence units.

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Therefore, addressing this complexity requires policies that are in line with the nature of agricultural work, combining productive incentives, expanded social protection and institutional strengthening. Formalization, improved incomes and the promotion of a safe and healthy working environment are essential steps in transforming productive dynamism into inclusive and sustainable development, capable of generating decent work and contributing to the strengthening of regional food security.

► Evolution of the sector



Agricultural work is transforming and standing up to the test of various crises, but without advancing towards formalization.

Between 2019 and 2023, there were significant transformations in the agricultural employment in Latin America, despite there being no growth in the total number of people employed in the sector. While the latter remained virtually stable, the structure of employment shifted: the proportion of family workers decreased, and the number of wage and self-employed workers increased. However, **these changes do not indicate a general trend toward formalization** but rather shifts in the composition of employment.

During the same period, labour income in the sector registered a relative improvement compared with the overall average for employed persons; nevertheless, significant disparities persisted across different branches of economic activity.

These recent changes occur within a context of longer-term structural pressures. **Over the last decades, the sector has experienced a decline in economic significance:** its contribution to regional gross domestic product (GDP) fell from **9.6 per cent** in 1981 to **6.5 per cent** in 2023, while its share to total employment declined from **21.4 per cent** to **12.6 per cent**. This contraction reflects the sustained shift of the workforce towards services and industry, as well as the process of rapid urbanization in the region, which has limited the agricultural sector's capacity to absorb employment.

Similarly, the lower relative profitability of agricultural products compared with industrial goods and services, as well as high price volatility in international markets, has constrained the sector's ability to attract sustained investment and weakened its relative weight in the regional economy.

The scenario was also affected by recent global shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic and international geopolitical crises disrupted logistics chains and

raised production costs—particularly fertilizer and food prices—further straining the sector's capacity to address structural challenges that were already constraining its development.

This was compounded by growing climate and environmental vulnerability: prolonged droughts, recurrent flooding and soil degradation reduced agricultural yields and intensified the seasonality of work in the sector.

Over the last decade, total factor productivity in Latin American agriculture has decelerated, reflecting growth driven more by increased input use than by improvements inefficiency improvements. Nonetheless, the agricultural sector showed a relative increase in labour productivity compared with other economic sectors, largely supported by technological modernization processes in some export-oriented countries.

This progress, however, should be interpreted with caution, as it partly reflects a reduction in employment rather than a general increase in labour efficiency, in a context of persistent structural heterogeneity and low levels of value added per person employed.

The lack of investment in innovation and technological adaptation, combined with limited institutional presence in rural areas, has negatively impacted the resilience of small and medium-sized producers. As a result, rural households are more exposed to the loss of their livelihoods.

In sum, the transformations in agricultural employment show a change rather than progress: the sector has managed to sustain itself in the face of successive crises, but without achieving significant gains in productivity, levels of formalization, or substantial improvements in working conditions.

► Structural inequalities



The agricultural sector perpetuates structural gaps in productivity, income and access to social protection, thereby limiting its ability to create decent work..

The labour structure of the agricultural sector is heterogeneous and segmented. Most people are employed in small family- or community-based units with low levels of capitalization and a high level of informality, while a smaller number participate in larger-scale and more formalized activities.

In addition, unequal access to land, credit and rural services, together with increasing exposure to external shocks, has limited productivity gains and reinforced divergent trajectories among countries.

Economies most dependent on subsistence crops or primary exports are also the most vulnerable to environmental degradation and fluctuations in international prices.

Employment in the agricultural sector is structurally distinct from total employment in the economy, with a lower proportion of wage workers and a greater presence of self-employed workers and contributing family workers, reflecting a work pattern centered around small-scale production units and predominantly low-productivity jobs.

Gender inequalities in agricultural employment remain pronounced, underscoring unequal access to economic integration and own income. Among men, 41.7 per cent are wage workers and 46.3 per cent are self-employed, whereas among women these shares decline to 24.3 and 35.2 per cent, respectively.

In contrast, 38.5 per cent of women work as contributing family workers, compared to 7.1 per cent of men, which shows that women are more concentrated in unpaid work (such as caregiving) and have less economic autonomy. These differences in occupational structure have a direct impact on employment quality gaps and explain much of the higher rates of female informality in the sector.

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The ageing of the working population adds an additional challenge. An increasing number of older adults continue working in agriculture out of necessity, due to a lack of access to pensions, healthcare services or alternative employment opportunities. By contrast, rural youth face greater barriers to access, frequent turnover and fewer prospects for professional development. This weakens generational renewal and limits the renewal of skills in the sector.

