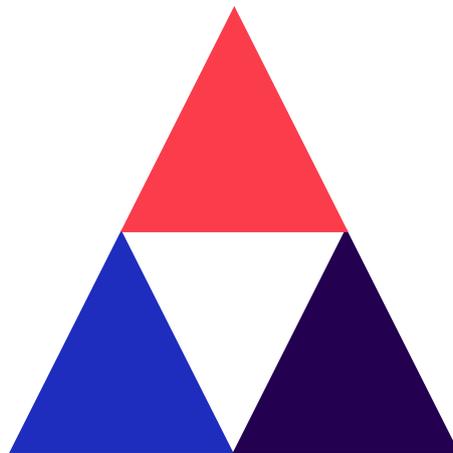




▶ Policy guidelines for the promotion of decent work in the agri-food sector *

Meeting of Experts on Decent Work in the Agri-food Sector:
An Essential Part of Sustainable Food Systems
(Geneva, 8–12 May 2023)



Sectoral Policies Department
Geneva, 2023

* In accordance with established procedures, these guidelines will be submitted to the 349th Session (October–November 2023) of the Governing Body of the ILO for its consideration.

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► Sectoral guidelines

ILO sectoral guidelines are reference tools setting out principles that can be reflected in the design and implementation of policies, strategies, programmes, legislation, administrative measures and social dialogue mechanisms in particular economic sectors or sectoral clusters. Sectoral guidelines are adopted by meetings of experts comprising governments, employers and workers. They can be implemented progressively to take into account different national settings, cultures and social, economic, environmental and political contexts.

Sectoral guidelines draw their principles from ILO international labour standards (Conventions and Recommendations) and other sources, including Declarations, codes of conduct and other policy guidance adopted and endorsed by the International Labour Conference or the Governing Body. They also draw on other international agreements and policies in the sector concerned, as well as relevant trends and developments in regional and national law and practice.

Sectoral guidelines focus on priority issues for governments, employers and workers that are unique to particular economic sectors and industries. While international labour standards normally deal with more general principles of labour law and practice, sectoral guidelines specify the principles and processes that could be implemented to promote decent work in particular workplaces or contexts. They benefit from the expertise of practitioners in the relevant sectors to capture good industry practices and innovations.

Sectoral guidelines are not legally binding. They are not subject to ratification or supervisory mechanisms established under ILO international labour standards. Sectoral guidelines can therefore be aspirational in scope, expand on principles laid down in international labour standards and other international agreements and policy and be adapted to different national systems and circumstances. ILO standards and other tools or guidance adopted and endorsed by the International Labour Conference and/or the Governing Body therefore form the foundation on which sectoral guidelines build. Sectoral guidelines are thus based on the full principles, rights and obligations set out in international labour standards; nothing set out in sectoral guidelines should be interpreted as lowering such standards.

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► Background

1. At its 346th Session, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) endorsed the proposal of the sectoral advisory bodies to hold a meeting of experts on decent work in the agri-food sector: an essential part of sustainable food systems, with a view to adopting guidelines on the topic.
2. The policy guidelines are structured around five chapters. Chapter 1 sets out the scope of the guidelines and identifies the intended users, while subsequent chapters cover the four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda. Chapter 2 focuses on the rights at work, while Chapter 3 is on decent jobs and productive employment in the agri-food sector. Chapter 4 considers social and labour protection and Chapter 5 addresses social dialogue and tripartism.

► 1. Scope of the guidelines and intended users

3. This document provides guidance for ILO constituents and other stakeholders engaged in the design and implementation of policies and measures on decent work in the agri-food sector as an essential part of efforts aimed at building sustainable food systems. It sets out common principles and the policy framework that should guide action to achieve decent work in the agri-food sector. Given the vast scope and complexity of the subject, such actions are many and diverse. The guidelines recognize the need for an integrated and coordinated approach at various levels (international, national, sectoral, local, and enterprise) and for the involvement of a wide range of actors.
4. The guidelines draw their principles from the following ILO instruments and documents:
 - Declaration of Philadelphia (1944);
 - ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022;
 - ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022;
 - Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) (1977), as amended in 2022;
 - ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019);
 - relevant Conventions, Recommendations and Protocols;¹
 - relevant resolutions and conclusions adopted by the International Labour Conference, notably the 2008 conclusions on the promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction.
5. The guidelines suggest respective and complementary roles of different actors in the process of designing and implementing such interventions. Governments have the duty to adopt, 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 agri-food sector taking into account other international labour standards. All enterprises

¹ A non-exhaustive reference list of ILO instruments, declarations and guidance to advance decent work in the agri-food sector is contained in the appendix.

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 ILO MNE Declaration and the 2011 *Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*. They also have a responsibility to comply with national laws and regulations wherever they operate.

6. Employers' organizations can play an important role in providing information and support to enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and contributing to promoting responsible business conduct and advancing the decent work agenda. Workers' organizations should provide information and support to workers, in particular regarding the respect of workers' rights and improvements in working conditions.
7. These policy guidelines are intended for use by:
 - (i) government authorities at all levels engaged in devising policy and practice on promoting decent work in the agri-food sector;
 - (ii) employers and employers' organizations in the agri-food sector;
 - (iii) workers and workers' organizations in the agri-food sector;
 - (iv) social and solidarity economy entities, including cooperatives, and other organizations of agri-food producers;
 - (v) international governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations involved in agricultural and rural development and poverty reduction.

► 2. Rights at work

8. International labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work are essential to a rights-based and human-centred approach to the development of the agri-food sector that responds to changing patterns in the world of work, protects workers and promotes sustainable enterprises and economic units. However, agri-food workers are often inadequately covered by labour and social security legislation due to the nature of their work, or because in rural areas, where most agri-food activities take place and where there are limited conditions for development and productivity, with a lack of infrastructure, sustainable investment and presence of the State, and where high levels of informality are present, law enforcement, labour inspection and compliance are often lacking or ineffective. The effective enforcement of national labour laws, which embody relevant international labour standards, is therefore of crucial importance.
9. International labour standards of direct relevance to the agri-food sector and the rural economy are addressed throughout this document, whereas the focus of this chapter is on fundamental principles and rights at work.
10. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, adopted in 1998 and amended in 2022, affirms the obligation inherent in membership of the ILO to respect, to promote and to realize the principles concerning the fundamental rights, namely: freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation; and a safe and healthy working environment.

2.1. Ensuring freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining

11. Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining are enabling rights that contribute to the promotion of democracy, efficient governance of labour markets and decent work. Their exercise has a major impact on work and living conditions and on economic and social development.
12. The fundamental right to organize and to bargain collectively is enshrined in the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98). These fundamental Conventions are complemented by other instruments that address the issue in the context of agriculture, including the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11), the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), and the Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110). In practice, however, agri-food workers may be excluded from the right to associate and bargain collectively due to inadequate legislative protection and insufficient mechanisms for the promotion of their rights. They are often unaware of their rights and/or lack the collective voice to demand that they be upheld. Additional challenges to the exercise of these rights can include a lack of education; high levels of informality; poor and isolated working and living conditions; unstable and temporary employment relationships; and discrimination based on union membership or participation in union activities.
13. In developing national policies and action to ensure freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining in the agri-food sector, governments should be :
 - (a) ratifying and effectively implement fundamental and other ILO instruments relating to freedom of association and collective bargaining, including Conventions Nos 110 and 141, and ensure effective implementation of Convention No. 11. This would entail establishing integrated national laws or adapting existing laws to the needs of workers in the agri-food sector;
 - (b) establishing adequate machinery, including through the responsible authority and labour inspectorate, to guarantee the effective application and enforcement of laws relating to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. In order to strengthen the capacity of the labour inspectorate, governments should consider the ratification and implementation of the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129);
 - (c) formulating and implementing measures towards the establishment, growth and functioning of workers' organizations in the sector, as set out in the relevant ILO instruments and guided by the Rural Workers' Organisations Recommendation, 1975 (No. 149). In particular, requirements regarding minimum membership, minimum levels of education and minimum funds should not be permitted in order not to impede the development of organizations in the sector;
 - (d) ensuring the right of workers and employers in the sector to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization. Such organizations should have the right to draw up their own constitutions and rules; to elect representatives; to organize their administrative activities; and to formulate their programmes. They should have the right to establish and join federations and confederations and any such organization should be able to affiliate with international organizations;

- (e) adopting legislative provisions to protect agri-food workers against discrimination on the basis of membership or involvement in workers' organization activities and their particular circumstances; protecting agri-food workers in law and in practice against the arbitrary dismissal or unlawful retaliation or eviction which are based on their status or activities as leaders or members of rural workers' organizations and against anti-union discrimination, by establishing rapid appeal procedures, national laws and regulations, and effective and dissuasive sanctions against interference;
 - (f) eliminating restrictions on the rights of migrant workers to join or form trade unions;
 - (g) ensuring the respect of freedom of association for employers;
 - (h) taking appropriate measures to encourage and promote the full development and utilization of machinery for voluntary negotiation between employers or employers' organizations and workers' organizations;
 - (i) securing for all those engaged in the agri-food sector the same rights of association and collective bargaining as granted to industrial workers and repealing any statutory or other provisions restricting such rights. Specific legislation may be required to safeguard the right of access of trade union leaders and representatives to plantations to meet with workers.
- 14.** In ensuring respect for the right to freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, employers and their organizations should focus on:
- (a) facilitating access to plantations and processing sites by independent trade union officials for the purpose of carrying out lawful trade union activities, provided there is no interference with work being carried out and subject to appropriate precautions being taken for the protection of the property, and respecting their freedom to hold meetings;
 - (b) removing hindrances, if any, to the organization of free, independent and democratically controlled trade unions; making no attempt to establish a trade union under the control of management or discourage workers from exercising their right to form or join a union, including by making the employment of a worker subject to the condition that they shall not join a union or shall relinquish trade union membership;
 - (c) providing unions with such facilities, as may be appropriate, in order to enable them to carry out their functions promptly and efficiently. The granting of such facilities should not impair the efficient operation of the undertaking concerned;
 - (d) strengthening their capacity, including increasing the representation of their membership, in order to effectively engage in all relevant processes.
- 15.** Workers' organizations should focus on:
- (a) promoting workers' education and training, including on the benefits of collective bargaining, their rights and obligations;
 - (b) strengthening their outreach efforts to migrant workers in particular women and youth in order to promote their organization and raise awareness about their rights and obligations within national law. This could be supported by transnational collaboration between trade unions and civil society organizations in countries of origin and destination;
 - (c) addressing practical challenges in relation to the freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, including issues concerning eligibility and the payment of dues, of workers not employed on a permanent basis;

- (d) strengthening their capacity, including increasing the representation of their membership, in order to effectively engage in all related processes.

