



HARVESTING THE FUTURE

Identifying risks and opportunities for labour conditions
in Turkish agricultural supply chains

CASE STUDY | OCTOBER 2021



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CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Context	3
Migrant Labour Conditions in Turkey	3
Leveraging Collaboration	3
Harvesting the Future	4
Objectives	4
Building Momentum	5
Project Activities	6
Challenges	11
Impact	13
What's Next?	14



INTRODUCTION

Harvesting the Future is a unique project to the food and beverage industry for its cross-commodity approach, the scale of partnerships, and engagement across diverse parts of the supply chain.

Launched in 2019, this project aimed to create greater visibility on labour conditions in Turkish supply chains. Activities focused on aligning industry understanding of interventions needed for improved working and living conditions for seasonal workers and to achieving quick wins for improving recruitment and employment practices.

Harvesting the Future focused on 6 major commodities: apricot, cumin, hazelnut, sultana raisins, potato, and pistachio. Training and other corrective measures provided have already touched every level of these

supply chains, which are an essential part of Turkey's economy. For instance, Turkey is the world's leading producer of hazelnuts, providing 70% of global supply; two to three million growers (5% of Turkey's population) depend on that commodity for their income¹, while thousands of labourers are employed for harvesting and processing. This project's work has the potential to create a sustained, wide-spread impact on the working conditions of seasonal migrant workers in Turkey across a wide variety of commodity crops.



¹ <http://www.fao.org/3/x4484e/x4484e03.htm>



CONTEXT

MIGRANT LABOUR CONDITIONS IN TURKEY

For decades, tens of thousands of seasonal workers have migrated across Turkey every summer, moving from one seasonal crop to another². Many travel as family groups, moving for up to eight months a year, with children often working alongside their parents without access to education. Vast disparities exist across commodity supply chains in payment methods, accommodation, and working conditions. Difficult working conditions have been reported, including verbal abuse, long hours, wages below the legal minimum, and lack of social security.

Addressing these issues is vital to improving the lives of seasonal workers and their families. There is also a direct link between the economic stability of farmers and farm workers, their working and living conditions, and the long-term sustainability of the agriculture sector. Individuals with better access to stable incomes, clean water, and sanitation have an increased capacity to manage risks and implement sustainable practices³.

To address these challenges, the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform (SAI Platform), Fair Labor Association (FLA), and a number of project partners came together to launch Harvesting the Future.

“ [Before Harvesting the Future] very little changed in nearly two decades... There were problems everywhere I looked, yet there were no easy solutions and no hope for change. ”

Agricultural labour intermediary, age 53, as told to an FLA representative.
(Translated from Turkish)

LEVERAGING COLLABORATION

After gathering local data on Turkish migrant agricultural labour over four years, the Fair Labor Association launched a project to improve working conditions for these workers, primarily through health and safety training, child labour remediation, and labour rights.

Around the same time, SAI Platform was asked by members to be a convening body to provide similar information and intervention. It was here that SAI Platform’s mantra of collaboration identified FLA’s project and the two joined forces to coalesce industry support and work together towards better livelihoods for migrant workers in Turkey.

Alongside the Sustainable Spices Initiative, FLA and SAI Platform launched the Harvesting the Future project in 2019. By pooling resources and leveraging FLA’s on-the-ground experts and regional expertise, this partnership enabled both organisations to have an increased impact on significant focus areas.

“ This project allowed SAI Platform to harness the collaborative power of our membership to accelerate sustainable practices in agriculture. By partnering with FLA, we were able to accelerate both organisation’s goals, particularly as they relate to our members’ interest in social sustainability in Turkey. ”

Leah Blechschmidt, Project Manager, SAI Platform

Within several months, the Harvesting the Future project had gained government support from Turkey’s Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, who hosted a kick-off meeting in Ankara with 21 project partner representatives in attendance. Together, they outlined the project objectives and determined a common approach.