Low education levels are another factor that widens the gaps. More than half of those employed in the sector have not completed secondary education, which hampers technology adoption, labour mobility and the ability to access jobs with higher productivity and social protection.

Gaps in social protection remain substantial. Despite some progress in health coverage, the sectors-specific conditions —such as seasonality, informality, and irregular income—together with the social protection systems that have failed to adapt to these particularities, continue to limit coverage for agricultural workers.

The persistence of child labour in the agricultural sector remains a critical expression of its precariousness. According to the ILO and UNICEF (2025), nearly 7.3 million children and adolescents between the ages of 5 and 17 are in this situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 46 per cent of them work in agricultural activities.

Technological and productive advances are progressing more rapidly than the expansion

of social protection, creating gaps in coverage that leave part of the rural population unable to benefit from its advantages.

These gaps are exacerbated in a context where public services, especially education and health care, do not guarantee quality standards, thereby deepening inequalities and reducing opportunities for social mobility.

► Informal employment

Millions of people remain outside formal employment.

The agricultural sector continues to have the highest incidence of informal employment in Latin America, with nearly 80 per cent of people employed in this condition. Informality is more prevalent among women, youth, older adults, and individuals with lower education levels.

A large share of agricultural wage workers continue to work without a written contract, highlighting the persistence of informal hiring practices and the limited institutional capacity to ensure the effective enforcement of labour rights.

On average, the agricultural sector records fewer effective hours worked per week than other sectors for both men and women, a pattern closely associated with a higher risk of informal employment. This is largely due to the highly seasonal nature of agricultural production, which leads to fluctuations in labour demand throughout the year.

Gender-disaggregated analysis reveals a more critical situation for women: over 60 per cent of women employed in informal conditions work less than 35 hours per week, compared to 38.6 per cent of men. Women are concentrated in seasonal and lower-paid activities and have less access to land, credit and training.

Employment instability often compels individuals to hold multiple jobs, frequently in informal conditions, as a survival strategy in response to income volatility and limited social protection.

In sum, the structural inequalities and high incidence of informal employment that characterize agricultural employment create a cycle that perpetuates vulnerability and undermines the sector's contribution to inclusive growth. Breaking this cycle requires policies that strengthen formalization mechanisms and expand social protection coverage, aligning productivity, equity, and sustainability goals.

► Key data on the agricultural sector in Latin America

- The agricultural sector contributes **6.5 per cent of regional GDP** and **12.6 per cent of total employment**, but accounts for nearly **80 per cent of informal employment** in the region.
- **Informality among women** reaches **86.4 per cent**, compared to **78 per cent** among men. This gap is explained, in part, by the fact that **contributing family work** — informal by definition — accounts for **38.5 per cent of women's employment** and only **7.1 per cent of men's employment**.
- A significant share of employed persons work **fewer than 35 hours per week**, a pattern associated with a higher likelihood of informal employment.
- **More than 50 per cent** of agricultural employment is represented by people with **low levels of education** (up to six years of schooling).
- The **age structure** of agricultural employment shows a **higher presence of young people and, in particular, of adults and older people** compared with the rest of the economy.

- Nearly **7.3 million children and adolescents (aged 5–17)** work in the region, and **46 per cent** of them are engaged in agricultural activities.
- **Thirty-nine point two per cent** of people living in poverty, and **18.5 per cent** of those living in extreme poverty, **reside in rural areas**.

► Interventions and policies



Countries across Latin America are taking steps to boost the agricultural sector, but its formalization is not yet at the top of the agenda.

In Latin America, countries are implementing a wide range of policies to improve working and production conditions in rural areas. Initiatives have been launched in the areas of productive development, land titling, institutional strengthening, social protection and workforce training.

However, although progress is being made on various fronts—productive, institutional, and social—most of these interventions do not explicitly prioritize formalization or improving job quality as core objectives, nor do they adopt a clear and consistent gender perspective.

The ILO and FAO report analyses 35 interventions implemented in different countries, which have been reviewed and classified according to the integrated approach of four policy areas proposed by the ILO's Formalization Strategy for Latin America and the Caribbean 2024–2030 (FORLAC 2.0): a) productive development; b) employment and skills development; c) social protection; and d) recognition and enforcement of labour rights, including sanction mechanisms and incentives for formalization.

Most of the interventions analyzed do not explicitly incorporate formalization or employment improvement as central objectives.