2.2. Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour

16. Forced or compulsory labour is a violation of the fundamental human right to work in freedom and to choose one's work freely. It contributes to the perpetuation of poverty and stands in the way of the achievement of decent work for all. Since it affects primary agricultural production and processing, forced labour is a threat to the sustainability of food systems. The challenge in the agri-food sector may be attributed to underlying root causes of forced labour as well as certain characteristics of the sector, including inadequate labour and social protection, high levels of informality and poverty, physically demanding and labour-intensive nature of work, piece-rate pay systems, remote and isolated work locations and living environments, low levels of literacy and lack of awareness of rights among workers. Migrant workers, upon whom the sector commonly relies, are more than three times as likely to be engaged in forced labour. Indigenous and tribal peoples may also be particularly vulnerable to exploitation, especially debt bondage.
17. Pursuant to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, all Member States have an obligation to respect, promote and realize the principle of the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, irrespective of whether they have ratified these instruments. Governments should therefore ratify and effectively implement the fundamental ILO instruments aimed at the prohibition and elimination of forced or compulsory labour, namely, the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), and the Protocol of 2014 thereto, and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).
18. In giving effect to their responsibility to address the challenge of forced labour in the agri-food sector, governments should consider:
 - (a) developing an integrated and gender sensitive approach combining law enforcement and prosecution with employment-related and other social measures for prevention and rehabilitation of forced labour victims and their compensation;
 - (b) adopting, reviewing or strengthening anti-forced labour and anti-trafficking laws and regulations with appropriate penalties and measures for remediation, such as compensation and repatriation, where applicable/as appropriate, to be accessible by all victims of forced labour irrespective of their presence or legal status in the national territory;
 - (c) reinforcing the capacity of judiciary and law enforcement officials, including labour inspectors, to identify and follow up on cases of forced labour including through training and the development of specific mechanisms such as mobile response teams;
 - (d) reinforcing the number, skills and resources of labour inspectors, including their mandate to conduct effective monitoring in the informal economy;
 - (e) strengthening the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations to support efforts aimed at the elimination of forced labour, including through capacity-building and awareness-raising support and enhancing social protection and skills development programmes as critical preventative measures. This requires providing guidance and training support on best practices, including on human rights due diligence to promote responsible business conduct and effectively address the challenge of forced labour;
 - (f) improving governance for fair recruitment to ensure the protection of workers against fraudulent practices and abuses during recruitment within their territory and/or jurisdiction by third parties. This requires strengthening legislation on recruitment practices and, in

particular, addressing gaps in coverage of the agri-food sector; ensuring that the relevant legislation and regulations cover all aspects of the recruitment process; and taking specific measures to ensure compliance, including through the public registration, licensing or certification of recruiters. Specific measures also include promoting the use of clear and transparent written employment contracts and access to grievance and other dispute resolution mechanisms, and prohibiting recruiters and employers from charging recruitment fees and related costs to workers and from confiscating, destroying or retaining workers' identity documents or contracts. Bilateral or multilateral agreements embodying international labour standards, in particular fundamental principles and rights at work, and providing for an oversight mechanism for the recruitment process of migrant workers, should be concluded between countries of origin, transit and destination, as relevant;

- (g) ensuring effective coordination between the relevant government ministries and departments, including immigration authorities and the judiciary, and the social partners in order to prevent and combat forced labour and trafficking and support and provide resources for awareness-raising campaigns run by employers' and workers' organizations;
- (h) addressing informality, in line with the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), as one of the root causes of forced labour;
- (i) providing access to effective remedy in line with the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights* and the ILO MNE Declaration.

19. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) ensuring fair recruitment practices, including through human rights due diligence assessments of recruitment procedures as outlined in the ILO's *General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment*. This includes, inter alia, providing workers, including those from local communities, with clear and transparent written employment contracts containing all significant conditions of employment in a language that they understand; ensuring access to effective grievance and dispute resolution mechanisms; ensuring that no recruitment fees or related costs are charged to or otherwise borne by workers or jobseekers; precluding from confiscating, destroying or retaining workers' identity documents or contracts; and respecting the rights of all workers, and particularly migrant workers, to leave or change employment and return to their countries of origin;
- (b) ensuring that workers are not held in debt bondage or forced to work. Deductions from wages shall be permitted only under conditions and to the extent prescribed by national laws or regulations or fixed by collective agreement or arbitration award;
- (c) ensuring that workers are not forced to work overtime beyond the limits permitted in national law and collective agreements. Taking immediate and effective measures within their own competence to prevent and eliminate forced or compulsory labour in their operations.

20. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) raising awareness and working on the elimination of forced labour, including through collaboration with labour inspectorates as long as their independence is ensured;
- (b) developing resources and capacity to support workers in the sector;
- (c) providing training to workers, raising awareness of workers so that they do not fall into forced labour.

2.3. Abolition of child labour

21. Child labour deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and is harmful to their physical and mental development. Today, 70 per cent (112 million) of all children in child labour work in agriculture. Almost half of these children are engaged in hazardous work that is detrimental to their safety and health or morals. Migrant child labourers are also vulnerable and thus in need of attention. Child labour reinforces a cycle of poverty, wherein children have inadequate education, food and nutrition and healthcare and are less likely to have decent work opportunities as adults. Consequently, eliminating child labour in the agri-food sector is key to the commitment and obligation to eliminate all forms of child labour at a global level, and to sustainable food systems and development in line with the Durban Call to Action.
22. Governments should consider:
- (a) ratifying and effectively enforcing the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), underpinned by the development, through tripartite consultation, of national policies, strategies and plans of action with measurable outcomes and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and strengthened inter-ministerial coordination and institutional capacities, including regarding education and law enforcement;
 - (b) establishing or reinforcing partnerships and multi-stakeholder platforms to pursue an integrated approach to tackling child labour;
 - (c) strengthening due diligence through accountability systems of all stakeholders and providing support for implementation, when applicable;
 - (d) ensuring the elimination of child labour by promoting decent work that delivers a decent income for young people of legal working age and adults as an important factor to this end, with a particular emphasis on workers in the informal economy, and ensuring access to social protection for children and their families to mitigate the poverty and economic uncertainty that underpin child labour;
 - (e) strengthening comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection systems, including social protection floors, in line with the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), which set minimum standards for the provision of family or child benefits that help to alleviate poverty, a key driver of child labour, and cushion the impacts of economic shocks on workers and their families. In strengthening an enabling environment to tackle child labour, particular attention needs to be paid to local development planning and implementation, especially in high-risk localities;
 - (f) investing in measures to increase the productivity and incomes of farmers in order to reduce incentives for the use of child labour, for instance by providing access to skills development and training, in particular to improved technical and vocational education and training systems that match labour market needs, or financing the adoption of modern technologies. Access to savings insurance schemes and government programmes, such as providing start-up funds, loans or matching workers' contributions can also help. These initiatives shall encourage access of children to education;
 - (g) promoting access to free, compulsory, quality basic education as well as early childhood education, where applicable, and raising awareness among communities where child labour is prevalent of its harmful effects and the importance and benefits of schooling;

- (h) raising awareness of national minimum age legislation in the agri-food sector, including the distinction between acceptable youth employment and hazardous child labour, which is to be banned for any person under the age of 18 years. This starts with the development of a national list of prohibited activities and may require establishing what light work (non-hazardous work, performed for a limited number of hours, without interfering with school attendance) is permitted under national legislation, in line with Article 7 of Convention No. 138;
- (i) improving occupational safety and health and working conditions for young people who are of legal minimum working age in their country, while pursuing prevention and withdrawal strategies for children, especially those engaged in hazardous work, taking into account Convention No. 138 (Article 3) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190) (Paragraph 3), and ensuring that children are not displaced from one form of child labour to another;
- (j) providing assistance for enterprises to establish child labour prevention programmes in their operations and out-grower schemes. These are best facilitated through social dialogue between employers' and workers' organizations, including through collective bargaining;
- (k) strengthening employers' and workers' organizations, including through capacity-building and awareness-raising support as critical preventative measures;
- (l) strengthening workers' and farmers'/producers' organizations to ensure their participation in and contribution to child labour prevention and elimination programmes;
- (m) establishing or strengthening child labour monitoring systems, including community-based systems, which involve the identification, referral, protection and prevention of child labourers in the sector. These could be particularly effective if pursued in collaboration with local authorities, labour inspection, agricultural extension, education and social services and with the active participation of employers' and workers' organizations and non-governmental organizations concerning matters that directly affect them;
- (n) addressing the underlying causes of child labour in agri-food activities by introducing regulations limiting practices that may incentivize the use of child labour, reassessing piece-rate wage systems in agriculture and recognizing the need to guarantee adequate minimum wages.

23. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) conducting due diligence in their operations, ensuring that the minimum age for employment or work is respected and that the recruitment of adult workers does not involve the recruitment of their children as family members;
- (b) taking proactive and effective measures to prevent and contribute to eliminating child labour in coordination with governments by engaging in negotiations on decent and fair wages;
- (c) promoting fair pricing with commodity buyers and retailers with a view to preventing and eliminating child labour by improving wage outcomes for workers.

24. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) raising social awareness;

- (b) supporting efforts to eradicate child labour in agri-food production, and cooperating with relevant authorities and services on the prevention and elimination of child labour.

2.4. Promoting equality and non-discrimination

25. The general acceptance of the principles of non-discrimination, equality and equal remuneration for work of equal value is reflected in the high ratification rates of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), and the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). However, women, migrant workers, indigenous and tribal peoples, small-scale farmers, persons with disabilities and people living with HIV in particular still often face discrimination and may not be effectively protected under relevant national legislation.
26. Despite playing an essential role in the agri-food industry worldwide, working as farmers, wage earners and entrepreneurs, women are often denied access to land and productive resources including inputs, technology, business and financial services, education and training. Women in the agri-food sector are less likely to be wage earners, typically earn less than men and frequently face discrimination at work, particularly during pregnancy. They are often concentrated in low-skilled, low-productivity or unpaid jobs, work long hours, face poor working conditions and have limited social protection. Furthermore, women frequently take on the burden of unpaid care and household work, including food provision and caring for children, the sick and the elderly. Women in the sector are also at high risk of harassment, including sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence.
27. Labour migration is reshaping the world of work. Migrant workers who typically move to higher-income countries or areas within the countries to work in labour-intensive crop production on plantations, including as seasonal workers and in food processing, are more likely to face discrimination, violence and harassment than other workers. They may lack the labour and social protection available to local workers. They are also less likely to know their rights or report abuse due to their immigration status or for fear of jeopardizing their income and employment. Appropriate regulatory frameworks need to be put in place to promote decent work for migrant workers.
28. Discrimination perpetuates inequalities, which undermines social cohesion and wastes human talent, with detrimental effects on productivity and economic growth. The fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination in employment and occupation for all workers in the agri-food sector should be at the heart of policies for poverty reduction, food security and sustainable food systems, sustainable development and the promotion of fairer and more equitable societies. Relevant policies and proactive measures need to target groups of workers who may be particularly vulnerable to discrimination based on their race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, or other status. In particular, governments should consider:
 - (a) promoting a zero-tolerance environment for discrimination, violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, in line with the Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190), and the Violence and Harassment Recommendation, 2019 (No. 206), by ensuring that relevant legislation, regulations and policies are in place and effectively ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, including equal remuneration for work of equal value and the right to work free from violence and harassment, and measures be taken to protect the reproductive health of women workers in agriculture. Strengthening social dialogue processes that integrate these matters with a view to developing relevant policies and joint strategies for the sector is of crucial importance;

- (b) strengthening the capacity of groups or categories of workers vulnerable to discrimination, violence and harassment to effectively participate in social dialogue processes and consultations through the most representative employers' and workers' organizations concerning matters that directly affect them;
- (c) eliminating barriers and facilitating equitable access to and participation in education and training programmes and employment recruitment processes;
- (d) promoting adequate, secure and equitable access to land, water, inputs and other natural and productive resources such as a range of financial services and start-up grants, markets, infrastructure, information technology and agricultural machinery. Strategies investing in public infrastructure and initiatives to collectively purchase land can be particularly beneficial;
- (e) supporting the establishment and sound functioning of child and long-term care, family services and facilities for agri-food workers, in order to allow both women and men to remain in employment;
- (f) promoting access to gender-responsive and inclusive universal, comprehensive, adequate and sustainable systems of social protection, especially for categories of workers particularly vulnerable to discrimination, violence and harassment, including migrant workers, women workers and workers with disabilities. Equitable access to universal, comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection has a significant impact on gender equality and fosters more inclusive societies;
- (g) facilitating the registration and issuance of identity documents for all workers in the agri-food sector and small-scale farmers.

29. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) developing and effectively implementing policies to address discrimination, violence and harassment at work and promote diversity and inclusion, including by ensuring that such policies cover all types of workers, irrespective of their contractual status and work-related activities. Doing so may require employers to develop or update relevant guidance, resources, training and tools, including gender-based violence and harassment in risk assessment and ensure that all personnel are fully aware of these policies and that managers and supervisors receive appropriate training to implement and comply with them;
- (b) ensuring that all workers, irrespective of their migration status, enjoy equal opportunities and treatment in employment and occupation, including equal pay for work of equal value;
- (c) promoting the participation of women and other under-represented groups in leadership positions within their sphere of influence, including by removing barriers to entry to and advancement in employment and careers and by combating gender stereotypes;
- (d) expanding policies for the provision of adequate paid care leave and promotion of a more balanced sharing of work and family responsibilities;
- (e) promoting the establishment of mechanisms for the prevention, monitoring and reporting of any incident of discrimination, violence and harassment in their operations in consultation with representatives of groups of at-risk workers in line with international labour standards;
- (f) ensuring safe, fair and effective reporting and dispute resolution mechanisms and procedures in cases of discrimination, violence and harassment and providing easy access to appropriate and effective remedies. There should be no interference with, or restriction of, workers' efforts to attain appropriate remedies, either judicial or non-judicial;

- (g) taking measures to ensure protection against victimization of or retaliation against complainants, victims, witnesses and whistle-blowers and access to legal, social, medical and administrative support measures for complainants and victims.

30. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) engaging in awareness-raising on plantations about rights, with a view to changing attitudes and behaviour, and extending such awareness outreach to rural communities;
- (b) playing an active role in the design, development and implementation of any prevention measures in relation to violence, harassment and discrimination;
- (c) supporting efforts aimed at monitoring of discrimination, violence and harassment on plantations. This could, for example, be done by establishing complaints procedures, and being part of the effective reporting and dispute resolution mechanism, setting up gender committees, and promoting pay equity;
- (d) tackling the challenge of equality within trade unions and understanding and addressing the root causes of gender-based violence and harassment with a view to ensuring that the membership base and leadership at all levels reflect the diversity of the plantation workforce.

2.5. Ensuring the right to a safe and healthy working environment

- 31.** The global affirmation of the importance of safety and health at work was expressed in June 2022, when the International Labour Conference decided to include a safe and healthy working environment in the ILO framework of fundamental principles and rights at work, designating the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), as fundamental Conventions. This decision reaffirms the constitutional obligation of ILO Members to promote, respect and realize the principles contained in these two Conventions.
- 32.** A safe and healthy working environment is not only a fundamental principle and right at work but also a fundamental requirement of a sustainable agri-food sector and should be an integral part of all policies for sustainable food systems. All workers, irrespective of their sex, employment or legal status, have the right to work in safe and healthy conditions. The agri-food sector remains one of the most hazardous sectors to work in, in terms of fatalities, injuries and work-related ill health, alongside construction and mining. The hazards can vary significantly depending on the type of operation, the specific work process involved, the crops or species being cultivated and the scale of operations or production.
- 33.** Governments in every country should progressively set up national occupational safety and health policies, programmes, and systems and build a national preventative safety and health culture, in accordance with the relevant ILO instruments, including the fundamental Conventions. The ratification and effective implementation of the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention (No. 184) and Recommendation (No. 192), 2001 which provide sector-specific guidance, is of crucial importance in this regard. The ILO code of practice on safety and health in agriculture provides guidance on the application of the relevant ILO Conventions, including appropriate strategies to address the range of occupational safety and health risks encountered in agriculture.
- 34.** In developing policies to ensure a safe and healthy working environment in the agri-food sector, governments, in consultation with the most representative organizations of employers and workers, should consider:
- (a) developing and enforcing pertinent and comprehensive occupational safety and health legislation that affords protection for all workers in the sector, taking into account

particularly the gender perspectives and incorporating provisions related to violence and harassment;

- (b) establishing authorities or bodies responsible for implementing national occupational safety and health systems; formulating and evaluating national occupational safety and health interventions; and establishing mechanisms of inter-sectoral coordination among authorities and bodies relevant to the agri-food sector and defining their functions and responsibilities, in line with Conventions Nos 155 and 184 (Article 4);
- (c) establishing and maintaining an education and training system adapted to the needs of the agri-food sector, with special attention to raising occupational safety and health-related knowledge and skills, in line with Convention No. 155 (Article 14);
- (d) ensuring the provision of adequate occupational health services, in line with the Occupational Health Services Convention (No. 161), and Recommendation (No. 171), 1985 and introducing provisions for the progressive extension of appropriate health services for small farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises, in line with Recommendation No. 192;
- (e) establishing or reinforcing classification systems for hazardous substances used in the agri-food sector, including establishing criteria for the importation, classification, packaging and labelling of hazardous substances used in the agri-food sector; ensuring compliance with national laws and regulations for those who produce, import, provide, sell, transfer, store or dispose of chemicals; and, ensuring a suitable system for the safe collection, recycling and disposal of chemical waste, in line with Conventions Nos 155 (Articles 5, 11–12) and 184 (Articles 12–14);
- (f) monitoring biological hazards and the use of chemicals in the sector, including the introduction of new chemicals, and their effect on the health of workers and the environment;
- (g) establishing or reinforcing reporting systems for the recording and notification of occupational injuries and diseases and collecting and analysing data, disaggregated by location, job category, sector, gender and age, in order to identify and take preventative occupational safety and health measures, and progressively developing procedures for including small farmers and small enterprises in the recording and notification of occupational accidents and diseases;
- (h) adopting legal, administrative and disciplinary measures and other types of remedial action and providing support to victims where violations of occupational safety and health laws and regulations have occurred, in line with Conventions Nos 155 (Article 9) and 184 (Article 4);
- (i) establishing requirements for job sites to provide adequate welfare facilities with potable water, separate and clean sanitary facilities for men and women, access to food services, first aid and medical care, temporary shelter to be used during breaks, and breastfeeding and day-care facilities;
- (j) addressing occupational safety and health issues related to climate change to help promote safe and healthy work in the agri-food sector. Heat stress, in particular, increasingly affects the world's agri-food workers, who mostly work outdoors and is linked to reduced working hours and lower labour productivity. Regulations to protect workers from heat stress, such as setting maximum temperatures to which workers may be exposed, investments in infrastructure and sound social protection systems, are important policy responses to heat stress;

- (k) ensuring compatibility with social protection schemes to cover workers affected by occupational injuries and diseases, and extending employment injury protection to all workers where gaps in coverage exist;
 - (l) supporting the progressive improvement of occupational safety and health on smallholder farms, thereby contributing to the promotion of sustainable enterprise development, including through education and training programmes, agricultural fairs and exhibitions and awareness-raising programmes in the media, trade press or social media platforms; and introducing traceability measures and conducting participatory analyses to improve occupational safety and health practices, including through supply chain stakeholder analysis, mapping the sites of operations and conducting risk assessments;
 - (m) developing educational programmes, materials and appropriate advice and training for small farmers and small and medium-sized enterprises on occupational safety and health, covering, inter alia, work-related hazards, including the risk of musculoskeletal disorders, the selection and use of chemicals and biological agents, the design of safe work systems and the selection, use and maintenance of personal protective equipment, machinery, tools and appliances.
- 35.** Employers and their organizations, in consultation with workers and their representatives, should focus on:
- (a) establishing occupational safety and health management systems to cover: (i) occupational safety and health policy, which should be specific to their enterprises, and comply with national laws and regulations; (ii) responsibility and accountability, competence requirements and training, documentation and record-keeping; (iii) hazard identification and risk assessment taking into account a gender perspective; (iv) planning and implementation of occupational safety and health controls, including preventative measures; (v) environmental management system; and (vi) monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement of occupational safety and health performance with the objective of lowering incidence of fatalities, injuries and work-related ill health. The establishment of a safety culture throughout all levels of the enterprise should be prioritized, with managers demonstrating commitment to the prevention of workplace accidents, injuries and diseases;
 - (b) establishing workplace occupational safety and health committees, in accordance with national law and practice and/or collective bargaining agreements;
 - (c) conducting regular risk assessments to identify potential hazards and eliminate or minimize risks. As stipulated in Article 16 of Convention No. 155, this includes ensuring that, so far as is reasonably practicable, the workplaces, machinery, equipment and processes under their control are safe and without risk to health, and that the chemical, physical and biological substances and agents under their control are without risk to health when the appropriate measures of protection are taken;
 - (d) conducting health surveillance and safety risk assessment in order to monitor and ensure the functioning of the measures for the prevention of occupational injuries and diseases;
 - (e) providing access to approved medical practitioners for the purpose of undertaking periodic medical examinations;
 - (f) ensuring that all relevant safety and health information is provided to workers prior to work commencing and as work progresses, including by conducting relevant training for all workers, creating information resources in common areas and ensuring that all hazard

warning signage and standard operating procedures are adequate, clearly visible, and written in languages that workers understand;

- (g) ensuring that risk control measures and safety equipment are kept up to date;
- (h) providing personal protective equipment at no cost to all workers, including all temporary, casual and seasonal workers, and training workers on occupational safety and health and the usage of personal protective equipment. Such equipment should comply with the relevant national standards and criteria approved or recognized by the competent authority;
- (i) when directly recruiting migrant workers, making sure that all necessary arrangements are in place to ensure that the workers are provided with transport of adequate quality and sanitary conditions to the place of employment, medical assistance, food and rest camps or rest houses, as appropriate, in line with Convention No. 110 (Articles 12 and 13);
- (j) ensuring that all workers have access to adequate shaded areas; welfare facilities, including adequate and secure sanitary facilities; clean drinking water; food services; first aid and medical care; temporary shelter to be used during breaks; breastfeeding and day-care facilities. The establishment of this should be adapted to the working place and, where appropriate, be replaced by agreed alternative measures through social dialogue.

36. Workers and their organizations focus on:

- (a) participating actively in occupational safety and health committees, including in the design of measures to eliminate and prevent risks at the enterprise level;
- (b) raising awareness among plantation workers and also among local communities of safety and health matters, including the appropriate use of personal protective equipment, and encouraging their participation in the application and review of safety and health measures;
- (c) cooperating with the employer in the field of occupational safety and health at the level of the undertaking.

► 3. Decent jobs and full and productive employment in the agri-food sector

37. As the source of employment and livelihood opportunities for over a quarter of the world's working population, the agri-food sector can be an important driver of decent work and sustainable enterprise development. A socially, environmentally and economically sustainable agri-food sector with full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work at its core is essential for eradicating poverty, tackling inequalities and ending global hunger. Realizing decent work for all workers in the agri-food sector is, therefore, also key to achieving sustainable development and ensuring that no one is left behind, thereby contributing to social justice.