2 https://www.fairlabor.org/sites/default/files/harvesting_the_future-project_information.pdf
3 https://saiplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/principlespractices_saiplatform_2021.pdf

HARVESTING THE FUTURE

OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of Harvesting the Future was to collaborate with supply chain actors to create an acceptable standard of working conditions for seasonal labour workers, farmers, and labour intermediaries that adhere to international norms.

The scope of the project focused on three key objectives:

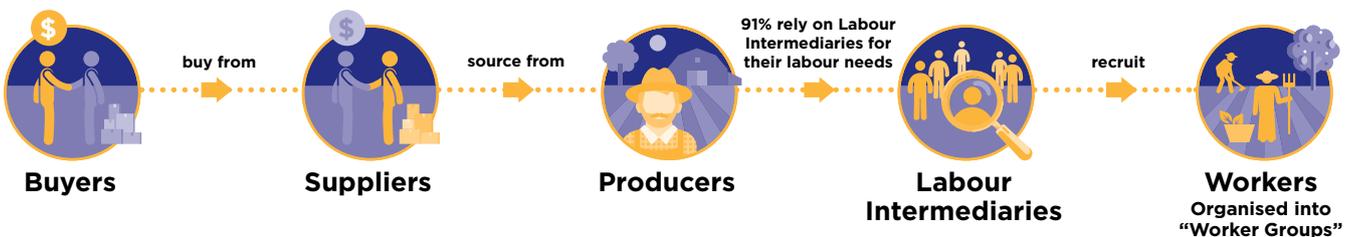
1 Facilitate project partners' ability to tackle responsible recruitment issues and social compliance through data collection, supply chain mapping, and internal monitoring.

2 Create a collective understanding and common standard for seasonal labour working conditions by assessing the needs of workers, farmers, and labour intermediaries.

3 Increase national regulation compliance and improve coordination and implementation of responsible recruitment practices in supply chains through increased stakeholder engagement and training.



Supply Chain



BUILDING MOMENTUM

SAI Platform and FLA reached out to suppliers, businesses, and the Turkish Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Services to collaborate on their joint venture, building on existing members and relationships. From the start, collaboration was a key component of this project. SAI Platform and FLA knew that they required the support from high-level supply chain actors with international influence.

Many international buyers, such as Nestlé and Marks & Spencer, have company-wide policies or mandates around sourcing and labour practices. Most of these organisations were already involved in some level of supply chain mapping but were limited in what they could accomplish alone. Complex supply chains were difficult to track down to the individual farmer level. They needed on-the-ground partners who understood the local culture, language, and needs. Together, the buyers used their influence to propel industry-level change.

“ Harvesting the Future provides an opportunity to learn from each other, share best practices, identify solutions to common challenges and maximise impact. ”

Funda Yildirim,
Global Procurement Manager, Unilever

At the same time, many of the local suppliers involved in Harvesting the Future were already working to improve labour and living conditions on the farms they purchased from. They were perfectly positioned to speak directly with labour intermediaries and workers but needed additional resources and support.

The Harvesting the Future project created a collaborative opportunity in which buyers were able to connect with supply chain actors on the ground, and suppliers were able to gain buy-in and support from their upstream supply chain actors.





PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Major project activities included data collection and interviews, risk analysis, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement. This project focused on 6 major commodities: apricot, cumin, hazelnut, sultana raisins, potato, and pistachio.

1 Supply Chain Mapping

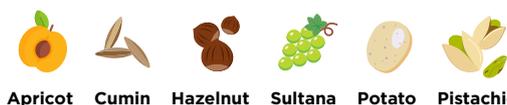
Supply chain mapping involves gathering information about everyone in a supply chain to create a map of the total supply network. For the purpose of this project, mapping the full supply chain ensures that project activities can create meaningful change from individual farmers to major corporations.

Project partners were encouraged to reach out to their suppliers to collect data on their respective supply chains. The Harvesting the Future team provided standardised tools for data collection, and trained project partners on supply chain mapping and interacting with supply chain stakeholders through in-person workshops. While most partners had been performing social audits at the manufacturing level, few had ventured down the supply chain. Participation in Harvesting the Future allowed them to take a more complete view of social responsibility.

