

## **Annex III – Workers’ testimonies about their incomes and expenses**

For interviews with farmers and workers, the research team used the household income strategies approach, covering questions about incomes from wages, transfers, rents, profits, and subsistence activities, and indebtedness.<sup>1</sup>

### **Reasons for working in the hazelnut harvest:**

*You say 14-15-16 year-olds, but 24- or 25-year-old men would never come here to work. And if they don't come, who is going to do the harvest? Wages paid for this work are too low for a 25-year-old man. Why would they come here for a month to make 1000 TL doing this terrible work instead of making 3000-4000 TL working in a company? That's why children mostly do these tasks. It is very rare for the older age groups to come here for work. Women would come, but men... I don't know.*

**Female worker, Şırnak, interviewed in Balatlı, Akçakoca, 19 years old.**

*I am a senior university student with a major in elementary school teaching. I came to Düzce because of economic hardship. After the state terminated my scholarship, I couldn't pay my rent for the summer. I came here specifically for that. I study what I want to study, but I cannot have the living conditions I would like. Living in a small town, one cannot find many employment opportunities. University students cannot earn and save money for their semester expenses. I want to be a teacher, but I have to get involved in agriculture. Since the state evacuated our villages, we cannot work in the village, either. Our father is away working as a construction worker in Konya. He works for 45 days, earning 2000 TL, and he spends that money over the course of 45 days. This is why I had to come here and work.*

**Female worker, Mardin, interviewed in Düzce, 23 years old.**

*We have many problems here. If we had the opportunity, we would have found jobs in our hometown. 1,000-2,000 TL would be enough. What can we do? We don't have any other source of income. We are in a foreign land here.... We are indeed compelled to come here and work. Would you do a robbery or anything illegal? God forbid!*

**Male worker, Gaziantep, interviewed in Ordu, 49 years old.**

### **Expenses and living conditions:**

*We cannot buy meat except in special occasions.... We need at least 5 kilos of meat (household of 12).... My father would invite our neighbors for religious holidays or when we had special guests from Istanbul. This is when our father buys red meat.*

**Male worker, Şırnak interviewed in Akçakoca, 24 years old.**

*We never eat red meat. It is beyond our budget. It is especially expensive here (Ordu).... Well, it is expensive in Malatya as well. Sometimes, we buy a sheep's head or cow udders or animal's lungs. We buy the cheapest parts of the animals. Otherwise we cannot afford it.*

**Male worker, Malatya, interviewed in Ünye, 43 years old.**

### **The spiral of indebtedness:**

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<sup>1</sup> Smith and Wallerstein, 1984; Eroğlu, 2011; Sert, Yükeker and Alnıaçık, 2015.

*We have debts. My husband does not work. And I make almost nothing in a month.... My son is unemployed. He worked for a week at a workplace and then fifteen days at another one, but he lost his job. If he worked, he would have wages and could take care of us. Then I would pay the rent and the bills without stress and look after my daughter. My daughter's teachers told me to send her to after-school tutoring since she is a thriving student, but these support classes are expensive and I cannot afford them. They then told me they would offer her training over the Internet if I subscribed to an Internet service package. I did and pay 115 TL monthly... We can only eat meat once in a year. We cannot even afford poultry... What we experience while working in the fields is utter disgrace. If I had an income of 1,500 TL monthly, I would never come here and would instead stay in Malatya.*

**Female worker, Malatya, interviewed in Ordu, 48 years old.**

*After covering our expenses, we'll get around 7,000 TL for the whole family.... I borrowed money from the labor contractor today for our family's daily needs. I went to the market to this morning. We need to eat and drink. We need things like clothing, gloves, and shoes. The working areas are steep. Sneakers don't last; they are easily torn apart so we need to renew them. We wear plastic shoes. When I estimate our current expenses, I see that we have spent 2,000 TL so far and that is too much. I reckon we need to curb our diet and additional expenses. However, if we eat less, we are not able to work properly. We have to eat to continue to work. I calculate that our expenses will eventually be around 3,000-4,000 TL. We only have 11 days left for work. How much more money could we earn? We have a 14,000 TL debt. We are indebted to the grocery store and the bakery in our hometown. We took a loan for the car. We will only be left with 2,000-3,000 TL at the end. What would this amount be sufficient for? Schooling expenses, daily needs, etc. We still need to find a job and have to ask for loans again and we'll be obliged to come here for the next harvest season. These are our dire circumstances.*