3.1. Sustainable enterprise development

38. The promotion of sustainable enterprises is a major tool for achieving decent work, sustainable development and innovation. At the centre of sustainable enterprise development are policies to create an enabling business environment, strengthening institutions, good governance and rule of law, promote skills and entrepreneurship development and access to markets and encourage the creation and growth of enterprises in a manner that human, financial and natural resources

are combined equitably and efficiently in order to achieve innovation and enhanced productivity which respects the values and principles of decent work, human dignity and sustainability.

3.1.1. An enabling business environment

39. An enabling business environment, which supports investment and contributes to the development of competitive and dynamic economic sectors, can help raise productivity and competitiveness, foster business continuity and stimulate the generation of decent jobs and livelihoods. Creating an enabling business environment entails developing a political, economic, social and environmental climate that improves the prospects of agri-food businesses of all sizes, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, helps to overcome decent work deficits and promotes sustainability.
40. Governments should foster an enabling business environment by ensuring at least the basic conditions for sustainable enterprise development outlined in the 2007 International Labour Conference conclusions concerning the promotion of sustainable enterprises and the 2015 Conference conclusions concerning small and medium-sized enterprises and decent and productive employment creation. The development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which tend to be labour-intensive, should receive particular attention. Attention should also be given to social and solidarity economy organizations, in accordance with the 2022 International Labour Conference conclusions concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy. Emphasis should also be placed on the impact of business environment reform on the formalization of the informal economy. The development of an inclusive legal framework for business development and the establishment of mechanisms to prevent and address all forms of discriminatory behaviour in lending markets and in land and property rights should also be prioritized.
41. In establishing programmes and policies to promote an enabling business environment in the agri-food sector, governments, in consultation with employers' and/or workers' organizations, as appropriate, should consider:
 - (a) identifying major constraints to sustainable enterprise development, including high levels of informality, corruption, adapting administrative procedures and addressing the underlying causes of these and challenges faced by small and vulnerable farmers, especially women-run economic units, paying particular attention to sector-specific challenges, such as, for example, food price volatility, and designing coherent policies across economic, social and trade portfolios in order to address these deficits;
 - (b) developing an enabling legal and regulatory environment that facilitates formalization and boosts competitiveness;
 - (c) formulating and implementing policies aimed at promoting responsible business conduct;
 - (d) promoting sector-specific investment, including investments that support value addition, combined with policy initiatives that fully incorporate social and environmental objectives and promote just transitions and decent work;
 - (e) improving the access of agri-food enterprises to information and to business and financial services. These may include information and services designed to help in the understanding of regulations and procedures, cross-sectoral issues and their implications, and access to finance, including through, for instance, loan guarantees, start-up grants and sector-specific financial institutions;

- (f) promoting the development of the agri-food sector, in particular entrepreneurs and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, cooperatives, producers' and farmers' organizations which can help producers achieve economies of scale; pool resources to upgrade their members' technical and entrepreneurship skills; facilitate access to new technologies, information and business services, thereby helping to innovate and improve product quality, including in terms of safety standards; act as intermediaries or guarantors for borrowing by members, or through credit and loan arrangements among members; facilitate access to markets, including high-value markets and connect to enterprises further up the supply chain; increase members' bargaining power and ensure that they capture a fair share of the value of their products; secure better prices for agricultural inputs when buying in bulk;
- (g) investing in and facilitating research and innovation in agri-food technologies and promoting academic partnerships and technology transfer at all levels;
- (h) supporting skills development to meet the changing needs of agri-food enterprises, including through the establishment and reform of technical and vocational education and training institutions and curricula and investment in basic education and literacy in rural areas.

42. Employers, workers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) participating in national processes in order to advocate for and design policies that promote enabling business environments in the agri-food sector;
- (b) providing services to their members in order to contribute to the promotion of sustainable business development in the agri-food sector, including through education and training, awareness-raising and access to sector-specific services and resources;
- (c) advancing respect for fundamental principles and rights at work.

3.1.2. Business development services

43. Business development services can help promote sustainable enterprise development in the agri-food sector by providing business advice, information and support, facilitating access to markets, improving the business environment and addressing market failures. Business development services should be needs-oriented and take into account labour market needs, the specific requirements and purchasing power of smallholders, small and medium-sized enterprises, local entrepreneurs and individuals, as well as group enterprises and cooperatives and all entities that fall within the social and solidarity economy in the agri-food sector. Furthermore, such services should be gender-responsive and address the needs of disadvantaged groups including youth, migrant workers and indigenous and tribal peoples. These service objectives may be achieved through initiatives to establish and build the capacity of business development centres.

44. In order to harness the potential of business development services to enhance growth, job-creation potential and the competitiveness of enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, governments should consider:

- (a) providing a range of direct and indirect support services for agri-food enterprises and their workers, including pre-start-up, start-up and development assistance; business incubators; information and advice services; consultancy and research services; legal, accounting and financial services; and environmental management services. The Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998 (No. 189), provides guidance in this regard;

- (b) promoting local partnerships to improve the delivery of business development services in the agri-food sector.

3.2. Ensuring equitable access to financial services

45. Access to financial services (such as savings, credit, leasing, payment and money transfer services) and risk management (for example, insurance, guarantees) can help to promote sustainable enterprise development and formalization, boost productivity and stimulate economic growth. Furthermore, equitable access to finance, including insurance against production and yield losses as well as price fluctuations, can help to build resilience to changing conditions in the sector, providing financial stability during periods of reduced income, protecting farmers from climate risks and facilitating the uptake of new technologies and crop varieties.
46. Agri-food enterprises, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and producers often face constraints that prevent them from gaining access to the financial services that they need. In Africa, for instance, although the agri-food sector accounts for a significant share of gross domestic product and employment, only a fraction of bank lending is directed towards the sector. In developing countries, where farmers are often the most vulnerable, only a small percentage are covered by agricultural insurance to protect their incomes. Financial institutions and agri-food enterprises face several key challenges both in the provision of and access to financial services, including seasonality and irregularity of cashflows, high transaction costs, systemic risks, such as crop diseases, droughts and floods, and remote locations. Addressing these challenges is essential to promoting sustainable enterprise development and building sustainable and resilient livelihoods in the agri-food sector.
47. In designing policies to improve access to finance, governments, in consultation with social partners, should consider:
 - (a) fostering an enabling environment, including by: investing in infrastructure and relevant technology to lower transaction costs (see sections 3.4 and 3.5 of this chapter); facilitating access to credit, in particular for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and effectively addressing discrimination in lending practices; increasing financial literacy among farmers and agri-food enterprises, through education in schools and training programmes; promoting savings and insurance through awareness campaigns; and facilitating the link between formal, informal and semi-formal financial institutions and increasing their capacity to serve the agri-food sector in rural and remote areas;
 - (b) promoting innovative means of finance, such as value chain finance, blended finance structures or results-based financing mechanisms; strengthening the capacity of alternative providers such as aggregators, which can reduce financial risk by pre-financing inputs and enhancing the creditworthiness of agri-food enterprises; and strengthening the management and governance capacity of and access to financial cooperatives, commercial banks, development banks and microfinance institutions, among others;
 - (c) developing preferential access schemes and support funds for young and women farmers and disadvantaged groups, for instance by enhancing the capacity of financial service providers to serve them, designing and adapting financial products and delivery mechanisms and providing non-financial support, including business plan development and business management training;
 - (d) promoting access to agricultural insurance, particularly for smallholder farmers, to increase resilience to fluctuations in demand, price shocks and climate risks. Protecting the incomes of farmers can help encourage a virtuous cycle of investment, increased productivity and

improved earnings. This objective may be facilitated by the use of satellite technology and other remote-sensing mechanisms to provide statistical data, while ensuring personal data protection according to national laws and regulations, for example on rainfall; investment in infrastructure, such as weather stations and roads; the establishment of back-office systems to perform transparent loss assessment and verification and provide cashless claims processing; and by the use of digital platforms and mobile applications to provide insurance to agri-food enterprises in remote areas.

3.3. Improving access to markets

48. Many agri-food producers, and particularly smallholder farmers, face significant challenges in accessing markets and selling their produce. The lack of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises and barriers to market access arise from conditions such as remote locations, lack of internet connectivity and access to technology, high transportation costs, due to the lack of adequate infrastructure, such as roads and storage and limited entrepreneurial and business skills and training. Due to these challenges and a lack of market information, many producers sell produce directly from their farms for prices lower than they could achieve elsewhere, contributing to low incomes. Limited marketing opportunities act as a constraint on production and make diversification into new crops difficult, as farmers tend only to produce what they can be certain to sell. Increasing access to markets for agri-food enterprises can help boost agricultural productivity, enable the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, provide reliable demand for agricultural production, create opportunities for diversification, reduce food loss and waste and boost employment.
49. In designing policies to improve market access for agri-food producers and enterprises, governments, in consultation with employers' organizations and workers' organizations, as appropriate, should consider:
- (a) promoting an enabling market environment for agri-food producers and enterprises, social and solidarity economy entities, strengthening their links including to input suppliers, financing agencies, extension services and commercialization channels;
 - (b) ensuring well-regulated contract farming which can facilitate farmers' access to quality inputs, finance and agribusiness services and promote capacity-building and skills transfer, as well as compliance with labour standards;
 - (c) encouraging farmers to form and participate in cooperatives and actively building the capacity of these organizations. Cooperatives that function well can help members improve market information, increase bargaining power to negotiate fair prices with buyers and facilitate business relationships with larger enterprises by reducing transaction costs for both parties;
 - (d) providing technical and financial support for investments and tailored advice at the farm and enterprise level on decarbonizing agri-food production, in order to enable farms and enterprises to meet the different environmental requirements introduced by countries to support climate adaptation and mitigation;
 - (e) investing in technologies and technology transfer, facilitating access to technology and helping enterprises access timely and transparent market and price information and help improve decisions on what to produce and how and when to sell it;
 - (f) linking policies to broader national strategies on the agri-food sector, the formalization of the informal economy and rural development in order to help develop an integrated approach to improving market access by, for example, encouraging public procurement,

processing, and distribution by local communities to contribute to local food and livelihood security, supporting linkages to local, national and international agri-food systems.