“ Traceability is important. We wanted to map the supply chain down to the farmer level and Harvesting the Future allowed us to enlarge the scope of our existing programme. We have reached out to new farmers and identified labour contractors who are the key people affected by the labour conditions. ”

Burcu Türkay, Sustainability Manager of Edible Nuts, Olam

Commodities in the Scope



Apricot Cumin Hazelnut Sultana Potato Pistachio

Locations

13 cities 35 districts 86 villages



746 Producers Accessed



363 Labour Intermediaries Accessed



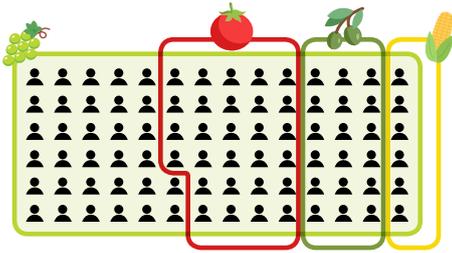
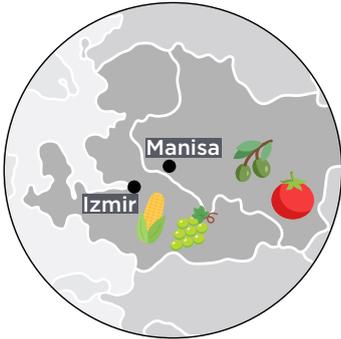
528 Worker Groups Accessed



9440 Workers Accessed

Supply chain mapping helped Harvesting the Future partners accurately define the scope of the project, identify and collect missing information, refocus efforts on areas of most concern, and identify risks that could be analysed and addressed.

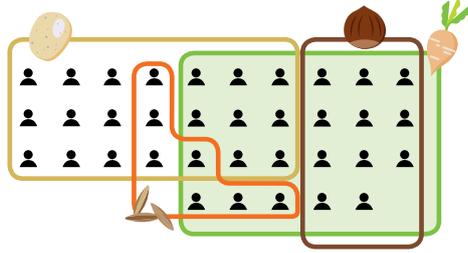
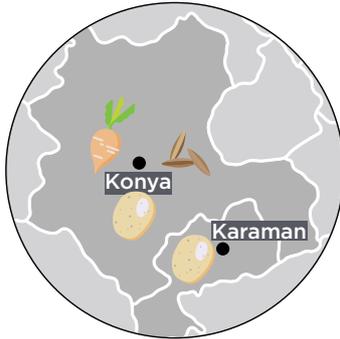
Labour Intermediaries (LIs) Circulation Map by Commodities



Of the 84 LIs who provide workers for
GRAPE — **33%** —> **TOMATO**
 also provide workers for

Of the 84 LIs who provide workers for
GRAPE — **21%** —> **OLIVE**
 also provide workers for

Of the 6 LIs who provide workers for
CORN — **100%** —> **GRAPE**
 also provide workers for

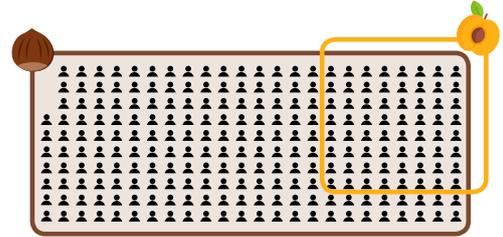
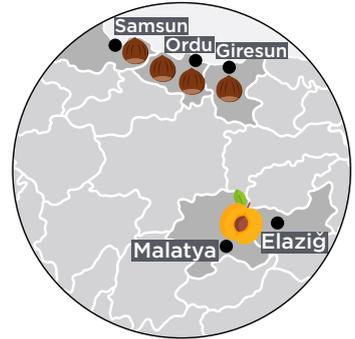


Of the 23 LIs who provide workers for
SUGAR BEET — **39%** —> **POTATO**
 also provide workers for

Of the 23 LIs who provide workers for
SUGAR BEET — **48%** —> **HAZELNUT**
 also provide workers for