**Male worker, Urfa, interviewed in Ordu, 20 years old.**

*There is no other work we could do. This is our only opportunity... If we didn't come here, we would be sit doing nothing and borrow from moneylenders. Then we would have to work for the moneylender to pay the debt and the interest.*

**Male worker, Urfa, age unknown, interviewed in Ikizce.**

### **Working conditions:**

In the absence of legal employment contracts, workers are vulnerable. In hazelnut harvesting, contracts are verbal and therefore there are no legal repercussions for the employer if he/she does not follow work rules and pay the workers' wages. Some workers stated that farmers were mainly concerned about reducing labor costs by speeding up the harvest work. They attempted to cut down on the total remuneration paid by increasing the workload and intensifying pressure on workers. Farmers closely monitored the workers and used verbal abuse:

*A farmer has 2 dönüms of land and produces 1 ton [sic] of hazelnuts. If he sells the product, he only earns 10,000 TL. Still, they consider themselves as Turkey's owners and see us as their servants. They treat us as if we are not human beings, but animals. We work 12 hours a day and if we stop for just one minute while working, they get offended. If you want to finish the shift, say, only 5 minutes before 7 pm, they warn you. They tell us that we have still have*

*5 more minutes to work. We finish harvesting at 5.30 pm, but they demand that we do additional work until the shift ends. When we take a lunch break and eat, the farmer shouts at us to eat quickly and get back to work. The farmers do not provide us with water. They bring water from their home for themselves, but tell us to use water from pipes, which are not clean. They find us abhorrent, somehow, and see us like animals. They consider themselves landlords.*

**20-year-old male worker from Siverek, Urfa**

*The main problem here is the working hours. Normally one should work for 8 hours indoors. Here it is open air and the fields are steep and full of weeds. You have to bend tree branches and it's very difficult. It's 12 hours of work from 7 am to 7 pm. In my own village, people go hoeing from 8 am to 5 pm and the daily wage is the same.*

**Female worker, Şırnak, interviewed in Esmahanım, 18 years old.**

**Mustafa's story (44 years old from Urfa, main breadwinner, male, household size: 5)**

Born in Hilvan, a district of Urfa, Mustafa lost his parents at the age of 7 and was forced to move İstanbul to make a living. He stayed there for over a decade before returning to his hometown and getting married. He has three children aged 13, 15 and 16 who were continuing their formal education at the time the interview was conducted.

Mustafa's family travels around Anatolia for harvest work. Before coming to Ordu for the hazelnut harvest, he and his family had gone to Konya and Çorum in May 2017 and stayed about two months to harvest sugar beet, sunflower and cumin. He told the research team the school principal gave his children permission to leave from school during their migration cycle Mustafa said that for working 15 days in the beet harvest, he received 500 TL, daily 15 TL per person. At the end of the hazelnut harvest in Ordu, the family would return to their hometown so that the children could continue their schooling.

In Urfa, Mustafa was unemployed and held a green card. He had significant banks loans totaling approximately 20,000 TL. In addition, he had two credit cards, and could not meet the minimum payments. He faced legal action and had to pay 4,000 TL to two banks, including lawyer expenses.

Until the start of the seasonal work cycle, Mustafa said he would be indebted to a local moneylender. He would have to borrow 6,000 TL from the moneylender to get by during his stay in Urfa and would eventually have to pay 3,000 TL in interests. Due to his debts, he could not find a job that provided social security. He thought no one in Urfa was willing to hire him. The only option for Mustafa would be to leave his family behind and go to Istanbul to get such a job. But he could not do so because of his children's schooling.

Mustafa owns a small plot of land, but he could not get financial support for agricultural activity from the state. He rented out the land for sharecropping, earning 500 TL monthly. His three children get a scholarship of 150 TL every two months, but the amount is not sufficient to cover their personal needs. The family saves 1,000 TL from their seasonal work for the children's schooling expenses.