3.4. Investing in infrastructure

50. Investment in infrastructure such as roads, communications 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 growth and decent work in the agri-food sector and beyond. Infrastructure investments can lower transaction costs for agri-food enterprises through improved access to information, knowledge and resources, such as agricultural technologies, innovative farming practices, market price information and financial services, and promote increased productivity, incomes and trade. Investment in soft infrastructure, such as transport services, agricultural extension, business development and financial services and sanitary and phytosanitary institutions, can help realize the benefits of investment in hard infrastructure and provide opportunities for producers to advance to higher segments of supply chains and increase their incomes.
51. Policies and action on infrastructure development should be climate-sensitive and include adequate mechanisms to address possible negative impacts on the environment or communities. Where possible, employment-intensive methods of constructing and maintaining infrastructure should be pursued. Such methods often involve local procurement of the inputs required by public works and may result in an increased demand for labour and locally produced input goods and services, with a positive impact on job creation and the empowerment of local communities.
52. Infrastructure projects should aim at:
 - (a) constructing and maintaining road networks to reduce geographical and social exclusion for agri-food workers and improve access to services;
 - (b) extending or improving irrigation and drainage systems, thereby reducing the risk of flooding and helping to improve the productive capacity of land, for example by enabling multiple cropping or the adoption of new plant varieties with higher yields;
 - (c) improving access to water and sanitation facilities for agri-food workers, in accordance with the guidance in the ILO code of practice on safety and health in agriculture, noting the link between potable water, occupational safety and health and productivity;
 - (d) extending and reinforcing the rural electrification grid. Improved access to electricity can bring numerous benefits to productivity and livelihoods for agricultural enterprises and workers, including through internet access, better rural services, use of electrical equipment and improved occupational safety and health outcomes due to better lighting. Renewable energy sources, including geothermal heat, sunlight, wind, water tides and waves, have high potential for providing energy in the agri-food sector;
 - (e) extending mobile telephone and internet access and coverage to provide better access to information and thereby promote innovation and new agricultural and resource management practices;
 - (f) investing in and promoting the development of soft infrastructure. Such action should be supported by the expansion of agricultural extension services to facilitate knowledge transfer, for example on new technologies, seed varieties and farm management practices; and by the extension of financial infrastructure to promote productivity and sustainable practices. Strengthening sanitary and phytosanitary services can help promote product diversification, market access and improved incomes.

3.5. Improving access to new technologies

- 53.** Improved access to new technologies can help agri-food enterprises to boost productivity and crop yields, diversify into new crops, facilitate access to markets and standardize and monitor agri-food operations. While agri-food technologies have the potential to boost productivity, raise incomes and reduce poverty, their rate of adoption is often low, particularly in developing countries. This is due to factors such as a lack of education, training and skills needed in order to understand the benefits of and operate new technologies and low access to finance in order to invest in them. Investments in ensuring the access to technologies of smallholders and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are particularly important to addressing the digital divide in the sector, and reducing inequalities and advancing a just transition.
- 54.** In designing policies to promote access to new technologies, governments, in consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations, should consider:
- (a) analysing the impact of new technologies on productivity and their implications for the number and quality of jobs in the sector, while considering their impacts on the environment;
 - (b) ensuring the accessibility and affordability of new technologies, in consultation with representative organizations of employers and workers;
 - (c) protecting the right to education and investing in education and training in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies skills in order to enable workers to understand and operate new technologies;
 - (d) harnessing the potential of new technologies to improve occupational safety and health and address the hazardous nature of work in the agri-food sector. Agricultural technologies can have occupational safety and health benefits, including the substitution of labour for the performance of hazardous tasks, development of more effective occupational safety and health management systems, reduction of exposure to chemicals and pesticides and improved livestock handling and machine safety. Uptake of new technologies should also consider the occupational safety and health risks of doing so, including increased lone work, monotony, psychosocial risks and work-related stress and concerns over worker monitoring and privacy.

3.6. Promoting skills and lifelong learning

- 55.** Skills and lifelong learning are essential for inclusive sustainable growth, productivity and decent work in the agri-food sector and are a critical component of its human-centred development, providing dignity and allowing people to realize their aspirations.
- 56.** Agri-food workers and producers often lack access to education and training. Farmers often face both financial and non-financial barriers to skills development. Where education and training are available, the opportunity cost of partaking may be too high as people often cannot justify giving up work that sustains their livelihoods in order to invest in their personal development. In rural areas, where most agri-food activities take place, many children do not have access to basic education, which hinders levels of literacy and numeracy and their participation in training throughout their working lives. Girls and women are the most disadvantaged and often face the highest barriers, which reinforces gender inequalities. Most training in the sector takes place outside the formal system and without properly trained trainers, which can result in agri-food workers being low-skilled or under-skilled and without recognized qualifications. This has a direct effect on the sustainability of agri-food enterprises and creates skills mismatches and shortages, with the demand for skilled agri-food workers outstripping the supply of workers with the

requisite skills and training. Low skills and education mean suboptimal outcomes in terms of decision-making, uptake of agri-food technologies, risk evaluation and management of resources.

57. In developing policies to implement and expand access to technical and vocational education and training and skills development so that they can become more relevant, inclusive, resilient and responsive, governments, in consultation with the most representative employers' and workers' organizations, should consider:
- (a) developing comprehensive policies and strategies to expand opportunities and possibilities for learning for the agri-food workforce. Such action starts with conducting skills needs anticipation and assessments in order to ensure that policies and strategies reduce skills mismatch and respond to the needs of the sector, and requires effective partnerships across the labour, education and training institutions and the active involvement of the private sector. Such assessments should take into consideration the heterogenous nature of the sector and the different skills needs, depending on the type of production system and sub-sector;
 - (b) strengthening the institutional and technical capacity of public and private training institutions in order to ensure that they have adequate training facilities and qualified teachers and trainers to deliver quality training programmes that respond to the needs of the sector and contribute to the uptake of new technologies, diversification and improved agricultural production;
 - (c) expanding the outreach of national training institutions to rural areas, where most agri-food activities take place and skills deficits are most acute, using innovative approaches including community-based training tailored to local areas; distance-learning through the use of information and communication technologies; mobile training; and work-based learning that may include technical or entrepreneurship skills development, including for those engaged in cooperatives, or training in employment-intensive infrastructure works;
 - (d) fostering partnerships between technical and vocational education and training institutions and enterprises, as well as with other actors such as agricultural extension services, agricultural research institutes and workers' organizations;
 - (e) providing children with universal access to free, compulsory, quality basic education as well as, where applicable, early childhood education, along with opportunities for knowledge and skills development. Access to education for all children is essential to eradicating child labour, which is prevalent in the sector, establishing basic literacy and numeracy skills and building a foundation for lifelong learning;
 - (f) providing equitable access to quality education for adults, including basic literacy, numeracy, life skills (such as social and environmental awareness, health management, confidence building), and digital skills and requisite language skills, in accessible formats, as appropriate. A focus on education for adults is especially important for the skilling, reskilling and upskilling of agri-food workers, who may have been excluded from basic education;
 - (g) reducing financial and structural barriers, including language barriers, and eliminating systemic discrimination against certain categories of workers through targeted interventions in order to ensure their equitable access to skills development and technical and vocational education and training, paying particular attention to women, young people, migrant workers, persons with disabilities and indigenous and tribal peoples;

- (h) promoting gender-responsive and inclusive learning environments, including through the provision of safe and accessible training facilities and transportation, separate sanitation facilities and dormitories and childcare;
- (i) fostering the mutual recognition of prior learning between countries to help improve decent work outcomes for migrant workers;
- (j) establishing a well-functioning and inclusive system of recognition of prior learning, including traditional knowledge, at the national and regional levels;
- (k) providing technical skills training, in accessible formats as appropriate, including on farming practices, crop varieties, technology and digital skills, to smallholders and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in order to help them improve productivity and meet standards on quality and safety of produce. Such training may include community-based approaches, which should be participatory, needs-based, flexible and inclusive for farming communities and include training on key skills and business knowledge. Linking training and post-training support to community-based economic opportunities can help promote employment opportunities and income security for agri-food workers;
- (l) developing and supporting public and private training programmes for workers in large-scale agri-food production by making available financial contributions; contributing land, buildings, transport, equipment and teaching material; contributing through scholarships or otherwise to the living expenses or wages of trainees during the course of training; and making entry into residential plantation schools free of charge to appropriately qualified trainees. This may include programmes on the use of machinery and agrochemicals; entrepreneurship and management; and modern resource-saving and environmentally safe working methods and technologies. The establishment of certification schemes should be considered in order to ensure that trainees receive nationally recognized and internationally understood qualifications;
- (m) promoting formalization to help ensure effective and equitable access to skills, training and lifelong learning for all.

58. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) contributing to the development of training programmes, given their essential role in identifying skills needs and gaps, collecting and analysing data on current trends and needs and assisting in the development of curricula that equip workforce with transferable and technical and non-technical/core skills and that are adequate, relevant and equitable;
- (b) establishing and improving workplace training programmes in accessible formats, as appropriate. The mutually beneficial impacts of doing so include the improvement of productivity and working conditions, including safety and health.

59. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) maintaining close collaboration with the authorities responsible for training programmes, and playing an active part in the improvement of general and vocational education and training in plantations, and in agri-food processing enterprises, as well as in training for community development;
- (b) establishing training as a priority issue and including it in the agenda for collective bargaining;
- (c) providing employees with support and advice on training matters and serving as a point of liaison between employees, management and training providers.

3.7. Decent jobs for youth

- 60.** Today, the global youth unemployment rate is more than three times the adult rate. More than one in five young people are not in education, employment, or training. When employed, young workers are far more likely than adult workers to be in informal employment and to live in extreme poverty. Despite declines in the share of young people engaged in agriculture due to structural transformation, which has led to a reallocation of labour towards industry and services, and urbanization, the sector continues to employ a significant share of youth in low- and middle-income countries. Unlocking the potential of the agri-food sector to create decent jobs for youth will be key to building sustainable and resilient food systems able to feed the world's growing population while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting the environment and advancing rural development. In order to ensure that the sector can be a source of decent jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities for the growing labour force, employment services and skills and entrepreneurship development programmes should also focus on related sectors such as food processing and manufacturing, transport and logistics services.
- 61.** Ensuring the sustainable and human-centred transformation of food systems, with decent work at its core, would require significant improvements to be made in the institutions, capacities and enabling environment that can support the creation of decent jobs for youth in agri-food and related sectors taking into consideration a gender perspective. In designing strategies for youth employment, governments, through social dialogue, should consider:
- (a) formulating and effectively implementing integrated youth employment policies and strategies in line with the resolution concerning the youth employment crisis: A call to action, adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 101st Session (2012), and its renewed follow-up plan of action, the Youth Employment Action Plan 2020-30, which provides a portfolio of tried and tested measures to foster pro-employment growth and decent job creation through macroeconomic policies, employability, labour market policies, youth entrepreneurship, and rights at work;
 - (b) supporting productivity improvement, including by promoting the uptake of modern technologies and production methods, improving access to education and training, adding value to agri-food products, linking small-scale farmers to agribusiness and agri-processing units;
 - (c) promoting diversification into higher-value agri-food production and related non-farm activities (such as environmentally sustainable food processing and packaging) that can contribute to job creation and are critical to the process of structural transformation;
 - (d) ensuring that young people are targeted by active labour market programmes, including public works in farm (such as water management) and non-farm (such as rural infrastructure) activities, wage subsidies, training, and employment services, including orientation, counselling and placement services (matching, mentoring). Such programmes need to be complemented by social protection measures;
 - (e) ensuring the relevance of skills development and technical and vocational education training programmes to the needs of the labour markets, as well as their overall effectiveness, by combining training on technical competencies, business and financial management, leadership and other soft skills. Developing a dual approach through combining skills development programmes with on-the-job training and apprenticeships could be particularly effective;
 - (f) supporting entrepreneurship and the development of social and solidarity economy entities, including through agri-food incubator programmes that provide financial and technical

support to entrepreneurs and paying particular attention to young women entrepreneurs by addressing gender-based constraints to the success of their businesses. An integrated approach that combines training (such as training on business management and agricultural marketing), mentorship on technical and financial aspects of agribusiness, agricultural extension, information and communications technology, with financial support for start-ups could be particularly effective in enhancing young people's engagement in agribusiness;

- (g) encouraging young entrepreneurs and workers to participate in employers' and workers' organizations and in the establishment and functioning of their membership-based organizations, and to engage effectively in social dialogue mechanisms so that they have a say in processes that affect their work and life;
- (h) investing in social, cultural and technological infrastructure, in particular in rural areas, taking into consideration the broader social needs and aspirations of young people in terms of access to entertainment and to modern communications networks, with a view to improving the attractiveness of rural areas and, consequently, of jobs in the agri-food sector;
- (i) supporting successful young entrepreneurs and workers in becoming agents of change for a sustainable agri-food sector by sharing their success stories and experiences with their peers and communities;
- (j) promoting the modernization of the sector by supporting innovative business models, such as indoor farming and cellular agricultural production, and the use of digital technologies, while improving productivity, incomes, working conditions and the dignity of jobs, with a view to making the sector more attractive to young people;
- (k) engaging young people in decision-making processes related to the agri-food sector in meaningful ways, including by facilitating their active participation in rural organizations and integration in producer organizations and cooperatives and supporting the establishment of specific mechanisms that allow their voices to be heard, such as youth advisory committees;
- (l) strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations to promote action on youth employment in food systems;
- (m) enabling young people to increase their knowledge and understanding of their rights at work enshrined in the Conventions recognized (or identified) as fundamental in the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, as amended in 2022, and in other relevant international labour standards.