Of the 21 LIs who provide workers for
POTATO — **14%** —> **CUMIN**
 also provide workers for

Of the 7 LIs who provide workers for
CUMIN — **71%** —> **SUGAR BEET**
 also provide workers for



Of the 237 LIs who provide workers for
HAZELNUT — **39%** —> **APRICOT**
 also provide workers for

Of the 64 LIs who provide workers for
APRICOT — **100%** —> **HAZELNUT**
 also provide workers for



2 Risk Analysis

Staff monitored worker activity during peak production to help identify and analyse the risks involved in the supply chain, including production cycle, seasonality, recruitment process, working conditions, and living conditions. Risk is defined here as any situation or circumstance that could negatively impact the efficacy of the supply chain.

Risks identified through interviews and monitoring included:

- The prevalence of child labour, often in hazardous conditions.
- Long working hours.
- Poor living conditions.
- Lack of transparency around wages.
- Frequent harassment, abuse, and discrimination.
- Lack of formal work contracts or registration with local authorities.

This risk analysis helped Harvesting the Future project partners better understand and quantify the areas for improvement.



Farmers primarily recruit migrant workers through labour intermediaries, who pay daily wages to workers after deducting costs for food, housing, transportation, and up to 10% commission from the total. This can leave workers with very little to take home at the end of the season.



3 Capacity Building

The Harvesting the Future project empowered its supply chain actors to take ownership of the programme, rather than mandating from above. This required providing stakeholders with the tools and training needed to carry on activities beyond the scope of the initial project, and continue making an impact for workers on the ground.

Capacity building activities involved all major stakeholder groups: buyers, suppliers, intermediaries, and workers.



Buyers

Buyers facilitated open communication, common understanding, and continued support of the project through:

- Round table meetings.
- Workshops.
- Conferences.
- Training sessions with project partners and government officials.



Suppliers

Suppliers were empowered to conduct supply chain mapping. They received:

- Guidelines for data collection.
- Training on working conditions and social compliance.
- Standardised policies and procedures (including remediation and corrective action programmes).
- One-on-one consulting sessions for 12 suppliers to identify and bridge compliance gaps in their supply chains.



Intermediaries

Intermediaries received education and training sessions on:

- Turkish labour law.
- The importance of registering their operation and establishing contracts with workers.
- Skills-based training on fostering productive, healthy relationships with workers.



Workers

Workers learned more about their legal rights through:

- Sessions and print materials on labour rights, standards, and contract agreements.
- Assistance in becoming legally registered employees.



“ If you’re really committed to this area of welfare or worker human rights, the first thing you’ve got to do is understand the situation... being able to uncover some of those issues was really important. ”

Vicky Dodman, Senior Human Rights & Ethical Trade Manager (Food), Marks & Spencer

4 Stakeholder Engagement

Engaging with stakeholders at every level encouraged collective knowledge-building, a clearer focus for project activities, and more efficient use of resources. Engagement included monthly partner meetings, quarterly committee meetings, and working groups/cross-partner meetings.

Stakeholder meetings included:

- Discussions of the findings from the field, and how those findings would impact future activities.
- Updates on current and future project activities.
- Identification of incomplete or inaccurate data that needed to be addressed.
- Needs assessments related to COVID-19.
- Guidance from governing bodies that impacted project objectives.

Joint meetings with the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Services gave partners first-hand information about how the Ministry could assist on the ground. Initial meetings focused on obtaining the support of local directorates, and allowing stakeholders the opportunity to learn more about the context and sensitivities required for the project activities.

For example, a roundtable discussion in February 2020 included 30 public authorities and was chaired by the local labour department. Harvesting the Future stakeholders were able to highlight specific interventions local governments could implement that had worked in the hazelnut sector, but had not been discussed in relation to other seasonal crops. Collaboration among engaged stakeholders helped to ensure that project activities would have a lasting impact.



5 COVID-19 Related Activities

Limiting the spread of COVID-19 was not an initial objective of the project's stakeholders, but quickly became one, given the significant potential risk for supply chains and impact on worker conditions and health.