Previously, Mustafa's wife had applied for financial support (unconditional cash transfer) to the district governorate and the family received support until the previous year. His wife was also getting promotion checks to meet domestic expenses. However, officials paid a visit to the family home and the support was withdrawn after inspection. For the past three years, the family had not received coal support during winter. Mustafa estimated that monthly expenses

averaged around 1,000 TL. He could not pay his regular bills regularly because his income regularly fell short of household expenses, nor could he address overdue bills, which totaled 2,000 TL. As a result, the electricity was cut off. The family collected dung to minimize the heating costs and sometimes bought wood on credit.

Mustafa paid 1,500 TL for transportation from Urfa to Ordu. During the hazelnut harvest, the family planned to stay in Ordu around 50 days. Mustafa and two of his children regularly worked in the harvest. The younger child, who was 13 years old, could sometimes not be convinced to participate. In some cases, the garden owner did not want him to work. Mustafa's wife deals with domestic duties, and only joined the harvest if she had free time.

During the harvest, the family spent 200 TL weekly on kitchen expenses and 500 TL monthly on clothing and protective equipment. At the end of the harvest, they had to pay for the electricity used during their stay. Mustafa told the research team the income would barely cover his debt to the moneylender (the remaining amount stood at 1,000 to 2,000 TL). If things went wrong, he would return to Urfa with increased debts.

### **Metin's story (19 years old from Urfa, eldest son in the family, household size: 10)**

Metin has three elder sisters. The remaining siblings are younger than him. He came to Ordu with five siblings. His father, ill and unemployed, works irregularly in the construction sector. The family does not have social security, but holds a green card. The only employed member of the family is Metin's elder sister, who worked in a textile factory. But she had to quit her job when the seasonal harvest cycle started. Metin told the research team that before coming to Ordu, the family had worked on the sugar beet and cumin harvest in Konya.

Metin and his family have been working in the hazelnut harvest for 10 years. The family members had their hometown four months earlier. This year they needed to cover the family's debts, which stood at around 18.000 TL at the time of the interview. Four children, who are still in education, were planning to earn pocket money. Metin wants to pursue an undergraduate degree and save money from the harvest work to meet the costs of a private preparatory school.

Metin graduated from high school last year, but his siblings had to interrupt their formal education to participate in the harvest in Konya. Metin stressed that they would only return to Urfa a month after the opening of school. The children's school attendance is therefore irregular.

In Konya, the landowner paid family members 100 TL for each decare they harvested. After the labor intermediary had taken his commission, family members received 15 TL/day per person. In total, the family earned 4.000 TL and gave this amount directly to the moneylender for covering part of their debts.

At the time of the interview, family members had been in Ordu for 17 days and were planning to stay there for a total of 35 days. They had paid 650 TL for transportation from Konya to Ordu. Metin estimated that total revenue from the hazelnut harvest would be 7,000 TL at best. Over the course of 17 days, the family had already spent over 2.000 TL. Metin was taking care to reduce expenses. He told the researchers that the family faced days of austerity. He forecast that total expenses during the harvest would reach around 4.000 TL.

The family had not eaten any meat since their arrival and could only survive on a carb-based diet.

In Urfa, the family does not pay rent. But Metin said their dwelling is not a proper house. It is decrepit and too small for 10 people, but they cannot afford to move. Joining the cotton harvest in their hometown might be an option to gain additional income.

The children are still in school and the younger women in the family are not allowed to work. Monthly expenditures average around 2.500-3.000 TL, including 1,500 TL for kitchen expenses. The family buys coal and wood for the winter at a cost of 20 TL per sack. The family uses 20-30 sacks of coal during the winter. Clothing needs are limited to 500 TL every three months. Since Metin's elder sister started a job with social security, the state cancelled financial support for the family. Last year, Metin's mother got seriously ill and medical treatment was a substantial expense. Borrowing is essential to the family's survival. They are indebted to a moneylender. Metin calculated that the amount remaining from the seasonal harvest work would be around 3,000 TL.