3.8. Promoting formalization

- 62. The agri-food sector has the highest rate of informal employment of any economic sector, estimated at over 90 per cent. This high rate reflects an urban-rural divide, with workers in rural areas almost twice as likely to be in informal employment as those in urban areas. The sector makes up one third of informal jobs worldwide but up to 62 per cent of total informal employment in developing countries. Work in the informal economy is often characterized by significant decent work deficits and is consequently also linked to the prevalence of poverty. Women and young people working in the sector are more likely to be in informal employment, as are temporary, casual, seasonal or migrant workers, who are often not, or insufficiently, covered by labour legislation.
- 63. The drivers of informality are multiple. Some are common across different contexts, such as inefficient public institutions, while others can be specific to a certain group or sector. In the case of rural areas where agri-food employment is high, low public spending, poor infrastructure and

low levels of social services remain key drivers. Micro-level determinants such as low levels of education, as well as discrimination, poverty, lack of access to economic resources, finances and property and low levels of organization can also lead rural workers to informal work.

64. A broad range of actors – including private buyers, harvesters, loaders, traders, intermediaries and food vendors – may engage in the agri-food sector informally. The high incidence of informal employment in the sector contributes to the challenges of promoting sustainable enterprises, safeguarding access to rights and ensuring decent working conditions. Formalization of the sector is therefore of critical importance to building sustainable food systems with decent work at their core and tackling rural poverty and socio-economic isolation.
65. The transition to formality should aim to reduce decent work deficits, foster economic growth, including through the development of an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises, increase productivity and competitiveness, while respecting workers' rights, ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods and entrepreneurship and preventing the informalization of jobs in the formal economy. It should also take into account the diversity of actors and tailor formalization approaches to specific drivers of informality. In designing an integrated policy framework to promote formalization in the agri-food sector underpinned by an institutional coordination mechanism for its effective implementation at local, national and regional levels, consistent with Recommendation No. 204, governments should consider:
 - (a) undertaking a thorough assessment of the characteristics and drivers of informality, including by collecting statistics on and analysing the migratory patterns of the agri-food workforce, in addition to a review of legal and policy frameworks and practice as applied in the sector, considering its heterogeneous nature and the variety of work arrangements prevalent therein;
 - (b) promoting a conducive business and investment environment, including business entry reforms that reduce registration costs and simplify administrative procedures, such as a one-stop-shop model; introducing simplified tax and contributions assessment and payment regimes; improving access to inclusive financial services, entrepreneurship and vocational training, business development services and markets. Providing the means for workers or economic units to obtain recognition of their existing property as well as by providing the means to formalize property rights and access to land can facilitate access to credit and incentivize investment;
 - (c) promoting formal contracting between producers and buyers, which, when well-designed and regulated, may help ensure fair prices, improve productivity, embed quality standards, including those related to labour, environment and food safety, improve traceability and encourage investment;
 - (d) formulating and implementing local development strategies, including regulated access for the use of public space and public natural resources; improving infrastructure and services with a view to enhancing productivity and livelihood opportunities; and facilitating structural transformation;
 - (e) strengthening labour inspection and mechanisms to promote compliance with national laws and regulations, including but not limited to ensuring recognition and enforcement of employment relationships in the agri-food sector by paying special attention to the informal economy;
 - (f) creating an enabling environment for employers and workers to exercise their right to organize and to bargain collectively;

- (g) fostering social dialogue in the design and implementation of strategies for the transition to the formal economy;
- (h) ensuring access to adequate social protection coverage for all workers in the agri-food sector and taking into account national circumstances, making social protection systems more sustainable, inclusive and effective, as enablers of national formalization strategies. A combination of contributory and non-contributory provision could help ensure higher levels of protection. These measures may form part of social protection measures covering the entire population or specific categories of workers. Adapted approaches that meet the needs of workers who may otherwise lack the capacity to participate in social protection schemes need to be considered. Effective action may include the extension of legal coverage to all workers; the introduction of simplified and additional voluntary mechanisms, the unification of tax and social security contributions; government-subsidized contributory schemes; or measures to adapt schemes and procedures to the circumstances and needs of those currently in the informal economy, including through collective registration and simplified payment mechanisms;
- (i) preventing informalization by taking into account the need to prevent and sanction deliberate avoidance of, or exit from, the formal economy for the purpose of evading taxation and the application of social and labour laws and regulations;
- (j) promoting a favourable environment for sustainable enterprises, in particular for small and medium-sized enterprises;
- (k) ensuring that agri-food companies in their operations comply with national laws and regulations to advance the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy and preventing the informalization of formal economy jobs.

3.9. A just transition towards an environmentally sustainable agri-food sector

- 66. A just transition towards an environmentally sustainable agri-food sector can be an important driver of sustainable development, decent work, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty. Policies to promote a just transition can generate improved resource efficiency, the creation of green jobs, increased labour productivity, new income opportunities and improved livelihoods. Greening existing jobs and creating new green jobs in the agri-food sector, which is intrinsically linked to the natural environment, can promote productive and sustainable enterprises, sustainable production and consumption and food security while addressing environmental degradation, climate change and the multiple impacts thereof.
- 67. Agri-food systems have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss and water use and wastage. Conventional agriculture is linked to environmental degradation, pollution, deforestation and the destruction of natural habitats. At the same time, the impacts of climate change are exacerbating existing challenges in the sector. Changing rain patterns and temperatures and the increased incidence of natural hazards are increasingly impacting crop yields and the quality of jobs in the sector, in particular regarding safety and health at work. A just transition in the agri-food sector involves the transformation of food systems so that they work for the benefit of all in society, including farmers, farming communities, agri-food workers, enterprises, consumers and the environment.
- 68. In designing policies to facilitate a just transition towards an environmentally sustainable agri-food sector, governments, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations, should consider:

- (a) designing targeted policy interventions, including by redirecting subsidies and aligning fiscal incentives with sustainability objectives. Fiscal policies may be complemented with regulatory instruments, market-based mechanisms, information tools and voluntary measures to support a just transition to sustainable agriculture;
- (b) supporting and investing in sustainable agricultural practices, including agroecology, that ensure a regenerative use of natural resources and ecosystem services while promoting socially equitable food systems. Such measures may focus on supporting green job creation in sustainable agriculture, including in organic farming, promoting the use of organic fertilizers, improving water use efficiency and improving land stewardship, conservation and rehabilitation practices, thereby reducing costs and carbon footprint at the supply end;
- (c) introducing programmes for environmental conservation, such as, for example, payments of environmental services, that monetize the value of reduced environmental pollution, as well as other measures to support conservation, reservation, diversification, employment growth and sustainable productivity;
- (d) encouraging farm-to-market distribution systems by investing in sector-related infrastructure, including transport, such as market feeder roads, and safe and secure storage facilities. Such investments not only contribute to greenhouse gas emissions reduction and create green jobs but also reduce post-harvest product loss;
- (e) implementing demand-side measures to promote sustainable consumption of agri-food produce and reduce food waste, including sourcing from local producers, in particular women-run economic units as part of the public procurement programmes and local distribution systems to ensure local community food security and to reduce carbon emissions;
- (f) investing in the development, accessibility and uptake of technologies that can help enterprises improve productivity, promote decarbonization and improve working conditions. Examples include digital applications and remote sensing for improved resource management, decision-making and access to finance; technologies to mechanize farming practices and substitute hazardous work; and agrivoltaics. Such investment should be coupled with policies to address the digital divide so that agri-food technologies are available to all, including smallholder farmers;
- (g) investing in skills development and capacity-building in sustainable agriculture, including agroecological practices; coordinating training systems with environmental policies and the greening of the broader economy including by promoting academic partnerships and technology transfers at all levels.

69. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) supporting enterprises in undertaking structural changes in production and management practices and compliance with environmental regulations, including on reducing emissions and building the capacity of members, particularly in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, to adopt good practices for sustainable agriculture;
- (b) engaging actively in social dialogue on the development of policies relating to the adoption of agri-food technologies, the promotion of green farming practices and related skills development and lifelong learning;
- (c) engaging actively in the design of education policies and skills development strategies fit to unlock the potential of the agri-food sector to create decent and green jobs.

70. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) engaging actively in social dialogue with governments and employers on the promotion of decent and green jobs and encouraging the inclusion of labour priorities in measures to reform the agri-food sector to address climate change;
- (b) promoting the adoption by workers of good practices to contribute to the promotion of a sustainable agriculture sector.