Most of the analyzed interventions do not explicitly prioritize formalization or improving job quality as core objectives.

a) Productive development

Land formalization

The initial block of analysis includes interventions that aim to formalize land ownership through various approaches: the first group focuses on cadastre; the second on community organization; and the third on linking property, productivity and environmental sustainability.

The **first group** sets the goal of improving cadastral organization. In **Colombia**, the *Multipurpose Cadastre Policy* transformed cadastral management into a public service, incorporated cadastral managers, and promoted digital tools such as CatasIA and ArcGIS. In **Peru**, the *Rural Land Cadastre, Titling and Registration Project (PTRT3)* introduced Supervised Working Groups, integrating technicians, lawyers, and representatives of indigenous communities; and coordinating between ministries, regional governments, and the National Superintendency of Public Registries (SUNARP).

These actions advanced legal certainty and the availability of information for public policies, although challenges remain in terms of coordination, financing, and ensuring the sustainability of the registries.

The **second group, corresponding to Colombia**, focused on community organisation and participation, including *Decree 780 (TECAM)* and the *Land Formalization Programme for Indigenous Communities*. These interventions promoted territorial management and the recognition of collective rights; however, they face challenges in coordination, decentralization, and consolidation of sustainable production models.

The **third group, corresponding to Peru and Ecuador**, linked formalization and productive development. In **Peru**, the *Mass Formalization Programme for Agriculture* combined titling with technical and productive support. In **Ecuador**, the *Territorial Development and Sustainable Agriculture in Yasuní Park* integrated formalization with conservation practices. The identified obstacles include limited regulatory frameworks, operational difficulties, and high transaction costs.

In terms of **the gender perspective**, some progress has been achieved in **Colombia**: the *PNFMPR* and *TECAM* explicitly include expanding rural women's access to land.

Overall, these interventions have shown progress in updating land registries, land titling, and the recognition of collective rights, although sustainability and inter-institutional coordination remain significant challenges.

Improving income, associativity and value chains

The second block analysed includes interventions aimed at improving producers' income and organization through associativity, value chains, and productive incentives.

The **first group** of interventions, corresponding to **Colombia**, included the *Programme to Support Productive Partnerships (PAAP)*, the *Harvest and Sell at a Fixed Price* strategy, and the *Productive Management Plan for the Dairy Chain*. These actions strengthened producer organisation and income predictability, but face challenges in terms of coordination, financing, and compliance with commercial agreements.

In **Ecuador**, the *Dairy Cluster* promoted coordination between producers and companies, combining technical assistance, innovation, and organizational strengthening to improve productivity and product quality. Despite advances in cooperation and value added, limitations in access to financing and the sustainability of partnerships persist.

Another group of interventions sought to formalize producer associations and strengthen business capacities through the *National Programme for Formalization, Value Added and Marketing for Family, Peasant and Indigenous Agriculture (AFCI)* in **Argentina**, and the *Mass Formalization Programme for Agriculture* in **Peru**. These initiatives encouraged agreements,

facilitated access to competitive funding, and supported cooperative organization. These interventions demonstrated that associativity facilitates formalization and boost competitiveness, although they require effective coordination and sustained technical support.

b) Employment and skills development

The third section analyses interventions that strengthen employment and skills in rural areas.

In the **Plurinational State of Bolivia**, the *Direct Support Programme for the Creation of Rural Agri-Food Initiatives (CRIAR II)* strengthened the productivity of small producers by providing productive assets, technical assistance and training, contributing to improved incomes and self-sufficiency. The initiative still faces challenges related to financial sustainability, institutional coordination and territorial coverage, especially in more remote areas.

In **Peru**, the *Artisanal Fisheries Agents* project strengthened the formalization and business management of the artisanal fisheries sector by combining technical training, financial inclusion, and administrative management assistance. The initiative enabled more enterprises to formalise and adopt sustainable practices, increasing the competitiveness and resilience of coastal communities. However, key challenges include reaching smaller communities and sustaining specialized financial services.

In **Chile**, the *Economic Associativity Programme (PAE)* promoted the creation and consolidation of farmers associations, providing technical support, business management training and marketing support. The intervention improved coordination between producers and markets and strengthened the participation of rural women and indigenous peoples. However, the main obstacles are sustaining business models and expanding financing sources to foster the consolidation of productive partnerships over time.