When the global pandemic was declared, Harvesting the Future quickly mobilised by:

- Performing a needs assessment for farmers and intermediaries.
- Reaching out individually to 188 intermediaries by phone to provide COVID-19 information and risk reduction measures for the upcoming season.
- Creating brochures and posters with safety guidelines and checklists for workers and field staff.
- Distributing over 1,000 school kits and 1,500 hygiene kits.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to measure the direct impact Harvesting the Future had on the spread of COVID-19 for seasonal workers, but the immediate intervention, training, and supplies helped workers understand and assert their rights regarding COVID safety.



“ When COVID-19 broke out [the Harvesting the Future project] had to stop training sessions, so we coordinated COVID-related activities in the field, including helping people get travel permits, calling intermediaries to provide guidance, and providing pamphlets for suppliers to distribute on how to stay safe. ”

Burcu Türkay,
Sustainability Manager of Edible Nuts, Olam

CHALLENGES

As a project creating significant change across many sectors, Harvesting the Future encountered multiple obstacles. By collaborating with partners at every level along the supply chain, these obstacles were met with a united approach from buyers and suppliers to communicate the importance of the project and provide adequate support for activities.

Logistical barriers

The vastness of the geographical area being studied, which included many remote locations, combined with the varying dialects, languages, and literacy levels of participants, made communication difficult. To overcome this, train-the-trainer sessions provided homogenous content that could be delivered consistently. The lack of formal written documents also proved a challenge.

“ Tracing back the people and the working conditions is challenging since everything is informal. There are often only oral contracts between the farmers and the workers. ”

Mégane Chesné, Sustainable Sourcing Manager, Hazelnut & Palm Oil, Nestlé

Resistance from suppliers

Data collection was often incomplete, as supply chain partners were hesitant to share private business information. This hesitancy was partially addressed through fostering an environment of relationship building, cooperation, and transparency. In the end, project partners received answers from fifteen suppliers and were able to map an average of just eight per cent of those suppliers’ supply chains.

Supply chain mapping activities demonstrated that there was work to be done to encourage suppliers to prioritise social compliance. Results showed that most suppliers surveyed began to consider social compliance in just the last ten years. While ten of the fifteen interviewees claimed to be members of at least one social compliance certification programme and eight claimed to have internal monitoring mechanisms in place, in-depth interviews revealed that social compliance was often not considered.

Resistance from labour intermediaries

Unregistered labour intermediaries expressed concerns about legalising operations. They worried that contract standardisation would affect their income, and that they would be unable to compete with other unregulated operators. Education is an extremely effective way to overcome this resistance. Greater focus in this area for the 2021 growing season will have a significant impact once in-person training can resume.

“ It has been difficult to bring labour intermediaries on board with this project. They think registering with the Turkish Employment Agency will bring tax liabilities. ”

Özlem Keceli, Quality Manager, Anatolia



Resistance from farmers

Farmers observing Harvesting the Future's focus on helping workers and labour intermediaries questioned what benefit they would personally experience. Harvesting the Future partners organised meetings with farmers to discuss their concerns and educate them on the benefits of the programme. They also supplied the farmers with additional training on agricultural and labour practices, farm equipment support for school-aged children, and renovated infrastructure if villages lacked the resources to improve.



COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the project in a number of unanticipated ways, including delayed travel and inspections, training sessions, and meetings. Despite this significant roadblock, however changes were quickly made to facilitate remote risk assessments and information distribution. As a result, 277 intermediaries were mapped and 25 were able to participate in training sessions through 2020.

Harvesting the Future partners took quick action to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among the migrant workers. This included distributing hygiene kits and PPE to farmers, labour intermediaries and seasonal workers during the 2020 harvesting period. Workers were not only concerned with illness, however; social distancing rules had increased their transportation and accommodation costs, and workers were worried that further deductions would be taken from their already low wages. Additional training, monitoring, and supplies were needed to address these issues.