► 4. Social and labour protection

4.1. Ensuring access to social protection

- 71. Universal access to adequate, comprehensive and sustainable social protection, anchored in the international human rights framework and international labour standards, is essential for social justice, decent work and inclusive and sustainable growth and development. 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 is a crucial factor in eradicating poverty, inequalities and social exclusion, strengthening resilience to crises and economic shocks and contributing to sustainable enterprises and robust, well-functioning economies.
- 72. Today, approximately 53 per cent of the world's population are not covered by social insurance or social assistance at all and many more are covered only partially. Workers in the informal economy, many of whom work in the agri-food sector, and rural populations are disproportionately affected by inadequate social protection coverage.
- 73. Significant and concerted efforts are needed in order to guarantee access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable social protection for all, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged, including workers in the agri-food sector. Such efforts should focus on building social protection systems, in line with the relevant ILO instruments such as those specifying minimum standards for social security benefits and conditions (including medical care, sickness, unemployment, old-age, employment injury, family, maternity, invalidity and survivors' benefits), comprised of nationally-defined floors that guarantee at least essential healthcare and basic income security and progressively providing higher levels of protection.
- 74. In designing measures through social dialogue on social protection for the agri-food sector, governments should give consideration to:
 - (a) analysing and identifying specific barriers that agri-food workers face in accessing social protection, bearing in mind the heterogenous nature of the sectoral workforce and specific contexts;
 - (b) designing and implementing adequate legal frameworks to guarantee the right to social security for all agri-food workers by progressively building and maintaining nationally appropriate social protection systems, so that everyone has access to comprehensive, adequate and sustainable protection over the life cycle, in line with ILO standards;
 - (c) promoting and ensuring the participation of representative organizations of employers and workers in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection policies and schemes in order to ensure that they adequately reflect the realities and needs of the sector;
 - (d) closing gaps in effective protection through well-designed schemes, whether contributory, non-contributory or both. Contributory schemes may require adaptation or the introduction of greater flexibility of timings and modalities, for instance, with regard to the determination

and collection of contributions, methods to facilitate payments of contributions, including by authorizing retroactive payment of contributions or benefit payments adapted to the particular circumstances of agri-food workers and subsidized social insurance contributions for low-income workers, with a view to incentivizing formalization. Contributory schemes could be complemented by tax-financed non-contributory schemes - for example, pensions or healthcare either for certain categories of workers or persons who do not have the capacity to contribute, irrespective of their employment status;

- (e) coordinating and linking policies to extend social protection with strategies to promote decent work and formalization in the sector, such as employment and tax policies or rural development strategies;
- (f) developing efficient and reliable administrative organization of programmes and delivery systems, including: (i) setting up mobile offices and single-window services and using digital technologies; (ii) simplifying processes by reducing application or validation requirements for benefits; and (iii) introducing collective registration processes with agricultural and rural workers' organizations (trade unions, cooperatives or rural producers' associations);
- (g) making social protection accessible for those in rural and remote areas;
- (h) encouraging compliance with and strengthening enforcement of the legislation, including by facilitating inspections in agri-food enterprises and the rural economy at large;
- (i) facilitating the acquisition and maintenance, including the preservation and portability, of social security entitlements, with a view to facilitating job transitions for all workers, including persons in temporary, part-time and self-employment, and migrant workers, including through bilateral and multilateral agreements without jeopardizing their access to social protection;
- (j) ensuring access to childcare services and maternity protection in order to strengthen the labour, social and economic protection of agri-food workers and their families. This includes prescribing by law a period of maternity leave of at least 14 weeks and providing for medical care and income security during maternity-related leave periods as well as for health protection at work during pregnancy and nursing periods in respect of work prejudicial to the health of the mother or child, covering all or some of the contingencies enumerated in Convention No. 183. Particular attention needs to be paid to ensuring protection from discrimination based on pregnancy, maternity and family responsibilities. In addition, promoting paternity and parental leaves to fathers offers an important opportunity for both parents to contribute to child development and encourages the equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men in accordance with national laws and regulations. Well-managed childcare centres should be available and adapted to the working hours and away from dangerous and hazardous areas;
- (k) ensuring that workers are entitled to adequate compensation in the event of occupational injury or disease and to survivors' and dependants' benefits. They should have access to appropriate services for rehabilitation and return to work;
- (l) identifying and paying particular attention to non-discrimination in the provision of social protection, including in terms of gender equality and the rights of often disadvantaged groups of workers, such as temporary, casual and seasonal workers, migrant workers, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous and tribal peoples and people living with HIV.

75. Employers in agri-food activities should focus on:

- (a) ensuring compliance with social security legislation and, where appropriate, taking further steps to establish additional measures for the protection of workers and their families through collective agreements or through other measures taken by direct agreement between the parties concerned, when no general scheme exists;
- (b) ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities to register workers and their obligations in terms of benefits and payment of contributions, and raising awareness so that workers are equally informed of their rights and obligations;
- (c) fulfilling their duties with regard to employment injury, prevention and protection and ensuring that workers receive the necessary first aid and emergency treatment and that victims have access to medical care and pharmaceutical supplies, rehabilitation or additional assistance needed, as well as income security in case of temporary and permanent incapacity to work, and survivors' pensions for their dependants in case of death, in accordance with national laws and regulations;
- (d) advancing the effective implementation of applicable national laws and regulations on maternity protection and paternity leave, nursing breaks during working hours and access to childcare services.

76. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) raising their members' awareness of their rights and obligations with regard to social security schemes and encouraging their registration and enrolment in such schemes, where necessary;
- (b) promoting the extension of social security to agri-food workers through social dialogue.

4.2. Terms and conditions of employment

77. Improving terms and conditions of employment in the sector is essential to reducing poverty, achieving decent work, stimulating economic growth, improving livelihoods and safeguarding food security at a global level. In order to achieve this objective, the specific challenges that agri-food workers face with regard to terms and conditions of employment and work organization require particular attention.

4.2.1. Terms of employment

- 78.** Agri-food workers are a heterogeneous group employed under different working arrangements and modalities. Terms of employment for waged workers in the agri-food sector vary considerably. Employment relationships are formed with farmers or farm owners, farming or plantation companies, labour contractors or subcontractors. Some are employed as permanent or full-time workers, while many others are fixed-term contract, seasonal or casual workers who are hired on a temporary basis, often during peak seasons, and usually paid on a per-day, per-task or piece-rate basis.
- 79.** However, much waged employment in the sector is temporary, casual or seasonal, and the majority of workers, including many migrant workers, lack access to adequate social and labour protection. The use of labour contractors specialized in the recruitment, transport and management of workers is a long-standing practice in this sector. Given that a common characteristic in the sector is the absence of a direct employment relationship between the workers concerned and the enterprise for which they perform work, ensuring that various employment arrangements are not used as a way to circumvent labour obligations and

responsibilities, and that, through appropriate regulatory frameworks, they are conducive to full, productive and freely chosen employment is essential to advancing decent work in the sector.

- 80.** In designing policies to promote decent work for all in the sector, governments should consider:
- (a) strengthening regulatory frameworks to cover all forms of employment prevalent in the sector;
 - (b) strengthening the enforcement of laws and regulations in practice in order to ensure that different forms of work are used for the specific legal purpose for which they are intended and not to circumvent the employer's legal and contractual obligations, as well as to afford adequate labour and social protection with a view to addressing decent work deficits;
 - (c) ensuring that the same rights and minimum standards applicable to national agri-food workers are also extended to migrant workers.

4.2.2. Hours of work and holidays with pay

- 81.** Effective regulation of working hours - which tend to be long, due to such factors as the seasonality of agricultural production, often requiring quick turnaround in picking and processing, or the prevalence of piece-rate payment systems - is essential to improving agricultural workers' health, work-life balance and workplace safety and to promoting sustainable enterprises in the sector. Such regulation should include the establishment of maximum numbers of hours worked per day and per week, irrespective of the type of employment relationship. In this regard, governments should consider:
- (a) ensuring that the regulations concerning hours of work, weekly rest and holidays with pay take into account the particularities of the sector and are in accordance with the Plantations Convention (No. 110), and Recommendation (No. 110) 1958, the Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47), the Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation, 1962 (No. 116), and the Holidays with Pay Convention (Revised), 1970 (No. 132). Doing so includes determining, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, the circumstances and limits in which exceptions to the normal hours of work may be permitted permanently, temporarily and/or periodically, taking into account the guidance provided in Recommendations Nos 110 and 116;
 - (b) taking appropriate measures to ensure the proper administration of the regulations concerning hours of work by means of adequate inspection or through tripartite monitoring systems;
 - (c) ensuring the participation of employers' and workers' organizations in social dialogue on the formulation and enforcement of regulations concerning hours of work.
- 82.** Employers should focus on:
- (a) arranging working hours, in accordance with national laws and regulations, or as approved by labour inspectorates or collective agreements, where applicable, to include: (i) short breaks during working hours, especially when the work is strenuous, dangerous or monotonous, in order to enable workers to recover their vigilance and physical fitness; (ii) sufficient breaks for meals, taking into account the customs of the agri-food workers working in a particular country or region; (iii) daily or nightly rest of not less than eight consecutive hours within a 24-hour period; and (iv) at least one full calendar day of rest per working week. This also includes establishing, in consultation with workers' organizations and in accordance with the applicable regulations, the circumstances and limits in which exceptions to normal hours of work may be permitted permanently, temporarily and/or

periodically, as well as the rate of pay for any hours in excess of the regular hours of work, unless these are taken into account in fixing remuneration in accordance with custom. Overtime work should be remunerated at a higher rate or rates than normal hours of work;

- (b) when payment is on a task or piece-rate basis, engaging in social dialogue, including in collective bargaining with a view to concluding a collective agreement, when appropriate, on the setting of these rates in relation to working time in order to ensure that workers earn an adequate wage, without working excessively long hours per day, per week or within any collectively agreed reference period;
- (c) keeping a record, in a form acceptable to the competent authority, of the hours of work, wages and overtime for each worker and regularly providing this information in the form of a wage slip when paying each worker;
- (d) enabling plantation workers to exercise their right to annual leave with pay after a period of continuous service with the same employer, in accordance with Conventions Nos 110 and 132.

83. Workers' organizations should focus on:

- (a) participating actively in social dialogue, including collective bargaining and raising awareness of workers' rights and issues regarding hours of work in agri-food.

4.2.3. Ensuring decent wages

84. Adequate minimum wages, whether statutory or negotiated, are an important means of reducing poverty and inequalities. Ensuring that agri-food workers are covered by minimum wage legislation and that minimum wages are set at adequate levels and adjusted regularly is therefore a matter of pivotal importance. The implementation of collective bargaining systems and other relevant measures for adequate earnings and equal pay for work of equal value is instrumental to ensuring that the critical role played by agri-food workers in feeding the planet is recognized, and to ensuring a just share of the fruits of progress to all.

85. In designing policies and measures concerning wages in the agri-food sector, governments, in consultation with employers' and workers' organizations should consider:

- (a) adopting adequate minimum wages, whether statutory or negotiated, and ratifying the Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No. 131). This includes setting a minimum wage level that takes into consideration the needs of workers and their families as well as economic factors; creating and/or maintaining a machinery to fix and adjust minimum wage rates at appropriate intervals to reflect changes in the cost of living and other factors; ensuring full consultation with social partners when setting and adjusting minimum wage rates; and implementing appropriate measures to ensure the effective application of minimum wages in the agri-food sector;
- (b) encouraging collective bargaining negotiations of fair and adequate wages taking into consideration the cost of living to enable workers to afford a decent living standard;
- (c) taking all practicable steps to ensure the use of fair piece-rate or output-based payment systems, where they exist, as well as the adequacy and cash value of any in-kind payments, and that workers are paid at least the equivalent of the minimum wage irrespective of the pay system used;
- (d) taking all necessary measures to limit deductions from wages to the extent deemed necessary in order to safeguard the maintenance of workers and their families, in accordance with Convention No. 110 (Articles 31-32) and its accompanying Recommendation No. 110

(Articles 24-26). The Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95), allows for the partial payment of wages in the form of allowances in kind in industries or occupations in which such payment is customary or desirable, provided that: (i) such allowances are appropriate for personal use and benefit the worker and his or her family; (ii) the value attributed to such allowances is fair and reasonable;

- (e) taking appropriate measures to promote and ensure equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of equal remuneration for work of equal value, without discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin or any other grounds;
- (f) identifying factors and conditions which are key for wage and income growth in the agri-food sector, including productivity growth and factors that ensure the coupling between productivity growth and wages/income growth;
- (g) adopting measures to upgrade the skills of employers and workers, increase the productivity of low-productivity enterprises, foster the transition to formality and encourage sustainable practices.

