



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



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# Ending child labour

## The decisive role of agricultural stakeholders

# FAO is dedicated to eliminating child labour.

This series of briefs provides an introduction to the peculiarities of the sector, who agricultural stakeholders are, and what they can do to address child labour together with partners.

In particular, it highlights the role of agricultural ministries, extension agents and producers' organizations in eliminating child labour.

# Progress or failure on SDG 8.7 will be decided in agriculture.

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CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

# We need a **breakthrough** in agriculture

The ILO 2017 global estimates show that child labour is overwhelmingly concentrated in agriculture. Of the 152 million children who are in situations defined as 'child labour', the vast majority – 108 million girls and boys between the ages of 5 and 17 – are to be found in farming, livestock, forestry, fishing or aquaculture.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ILO, 2017, *Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016*.



## Why does child labour in agriculture require particular attention?

While child labour has decreased since 2012 reports, child labour in agriculture has actually increased by a staggering 12 per cent.

The plight of these children is inextricably linked to the challenges of promoting rural development and decent employment in the agricultural sector. Poverty in rural communities is a significant factor in pushing children into child labour.

The specific situation of children labouring in agriculture is not widely known or understood. Many people think that children who work on farms or on fishing boats, for example, enjoy a healthy outdoor life compared to the many who toil in sweatshops or work as domestic servants. But this is not at all the case.

Children in child labour in agriculture face some of the most dangerous and damaging threats to their health and well-being. These include driving heavy machinery, spraying toxic pesticides and carrying heavy loads, as well as amputations from machinery and proximity to dynamite fishing. They also suffer cuts from machetes, exposure to extreme heat and cold, and long hard hours of work.

***Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 – progress or failure will be decided in agriculture.***



## What makes eliminating child labour in agriculture so challenging?

Child labour in agriculture is driven by both economic and social factors and, compared with other sectors, presents some particular challenges.

### Limited protection for children in family farming

One significant challenge in addressing child labour in agriculture is that many children – an estimated two-thirds of those in agricultural labour -- work in family operations or alongside family members in seasonal work. National labour legislation may not cover well, or may explicitly exclude the work that children do in family enterprises.

### Limited labour enforcement in rural areas

Traditional labour inspection may face difficulties reaching children in remote, rural areas and working on family farms, in forests, or herding livestock. Child labourers are often isolated on smallholdings or in fishing boats and are to this extent 'invisible'. While other workers or workers' associations might report instances of child labour in other sectors, this is not so likely to happen for children in agriculture, especially in family farming.

### Tradition and dependency on child labour

Often child labour is seen as a traditional way of life, especially for fishing and nomadic communities, and hiring other workers is not seen as economically viable.

### Limited options in seasonal activities

The seasonal nature of agriculture and the consequent peaks and troughs in the need for labour also contribute to children being used as workers.

### Confusion with "helping out"

Often it is argued that children are just helping their families or that they are learning skills they'll need on the farm as adults. International law does take this into account and allows children to lend a 'helping hand', but it stipulates that the child must be at least 13 years of age (12 in some developing economies), work for a limited time each week, only in non-hazardous work, and the child must go to school. For too many children, though, work in agriculture goes beyond these limits and becomes child labour.



## What are the impacts of child labour in agriculture?

In many cases, children are pulled out of school to engage in agricultural labour, or their performance at school suffers. When children work instead of going to school, their development and the future of their families, communities and nations is compromised. Their low level of education limits their access to information and impedes them from acquiring higher-level skills. They are less likely to find decent work when they are older,<sup>2</sup> less likely to adopt new practices and technologies if they remain in agriculture, and more likely to be trapped in poverty and suffering the long-term effects of the hazardous conditions they faced as children. Development of their communities is stymied because of this, and the agricultural sector in some countries remains stuck, threatening food security in an expanding world and contributing to the cycle of poverty.<sup>2</sup>

## What about older children who have reached working age?

Once a child has reached the legal minimum age for work, which is generally 15 years of age, she or he is allowed to work, but still not in any situation classified as 'hazardous'. Consequently, it is important to *promote safe work* in agriculture and related activities for young people who have reached the minimum age.

At the same time, however, older children who have worked on the farm from a very young age – sometimes five or six years of age – may just want to get away and find non-agricultural work. They may carry injuries or be worn out by the hazards of working before they should have. Many rural youth are working poor and face enormous challenges in preparing for and accessing decent work, including in agriculture. They may be compelled to migrate to urban areas, putting them at increased risk of trafficking.

Re-engaging young people in agriculture requires addressing decent work deficits in rural areas and the numerous constraints that they face when trying to earn a livelihood. Youth are the future farmers, fishers, foresters and livestock raisers who will feed our world.

