



# Harvesting the Future:

## *Improving Recruitment and Employment Practices of Seasonal Migrant Agriculture Workers in Turkey*



*August 2019 to January 2021*

### PROJECT CONTEXT

Every summer, tens of thousands of seasonal workers migrate to agriculture production areas across Turkey. A majority of these workers are from the southeastern Turkey and they travel as family groups moving from crop to crop for six to eight months each year. Often, the children work alongside their migrant parents, contributing to the household income, but at the expense of their personal development.

Labor intermediaries predominantly recruit migrant workers promising them daily wages, transportation, food, and accommodations. Once the workers get paid, the labor intermediary deducts the costs for transportation, housing, and food and a commission, often 10 percent on total earnings, significantly reducing the workers' take-home pay. Some workers have reported verbal and psychological abuse, lack of social security, and long hours while working under the labor contractors' agreements.

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since 2011, the [Fair Labor Association \(FLA\)](#) has conducted research, including field-level projects, to address workplace conditions in Turkey in the hazelnut, cotton, spices, and seeds sectors. Because of the short duration (six to eight weeks) of the harvest in any one agricultural commodity, it is difficult to sustain interventions. Workers move on to other products and regions.

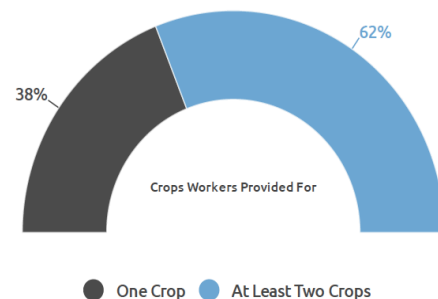
To achieve a sustained impact, seasonal workers and their families must be monitored in their journeys across commodities and regions. This approach will ensure that similar working conditions are maintained across harvests. In 2015, with financial support from the U.S. Department of Labor-Bureau of International Labor Affairs, the FLA bolstered its programming and piloted the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Guidelines to Eliminate Child and Forced Labor in Agriculture Supply

Chains. The FLA implemented the [project](#) with three affiliated companies and the Turkish Ministry of Family and Labor Social Security (MoLSS).

The project included training on labor rights including occupational health and safety, programs to remediate child labor cases, and multi-stakeholder interventions to improve employment conditions of seasonal migrant agriculture workers. During the project, the FLA and its partners mapped and profiled 330 labor contractors and followed their migration across commodities over one year. The project concluded in 2018.

### Demographic Characteristics of the Workers Recruited - *Results with Regards to the Other Crops They Have Been to*

It was found that 38% of the agricultural intermediaries (117 agricultural intermediaries) provided workers only for hazelnut harvest and 62% (192 agricultural intermediaries) provided workers for at least two crops.



The FLA found that 62 percent of labor intermediaries recruit workers for at least two crops, including hazelnuts and the most popular crops: apricot, cotton, potato, sugar beet. This insight compelled the FLA to reimagine its interventions to meet the reality of a multi-commodity landscape. To be successful, efforts require working with several supply chain actors and the government with a common vision to improve workers' lives. This realization led to the launch of the Harvesting the Future project in 2019.

## PROJECT SUMMARY

The FLA is partnering with multi-national agri-business, food and beverage companies and Turkey-based suppliers, and the MoFLSS to improve recruitment and employment practices among seasonal migrant agriculture workers in Turkey. The project is supported by the [Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform \(SAI\)](#) and [Sustainable Spices Initiative \(SSI\)](#). The commodities in project scope include apricot, cumin, grape, hazelnut, maize seed, potato, pistachio, sugar beet and sunflower seed. New companies and commodities are added on a rolling basis.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

1. Assist suppliers in supply chain mapping and establishing internal monitoring and remediation programs in upstream supply chain.
2. Assess the profiles of workers, farmers and labor intermediaries to identify their needs.
3. Drive a collective understanding and common standard among multinational companies on working conditions for seasonal workers.
4. Boost stakeholder engagement, exchange good practices, and improve coordination on remediation of non-compliances.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

- 1) **Supply chain mapping** to acquire insights in the supply chain tiers for apricot, cumin, grape, hazelnut, sugar beet, potato and pistachio. The work includes a participatory approach with companies taking the lead in reaching out to their supply chain partners. FLA provides standardized data collection tool and conducts in-person workshops on supply chain mapping for project partners.
- 2) **Risk analysis** to plot the production cycle, seasonal calendar, activities, hazardous work, risks and groups involved in apricot, cumin, grape, hazelnut, sugar beet, potato and pistachio production. The process includes gaining an understanding of the recruitment process, working conditions, workers' living conditions, and repatriation. The work includes conducting visits to small-holder farms during peak production months.

- 3) **Capacity building of supply chain actors**, including suppliers and companies, to establish robust social compliance and sustainability management programs. Tactics include traceability through training, the provision of tools, policies and procedures, and hands-on support during fieldwork. Capacity building activities include training for suppliers' management teams and field teams; farmers, agriculture workers and labor intermediaries. The project helps labor intermediaries with legal registration.
- 4) **Stakeholder engagement** is a critical feature as it leads to collective knowledge-building and sharing. Joint activities with the government help to avoid duplication of efforts and maximize the use of scarce financial, human and time resources while enabling best practice exchange among partners.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Project activities support three expected outcomes:

1. Improved capacity of participants to tackle issues related to responsible recruitment that seasonal migrant workers face in the agriculture sector;
2. Increased adherence to national and international norms; and
3. Increased coordination and implementation of responsible recruitment principles in companies' supply chains.

Companies and suppliers benefit at multiple levels. They gain visibility into their supply chain and labor force and get access to tools and peer-to-peer interaction. Also, the project helps companies demonstrate their efforts to conduct due diligence and improve working conditions, which is an increasing interest globally among regulatory bodies, investors, buyers, and consumers.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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