86. Employers in agri-food activities should focus on:

- (a) participating directly and on an equal footing in the fixing and operation of adequate minimum wages, whether statutory or negotiated, and engaging in collective bargaining over wages, with a view to setting adequate wages that take into account the needs of sustainable enterprises and provide workers and their families with a decent standard of living;
- (b) ensuring that workers receive at least the minimum wage specified in collective bargaining agreements, or in the applicable national laws or regulations if there is no applicable collective bargaining agreement;
- (c) ensuring the adequate periodicity of payment of wages, taking into account the guidance provided in Recommendation No. 110;
- (d) bringing the details of wages conditions to the knowledge of workers, particularly with regard to the rates of wages payable, the method of calculation, the periodicity and place of payment and the conditions under which deductions may be made; and maintaining relevant records.

87. Workers and their organizations in agri-food activities should consider:

- (a) participating directly and on an equal footing in the fixing and operation of minimum wages, whether statutory or negotiated, and engaging in collective bargaining over wages and equal pay for work of equal value.

4.3. Living conditions: Welfare facilities and housing

88. Agri-food workers and their families often reside at their place of work. Their living and working conditions are inseparable and there is a close link between these conditions, the safety and health of workers and their productivity. Adequate housing accommodation for all categories of plantation and other agri-food workers, with appropriate facilities such as ventilation, heating, decent sanitary facilities and potable water, is therefore essential.

89. In order to promote improved living conditions for agri-food workers, governments should consider:

- (a) developing national policies to ensure the provision and maintenance of adequate housing and welfare facilities that guarantee decent living conditions for agri-food workers. In accordance with Convention No. 110 and the ILO code of practice on safety and health in agriculture, minimum standards should be established including on minimum space per person or per family; the supply of potable water; provision of food; medical services; waste removal; sanitary and washing facilities; privacy; ventilation; and protection against heat, cold, damp, noise and fire;
- (b) providing or encouraging the provision of recreation facilities in a location convenient and accessible to workers;
- (c) establishing public services to improve living conditions of workers including the provision of health services, education, recreation, childcare and other social services and public transport.

90. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) ensuring that housing and welfare facilities comply with the minimum standards established by the competent authority;
- (b) providing welfare facilities and recreational facilities, where appropriate, as determined through consultation with representative organizations of workers;
- (c) providing or arranging, whenever possible, for adequate transport in good sanitary conditions, and not overcrowded, to and from the workplace where transport is unavailable or inadequate for the purposes required by workers.

91. Workers and their organizations should:

- (a) engage actively in social dialogue;
- (b) engage in awareness campaigns to promote and encourage the provision of adequate welfare facilities and housing for workers, at least in accordance with the national minimum standards established by the competent authority.

4.4. Strengthening labour inspection

92. Well-functioning labour inspection institutions are a mechanism of crucial importance for ensuring the effective enforcement of labour legislation and the protection of workers, and contribute to promoting productivity at work.

93. Two of the ILO governance Conventions, namely, the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81), and the Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129), and related instruments,² set out a series of principles concerning the establishment, functions and organization of the system of inspection; recruitment criteria; and the powers and obligations of labour inspectors. In order to establish and maintain well-functioning labour inspection institutions pursuant to the principles laid down in these standards, governments need to give particular attention to:

- (a) developing an integrated strategy for inspection activities and ensuring the coordinating and supervisory role of the central authority;

² Related instruments include the Labour Inspection Recommendation, 1947 (No. 81), the Protocol of 1995 to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947, and the Accommodation of Crews (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1970 (No. 133).

- (b) regularly allocating adequate resources to labour inspectorates so that a sufficient number of adequately resourced inspectors is available and inspections can reach all rural employers and workers, including workers in the informal economy;
- (c) reinforcing the skills of labour inspectors, and ensuring that inspections are carried out by adequately trained inspectors familiar with technical aspects of work in the agri-food sector;
- (d) ensuring that labour inspectors are able to exercise powers and perform functions, including enforcement and sanctions sufficiently dissuasive to deter violations of labour legislation in accordance with national law and practice while also providing corrective, developmental and technical advice and prevention tools and promoting workplace best practices. This includes the right of free entry of inspectors to workplaces and to order measures with immediate executory force to eliminate imminent dangers to workers' safety and health;
- (e) developing cooperative relationships across ministries and with other stakeholders, including community leaders, when appropriate. Closer cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, especially with agricultural extension services, can strengthen the information base on the sector;
- (f) encouraging cross-border cooperation between labour inspectorates;
- (g) exploring innovative approaches to improving the internal working methods of labour inspectorates (for example, mobile groups) and the range and accessibility of services that they provide to constituents by harnessing advances in information and communication technologies. Online, mobile and networking technologies can increase efficiency and reduce costs, improve transparency, facilitate the collection and analysis of labour statistics and assist with the dissemination of information on labour laws and policies. Innovative outreach systems such as roving representatives or workplace safety advisers covering several workplaces could effectively complement traditional labour inspection.

► 5. Social dialogue and tripartism

- 94.** Strong, independent and effective organizations of workers and employers are a prerequisite to fostering social dialogue in the sector. Removing legislative or administrative barriers that agri-food workers and employers may face in forming or joining organizations of their choice and addressing challenges impeding their inclusion in social dialogue processes at all levels are key to ensuring that their collective voice is heard in processes that directly affect their work and life and thereby contributes to the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and food systems.
- 95.** In order to fully realize the potential for social dialogue to advance decent work in the agri-food sector, governments should consider:
- (a) developing and implementing integrated policies to promote the establishment, growth and effective functioning of the organizations of workers and employers in the sector, pursuant to the vision and principles contained in relevant ILO instruments including the Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11), the Rural Workers' Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141), and the Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144), to ensure their participatory voice and contribution to socio-economic development. These should respond to the particular challenges of the agri-food sector, taking full account of the legal and practical implications of outsourced, seasonal, temporary, migrant workers and workers in the informal economy, and workers on family farms and small undertakings;

- (b) eliminating legal barriers to the full application of workers' rights to form and join organizations of their own choosing, including by ensuring that legislation establishing machinery to encourage and promote such organizations exists and removing requirements regarding minimum membership, minimum levels of education and minimum funds or residency requirements; addressing challenges which, in practice, impede the implementation of the law, including through financial or material assistance, education and training programmes, campaigns on rights, awareness-raising with respect to the particular needs of certain categories or groups of workers such as migrant and women workers, mass media initiatives, local stakeholder seminars, field visits and school curricula;
- (c) eliminating legal barriers to the full application of employers' rights to form and join organizations of their own choosing, including by ensuring that legislation establishing machinery to encourage and promote such organizations exist;
- (d) providing education and training programmes for agri-food employers and workers in general, technical economic and social fields, in order to enable them to engage more effectively in social dialogue;
- (e) establishing new, or strengthening existing, social dialogue mechanisms and taking appropriate measures to ensure that employers' and workers' organizations are genuinely involved in social dialogue at all levels. Such action includes ensuring that employers and workers are not only able, through organizations of their own choosing, to contribute to externally initiated proposals but also to participate actively and propose measures, programmes and activities that shape their socio-economic situation. Participation extends beyond mere consultation, and should lead to concrete ownership of initiatives by and for agri-food workers. Encourage women's involvement in negotiations and other decision-making bodies and processes;
- (f) promoting the establishment and growth of cooperatives, farmers' organizations and other membership-based organizations by creating a level playing field in terms of the legal and administrative framework governing their formation and operation, consistent with the guidance provided in the Promotion of Cooperatives Recommendation, 2002 (No. 193). Cooperatives and other membership-based organizations are an important means for agri-food producers to mobilize for self-help, access markets and new technologies and share knowledge on agronomic practices. In addition, they help generate income and employment for their members. The provision of technical assistance and training through membership-based organizations to upgrade farmers' technical capacities and know-how in business and financial management, marketing and advocacy is a cost-effective channel for reaching small-scale entrepreneurs. Empowering producers and entrepreneurs to organize into formal associations such as cooperatives and other membership-based organizations, including women- and youth-led organizations and networks, can increase their capacity to effectively engage in industrial relations and contribute to improved productivity, food security and decent work;
- (g) providing the leaders of such organizations with the appropriate education and training to enable them to manage their organizations' activities adequately, including by advocating on behalf of and representing their members in social dialogue processes.

96. Employers and their organizations should focus on:

- (a) increasing outreach and engagement in the sector;
- (b) advocating for the removal of any practical barriers that impede workers' rights to form or join organizations of their own choosing;

- (c) engaging in social dialogue with workers and their organizations;
- (d) promoting sound workplace cooperation and the establishment of independent mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of disputes between managers and workers;
- (e) forming networks and partnerships with farmers' unions, cooperative organizations and other agri-food workers' organizations to improve governance in the sector, both at national and local levels.

97. Workers' organizations should consider:

- (a) taking measures to ensure and strengthen the participation of all workers, including temporary, casual, seasonal and migrant workers, in particular women, in their organizations;
- (b) engaging in social dialogue with employers and their organizations in order to avoid disputes and, should disputes arise, to reach fair settlements by means of conciliation;
- (c) strengthening relationships and building alliances with representative groups of workers and producers, such as small farmers' organizations.

► Appendix

Non-exhaustive reference list of ILO instruments, declarations and guidance to advance decent work in the agri-food sector

Declarations

- Declaration of Philadelphia (1944)
- ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022
- ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization (2008), as amended in 2022
- Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) (1977), as amended in 2022
- ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work (2019)

International labour standards

Fundamental instruments

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and its Protocol of 2014
- 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)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 155) and Recommendation (No. 164), 1981
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
- Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (No. 187) and Recommendation (No. 197), 2006

Governance Conventions and related Recommendations

- Labour Inspection Convention (No. 81) and Recommendation (No. 81), 1947
- Employment Policy Convention (No. 122) and Recommendation (No. 122), 1964
- Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)
- Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)
- Employment Policy (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1984 (No. 169)

Technical Conventions and Recommendations

- Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11) ¹
- Workmen's Compensation (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 12)
- Social Insurance (Agriculture) Recommendation, 1921 (No. 17) ²
- Protection of Wages Convention (No. 95) and Recommendation (No. 85), 1949
- Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97)
- Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery (Agriculture) Convention (No. 99) ¹ and Recommendation (No. 89), 1951 ¹
- Plantations Convention (No. 110) and Recommendation (No. 110), 1958
- Tenants and Share-croppers Recommendation, 1968 (No. 132)
- Minimum Wage Fixing Convention (No. 131) and Recommendation (No. 135), 1970
- Rural Workers' Organisations Convention (No. 141) and Recommendation (No. 149), 1975
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
- Occupational Health Services Convention (No. 161) and Recommendation (No. 171), 1985
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169)
- Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170)
- Protocol of 1995 to the Labour Inspection Convention, 1947
- Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181)
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)
- Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention (No. 184) and Recommendation (No. 192), 2001
- List of Occupational Diseases Recommendation, 2002 (No. 194)
- Human Resources Development Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)
- 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)
- Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) and Recommendation (No. 206), 2019

Other ILO tools

- Safety and Health in Agriculture. Code of practice (2010)

¹ Instrument with interim status.

² Requiring further action to ensure continued and future relevance.

- Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all (2015)
- General principles and operational guidelines for fair recruitment (2016)
- WASH@Work: a Self-Training Handbook (2020)

Other relevant international regulations

- UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)
- UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (2011)
- OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (2011)
- UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and other People Working in Rural Areas (2018)
- Rotterdam Convention
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Bibliography

The bibliography can be consulted [here](#).