“ Without any doubt, COVID-19 is one of the biggest challenges we all faced in 2020. We had to re-think the way we worked and engaged with people. The Harvesting the Future project had to change focus and priorities to support migrant workers. ”

Funda Yildirim,
Global Procurement Manager, Unilever

IMPACT

Harvesting the Future has made strides in addressing and improving the labour conditions of seasonal migrant workers in Turkey. One of the most significant outcomes of the project is that industry stakeholders are now aligned in their understanding of current working conditions, major risk areas, and the actions and collaboration required to improve them.

Stakeholders are now better equipped and empowered to create positive, sustained changes within the supply chain. For example, in December 2019, 40 participants representing 15 suppliers attended “train-the-trainers” sessions on eliminating

child labour and working with labour intermediaries. Those participants can now educate and train farmers, intermediaries, and workers within their supply chains. Workers themselves were also provided with critical information about their legal rights.

Training and education sessions have had a direct impact on the employment structure of the industry. Workers were offered assistance in becoming legally registered employees. As a direct result of a series of training sessions in January 2020, 53 out of 54 previously unregistered intermediaries who were in attendance subsequently registered with the Turkish Employment Agency.

Individuals and groups contacted



746
Producers



363
Labour intermediaries



528
Worker groups



9440
Workers

Training provided to



89
Participants from buyers and suppliers



105
Labour intermediaries

Industry Impacts



79 Labour intermediaries legally registered



363 Labour intermediaries entered into an online database as a reference for suppliers



12 Suppliers launched child labour monitoring and remediation programs



20 Suppliers' supply chains mapped

Outcomes

- 1 Greater understanding throughout supply chains of the risks and root causes of child labour and labour rights violations
- 2 Improved trust and compliance between actors in Turkish supply chains
- 3 Aligned commitment from companies and suppliers to focus on 6 key risk areas across commodities in Turkey:
 - Child labour
 - Hazardous work
 - Informal work
 - Excessive work hours
 - Minimum wages
 - Access to basic services (such as hygiene and sanitation)

“ Things have started to get better. There is water to drink, and better living conditions. We even had electricity in our accommodations for the first time. It feels so good to rest in decent conditions after long, hard days. ”

Mustafa, 45, seasonal agricultural worker, as told to an FLA representative (translated from Turkish), February 2021

WHAT'S NEXT

Harvesting the Future created a strong foundation for improved labour conditions in Turkey. There is still much work to be done before there is a nationally regulated and upheld industry-wide standard for responsible recruitment practices.

The Fair Labor Association has initiated a second phase of this project that will continue to empower buyers and suppliers to build their internal monitoring capabilities to ensure compliance with labour regulations, while working to mitigate the 6 key risk areas identified. Companies will

work through modules focused on: implementing supply chain monitoring of workers and labour contractors; protecting young workers and providing safe spaces for the children of migrant workers; promoting health and safety; and increasing the number of legally registered labour contractors and formal contracts between labourers, labour contractors, and farmers. Supply chains that are more advanced will also be able to work through modules that provide training on grievance mechanisms and support companies in creating a roadmap to achieve a living wage for migrant farm workers.

For more information or to get involved, contact the Fair Labor Association – Zümrüt Aydın at zaydin@fairlabor.org



“ We are pleased to see the work from the Harvesting the Future project over the last several years and the actions being taken to support seasonal labourers in Turkey. ”

Nurcan Önder, Director of Labour,
Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security

“ Harvesting the Future has brought many important stakeholders together across key commodities in Turkey and empowered them to make positive changes. We look forward to continuing this work as industry standards are implemented and labour conditions continue to improve. ”

Burcu Kugu Bolak, Program Director,
Supply Chain Innovation and Partnerships,
Fair Labor Association



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Founded in 2002, the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative Platform (SAI Platform) connects, collaborates, and builds industry-wide solutions globally to catalyse and support sustainable change in agriculture. It enables its over 140 members to share expertise, create solutions to common challenges and promote sustainable agriculture in a pre-competitive environment.

The Fair Labor Association (FLA) is an international non-profit organization dedicated to protecting workers' rights. It is a collaborative effort of universities, civil society organizations and socially responsible companies.