## How can agricultural policies and strategies help to end child labour in agriculture?

Dear colleagues,

Today, approximately 71% of child labour, or 108 million children worldwide, is found in the agriculture sector. More than two thirds of all child labour is unpaid family work where children do not attend or fully benefit from compulsory schooling and many of the tasks they undertake in agriculture are hazardous.

Children living in rural areas often become involved, early on, in agricultural tasks which allows them to development important skills, capacities, contribute to the family household as well as gain a sense of belonging to the community. Unfortunately, for numerous children, tasks that children perform are not limited to educational tasks but correspond to what is defined as child labour.

While child labour in agriculture takes place in a wide range of different circumstances and work situations, a large portion of child labour in agriculture can also be found in family farming, especially when household poverty persists, few livelihood alternative are available, family income remains low or is susceptible to shocks and there is poor access to education. Child labour perpetuates a cycle of poverty for the children involved, their families and communities, where they are likely to be the rural poor of tomorrow.

In July 2019, the United Nations General Assembly has declared 2021 the ‘International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour’. This online consultation represents one of many activities that FAO will organize to observe the International Year and to contribute to the progress in achieving target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2025.

The online consultation will take place for a period of three weeks, from April 27 to May 18.  Your comments and inputs will be instrumental to identify and document good and promising practices for which evidence-based research and replication could be explored. The results of the consultation will be widely promoted throughout the International Year and beyond.

A comprehensive multi-sectoral approach[[1]](#footnote-1) is often needed to address child labour in agriculture. Below are some of the many areas that can help address the issue in the rural sector. The following questions are applicable to all agricultural sub-sectors (Crop production, Fisheries, Aquaculture, Livestock and Forestry). The mention of agricultural stakeholders includes, but is not limited to, agriculture-related ministries, agricultural extension agents and officers, agricultural producers’ organizations and cooperatives, workers’ organizations as well as farmers at community level.

*Guidance on input:*

*Please share case studies, experiences and information on the effectiveness of policies and strategies related to each question, how they are implemented and what challenges may remain.*

*Feel free to choose a question(s) where you can share the most relevant experience, input and expertise. There is no need to address all questions.*

*When you answer, please refer in the title of your contribution to the number of the question and related thematic areas you are contributing towards (e.g. “Question 1: food security and nutrition policies”, “example of a policy improving lives of fisherman and reducing child labour” etc.).*

*Please try to adopt as much as possible a gender lens when writing your contributions: (i) did the policy or strategy have (also) a focus on the role of women, (ii) did the policy or programme take into account the differences in tasks, hazards, ages of girls and boys in child labour?*

**Questions:**

**1) Hunger and Malnutrition**

In some circumstances, children work to meet their food needs. How has child labour in agriculture been addressed through food security and nutrition policy and programming (such as school meals, school feeding programs, home grown gardens, etc.) and what has been the role of agriculture stakeholders in this process?

**2) Climate change and environmental degradation**

Climate change and environmental degradation can make agricultural work more intensive and income less predictable. This may lead to the engagement of children to meet labour demand and support vulnerabilities of their families. Where have agriculture stakeholders been involved in climate-related policy (deforestation, soil degradation, water scarcity, reduction of biodiversity)[[2]](#footnote-2) or programmes and where this has been effective in addressing child labour?

**3) Family farming**

Child labour in family farming is particularly difficult to tackle when family farmers are the most impacted by poverty and vulnerability, and face high levels of economic, financial, social and environmental risks. Which agricultural policies and strategies related to family farming have led to a reduction of child labour in agriculture?

**4) Innovation**

Agricultural work can be labour intensive, harsh and require additional workforce that is not always available or affordable. Which policies or programmes related to labour saving practices, mechanization, innovation and digitalization have led to the reduction of child labour in agriculture? What has been the role of agricultural stakeholders in this process?

**5) Public Investment**

Where and how has public investment in the agriculture sector been sensitive to addressing child labour? What is the role of agriculture stakeholders in this process?

**6) Attention to domestic supply chains**

Eliminating child labour in global agricultural supply chains receives significantly more attention and funding than eliminating child labour in domestic and local supply chains, yet there is a wide consensus that more child labour is found in latter. Which kind of agricultural policies and strategies could help to address child labour in domestic and local agricultural supply chains? Are there any cases where gender inequalities in local and /or domestic supply chains have been assessed in linking its impacts on child labour?

**7) Cross-sectoral policies and strategies**

* In many contexts, agricultural workers do not benefit from the same labour rights as other more formalized sectors. Where and how have agricultural stakeholders complemented labour law compliance in order to successfully improve working conditions for agricultural workers and through this helped reduce the vulnerability of households that engage in child labour?
* In which circumstance have agricultural and education stakeholders come together to formulate and implement policies or programmes on addressing child labour in agriculture ensuring that children have access to affordable and quality education in rural areas? Has this process been successful and what are the main challenges?
* Social protection in rural areas can be a mechanism to provide support to vulnerable households and address child labour in agriculture. Are there any examples of social protection schemes that address the vulnerabilities experienced by migrant agriculture labour, since children can be at particular risk (including multiple forms of exploitation) in these scenarios?

For more information on child labour in agriculture, please visit:

[www.fao.org/childlabouragriculture/en/](http://www.fao.org/childlabouragriculture/en/)

We thank you for your valuable contribution,

Antonio Correa Do Prado

Director a.i., Social Polities and Rural Institutions

1. See Statement of the African Regional Workshop of rural workers’ trade unions and small producers’ organizations to exchange experiences of “Organizing against child labour” 2017: [www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS\_IPEC\_PUB\_29755/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_29755/lang--en/index.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For example, a typical task that young children undertake is in relation to water collection and irrigation which may include heavy lifting and impede their access to school. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)