In **Colombia**, the digital tool *MYPE AsesorIA* – *MAIA* provided online assistance to micro and small agricultural enterprises in the coffee value chain to facilitate business and labour formalization. The platform made it possible to expand access to information and personalised advice in rural areas, helping to improve

producer knowledge in business management, decent work, formalization, and technical and production-related topics. However, it faces limitations due to digital connectivity, user technology training and coverage in dispersed territories.

In **Uruguay**, through the *Wage Councils for each economic activity*, the institutional framework for social dialogue in the agricultural sector was strengthened, setting minimum wage standards and encouraging collective bargaining between employers and rural workers. This strategy improved working conditions and reduced informality, especially in permanent and temporary jobs. The challenges identified focus on ensuring the effective implementation of agreements during the harvest season and improving enforcement of regulatory compliance.

c) Social protection

Another set of interventions analysed seeks to expand access to social security for agricultural and rural workers, including health care for them and their families, pensions, occupational hazards and unemployment insurance.

In **Argentina**, the *Trade Union Co-responsibility Agreements (CCG)* allowed seasonal producers to make payments to the social security system at the time of collection of their production, reducing operating costs and enabling temporary workers formalization of workers. Until 2016, the CCGs covered **54 per cent** of declared jobs in the activities included, yielding positive results in formalizing seasonal rural employment; however, high labour turnover and the presence of migrant workers limit universal coverage.

In **the Dominican Republic**, the *Collective Registration Agreement* linked self-employed workers to the Dominican Social Security System through AMUSSOL, resulting in more than **100,000 members** contributing regularly by 2024, tripling 2010 levels and doubling those of 2015. This intervention incorporated a gender approach through awareness campaigns.

In **Costa Rica**, *Collective Insurance Agreements* have enabled the extension of social security coverage to farmer and rural producer organizations, enabling self-employed workers grouped in cooperatives to access the same services as conventional contributory schemes.

The adaptation of contributions to agricultural production cycles and the active participation of organizations strengthened community cohesion, although universal coverage remains limited and depends on local organizational capacity.

In **Ecuador**, the *Rural Social Security Scheme (SSC)* protected self-employed agricultural workers and artisanal fishers through individual or collective membership, subsidized by the State and contributions from the general scheme. In 2017, it reached **more than 1.1 million** insured persons and provided pensions to **74,000 people**, helping reduce rural poverty from **61 per cent** to **41 per cent**, discouraging migration and strengthening the participation of farmer organizations. However, full coverage is limited by access barriers in remote areas and the seasonality of rural employment.

In **Brazil**, the *Rural Pension Plan* provided non-contributory pensions to small farmers and fishermen and a semi-contributory system for wage earners, supplemented by the State, reaching **one in four** self-employed workers and generating a significant redistributive impact. The *+Previdência Brasil* programme expanded private pension coverage with contributions exceeding **BRL 175 billion** in 2024, although future sustainability of this programme could be challenged due to the challenges posed by an ageing population. These initiatives also facilitated rural women's access to social protection benefits by assigning rights to them individually, rather than solely to the household head.

In **Mexico**, the *Programme to extend social security coverage to sugar producers* and the *MAS-CANA* project integrated training in sustainable practices, health and **occupational safety**. Between 2018 and 2021, **1,275** small producers adopted good practices, increasing productivity from **60.3** to **76.8 tonnes per hectare**, and the gaps in access to social protection was narrowed by five percentage points. Even so, there remains a need to expand coverage to seasonal and migrant workers, as well as to improve compliance with occupational health and safety standards.

Together, these interventions improved coverage and formalization, reduced costs and rural poverty, and highlighted management through local organisations and adaptation to productive contexts. Challenges include ensuring universality, sustainability and extending protection to migrant workers.

d) Recognition and enforcement of labour rights

A final block focuses on interventions aimed at formalization, labour inspections, and pilot initiatives grounded in social dialogue.

In **Argentina**, the *Fiscal Registry of Operators in the Production and Marketing Chain of Cattle and Buffalo Farms and Meat (RFOCB)* established mandatory registration to improve fiscal control and traceability. Complementarily, the *Digital Inspector (INDI)* enabled real-time inspections, regularising more **than 200,000 workers** and surveying **more than one million** between 2017 and 2019. Version 2.0 incorporated georeferencing, image capture and surface measurement, facilitating inspection in areas that are difficult to access.

In **Peru**, the *Simplification of Administrative Procedures for Artisanal Fishing (SIFORPA)* reduced the time required to obtain permits from several months to ten days, formalising **16,143 vessels** and **9,381 aquaculture producers**. Other initiatives, such as *Law No. 30814* and specialised guidance groups, applied behavioural economics and ICT to strengthen regulatory compliance, reducing uninsured work, irregular contracts and below-minimum wages. *Law No. 31110* improved working hours, remuneration, holidays, social security and bonuses, also incorporating gender measures, breastfeeding rooms and training for foremen.

In **Chile**, the *National Seasonal Agricultural Inspection Programme* monitored labour compliance in contracts, working hours, remuneration, social security, and protection of minors and migrant workers, while providing guidance to employers and workers on their rights and obligations. The initiative improved oversight, increase temporary workers formalization and raised awareness of labour regulations, especially among seasonal workers. However, challenges remain in terms of comprehensive coverage of the sector, uniform application of sanctions,

and continuity of guidance throughout the agricultural season.

The lessons highlight the importance of supporting processes, training labor inspectors, strengthening regulatory frameworks, and promoting tripartite dialogue.

In **Brazil**, through the projects *Reaping the Fruits of Social Dialogue and Cooperation*, *Cashews and Protection*, it promoted formalization through training, cooperativism, dissemination of policies and access to credit, boosting formal hiring and small producer engagement in the eSocial platform.

►► The lessons learned point to the need to accompany processes, train inspectors, consolidate regulatory frameworks and foster tripartite dialogue.

In general, the interventions stood out for their inter-institutional coordination, operational strengthening and access to information, achieving progress in formalization, although regulatory challenges, digital resistance and lack of incentives remain. The lessons learned point to the need to accompany processes, train inspectors, consolidate regulatory frameworks and foster tripartite dialogue.

Taken together, the 35 interventions analyzed show that countries in the region are actively working to strengthen the agricultural sector by innovating, coordinating and learning. However, they also confirm that, **without a clear focus on formalizing businesses and employment, structural improvements in the quality of agricultural employment will remain elusive.**

► Policy recommendations



Realizing the agricultural sector's potential for decent work and food security demands decisive political action now.

Based on the interventions analyzed and their findings, this report presents **ten concrete policy recommendations** to accelerate the transition towards formality and decent work in the agricultural sector.

1. Promote comprehensive strategies and policies that accelerate the transition to formality

With informality affecting nearly **80 per cent** of employment in the agricultural sector, there is an urgent need to promote comprehensive national and territorial strategies that accelerate the transition to formality, as well as to design specific measures to promote formalization in the different sector's value chains. This should integrate productive development policies, employment policies, regulatory frameworks, social protection systems, and strengthening of labour market and productive development institutions in rural areas.

Isolated interventions are not enough; the sector needs State policies with measurable objectives and defined time frames, capable of simultaneously addressing the structural roots of informality. A comprehensive approach—and coordinated across sectors and tripartite actors, as in the FORLAC 2.0 strategy—will allow productive dynamism to translate into quality employment, job stability, and social sustainability.

2. Integrate the formalization of economic units and employment into just transition strategies

Climate change has become a structural factor affecting agricultural productivity in the region; it is therefore crucial to integrate the formalization of economic and labour units into just climate transition strategies.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation must go hand in hand with the creation of formal employment and decent work, including—on both sides—incentives for both formalization (business and labour) and environmental sustainability, which are key elements of a just transition. Aligning the climate transition with decent work will reinforce both environmental goals and social justice.

3. Strengthen institutional coordination across sectors to develop effective rural policies

High levels of informality, inequality, geographic dispersion, and productivity gaps in the agricultural sector develop in a context marked by coordination failures, reflected in: a) disconnected policies without an explicit objective of transition to the formal economy; b) policies not accounting for the heterogeneity of workers and economic units, favouring the most advanced sectors; and c) weak institutions, with poor coordination and insufficient financial resources. These points, point out to the need for institutional coordination to ensure that rural policies have a sustained impact.

Governments need to establish interministerial coordination mechanisms that integrate the labour and agriculture agendas and promote coordination from the national to the local level. Establishing permanent coordination bodies can enable alignment of objectives, leverage synergies, and guarantee effective service delivery to rural populations.

4. Consolidate tripartite social dialogue as a tool for legitimacy and sustainability

In the absence of institutionalized spaces for social dialogue focused on rural areas and given the limited representation of the informal sectors of the rural economy in the design and implementation of formalization strategies,

tripartite social dialogue is key in ensuring the legitimacy and sustainability of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of agricultural policies. Active participation of workers' and employers' organizations—including those involved in the informal economy—is essential for developing legitimate solutions, building consensus and adapting to the reality of the territory.

Through spaces for consultation, conflicts can be anticipated, trust can be built, and the shared responsibility of all actors in the transition to formality can be strengthened.

5. Ensure sustained and diversified financing for rural transformation

Governments need to ensure sustained and predictable financing, as well as the availability of long-term instruments, as an enabling condition for rural transformation, through stable political commitments, regulatory frameworks that guarantee continuity, and adequate budgets.

To this end, it is necessary to design financial instruments tailored to formalized smallscale producers—agricultural microinsurance, green credit lines and state guarantees—strengthen rural microfinance and mobilize international cooperation to facilitate access to working capital, investment and modernization. Without continuity, there is no impact.

6. Incorporate digital technologies as a pillar of productive inclusion and formalization

The adoption of digital platforms and management tools remains limited and uneven in rural productive units, which limits labour formalization, access to markets and financial services; it is therefore essential to incorporate them as a strategic pillar of productive inclusion.

Governments should invest in connectivity, digital infrastructure and technological literacy, as well as promoting platforms that facilitate the registration of economic units and workers, training and participation in markets.

When used properly, digital tools not only improve productivity, but also reduce barriers to formalization and democratise access to services and opportunities, making them one of the keys to decent work and productive inclusion.

7. Combating misinformation and redesigning incentives for formalization

Many workers and employers perceive formalization as a complex, costly or unbeneficial process. To change this perception, governments need to implement efficient and far-reaching information campaigns on labour rights and the concrete benefits of formality.

In addition, it is crucial to simplify procedures, reduce costs and offer concrete incentives—such as administrative simplification, temporary exemptions, flexible modalities for integrating into social security, among others—that make formalization an attractive option. Formalization should not be seen as a burden and begin to be perceived as an opportunity.

8. Link technical and vocational training to the demands of the sector

More than **50 per cent** of agricultural employment is represented by people with low levels of education, making it urgent to link technical and vocational training to the demands of the sector in order to respond effectively to value chains.

It is essential to coordinate technical and vocational education with the productive sector, strengthen agricultural extension services, and promote professionalization programmes that improve productivity and skills in line with labour market demands. Meeting these demands and boosting the sector's development will only be possible with more trained human capital.

9. Expand the coverage and quality of social protection in rural populations

No formalization strategy will be sustainable if millions of people remain excluded from health, pension and benefit systems. It is imperative to create schemes adapted to the realities of

rural work, with flexible contribution schemes, collective insurance and targeted subsidies.

Enrolment in the social security system should become a gateway to rights and opportunities. Expanding social protection is not only a matter of justice: it is a prerequisite for breaking the cycle of informality, inequality and poverty.

10. Monitor and evaluate systematically

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation should become the driving force behind the effectiveness of rural policies. Without robust mechanisms to measure results—in formalization, improving working conditions, or reducing structural gaps—interventions lose direction and legitimacy.

Incorporating clear indicators (integrated into employment and agricultural surveys), reliable evaluation methods, and opportunities for feedback, improves design and implementation, strengthens accountability and ensures sustainability.

Specifically, it is urgent to integrate indicators of transition to formality into national statistical systems so that employment and agricultural surveys capture data on employment formality, employment transitions, social protection, gender, and working conditions.

None of the above recommendations will be effective if they leave women and young people behind. To close historical gaps and build a more just, dynamic and inclusive agricultural sector, policies need to be based on explicit gender-sensitive diagnoses and objectives, adapted to the realities of rural women and ensuring their participation in decision-making, while promoting equal pay, social protection, and violence-free working environments.

Similarly, they need to respond to the aspirations of rural youth, ensuring their access to land, financing, training, and decent work. This is not only a right and a condition for their current development, but also a key factor in strengthening the sector's sustainability and food security in the region.

► Final reflection



Formalization in the agricultural sector is a central pillar for a sustainable future in the region.

Agricultural employment can become an engine for decent work, food security and sustainability in Latin America. To achieve this, the formalization of enterprises and employment needs to be a central pillar of rural policies, backed by sustainable financing and social dialogue.

The path forward reaffirms the principles of **FORLAC 2.0**: moving towards a more productive, inclusive and resilient agricultural sector through coordinated policies that integrate productive development, employment and skills, social protection and labour rights, with a focus on gender, just transition and social dialogue.

Only in this way will it be possible to position agricultural employment as a cornerstone of sustainable development and food security in the

region. **Without decent work, there can be no sustainable development.**

Agricultural employment can become an engine for decent work, food security and sustainability in Latin America.

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