<sup>2</sup> ILO, 2015, *World Report on Child Labour 2015: Paving the way to decent work for young people*



## How do we stop child labour in agriculture at its roots?

**Agricultural stakeholders can address the root causes of child labour in agriculture. They can help:**

- Reduce rural poverty
- End dependence on family labour
- Make education and training more relevant and accessible
- Provide decent work for rural youth
- Shift to safer agricultural practices
- Increase resilience of rural households
- Raise awareness among agricultural families

Child labour in agriculture is a complex problem requiring a holistic approach. We must look beyond the symptoms of the problem and address the root causes that oblige boys and girls to be engaged in premature work in agriculture. This means addressing



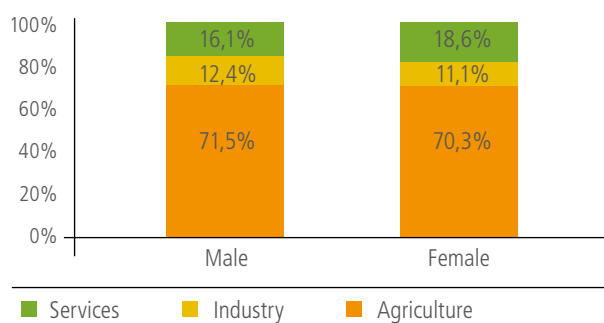
both the reasons they are sent to work instead of school and why there is a demand for their work. In particular, it means reducing poverty in rural areas, where the majority of households work in agriculture, and eliminating dependence on child labour for production. It also means supporting young people to prepare for decent work in agriculture, making sure that education and training is relevant and accessible, and promoting safer agricultural practices.

FAO works closely with the ILO to bring labour and agricultural stakeholders together to get at the heart of the child labour problem. 'Agricultural stakeholders', such as ministries of agriculture and rural development, extension agents and producers' organizations have a decisive role to play in addressing the root causes. They have access to rural communities and expertise in addressing issues related to agricultural production and value chains. They can promote improved technologies, practices, and agriculture-related education. In short, they can make agricultural livelihoods safer, more productive and resilient, so that rural families and agriculture are not dependent on child labour.

**Bringing agricultural stakeholders on-board is key to achieving SDG target 8.7.**

## Agriculture is by far the greatest employer of both girls and boys in child labour.

SECTORAL COMPOSITION OF CHILD LABOUR, PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION, 5-17 YEARS AGE RANGE, BY SEX



### Data source

ILO, 2017, Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016, [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_575499.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf)

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CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

# The role of **Agriculture-Related Ministries** in ending child labour

**Governments are responsible for making sure that measures to eliminate child labour, and to protect and provide for children, are fully integrated into national policies and programmes.**

This must happen in all portfolios, from labour, agriculture and fisheries, to rural development, education, social services, health and justice. The protection of children and their well-being should be part of all actions of government. Ministries of finance and planning also need to be part of the process. Funds must be made available to allow policies to be put into action.





## What is the role of agriculture-related ministries?

Ministries of agriculture can integrate the importance of preventing child labour in their policies and promote greater synergies with labour and social policies. They also have a specific role to play in putting in place the framework in which all other players can work towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture. This is by addressing some of its root causes: rural poverty, family dependence on child labour, low school attendance of rural children, and the seasonality and vulnerability of family income, for example to environmental shocks and price fluctuations combined with limited social protection in agriculture. Ministries of agriculture have unparalleled reach into remote areas where rural families look to them for advice and support.

*In many countries, there is not just one 'ministry of agriculture'. This wide portfolio is often separated into ministries focusing on areas such as fisheries, livestock, forestry, crops, irrigation, food security, rural development or cooperatives.*

The majority of rural households in developing countries are engaged in agricultural activities. Sustainable agriculture and value chain development initiatives can be the bedrock to increase rural families' income and food supply and can provide more work opportunities for young people and adults addressing some of the root causes of child labour. Building the skills of those working in agriculture also increases productivity and can contribute to higher incomes and less reliance on children's work. By explicitly taking into account child labour concerns, agricultural and rural development strategies can avoid unintended negative consequences and maximize positive impact.

Ministries of agriculture frequently also monitor quality standards, help establish new markets for agricultural produce, provide subsidies for selected commodities, support improved rural infrastructure, and undertake a range of initiatives designed to guarantee food security and increase commercialization.

*Ministries of agriculture have a pivotal role to play in reducing rural poverty - the principal factor pushing children into child labour - and in reducing the demand for child labour, especially in family farming.*

## What action can ministries of agriculture take to increase their impact on child labour?

At a policy level, agriculture-related ministries can contribute to ensuring that child labour in agriculture, and the challenge of providing decent work for young people who have reached the legal age for work, are integrated into all policies and plans related to development of the agricultural sector.

Agriculture-related ministries traditionally contribute to providing extension services and also provide an oversight role of public and private providers, ensuring for example that extension services promote growth in the agricultural sector but do not impact negatively on the environment. Ministries can ensure that extension services also take into account any positive or negative impact on child labour, by mainstreaming this concern into strategies and practice.

Agricultural policies and programmes can have significant impact on the lives of rural communities and the potential to reduce child labour in agriculture when well-designed. For example, irrigation programmes can take into account other uses of water – for livestock and domestic consumption – and can reduce child labour related to watering animals and collection of water for household use. Facilitating access to simple agricultural technologies can also help reduce the work burden that leads to demand for child labour.

*Agriculture-related ministries play a central role in building resilience and protecting household livelihoods in times of crisis.*

Agriculture-related ministries play a central role in times of crisis, protecting household livelihoods, for example by taking steps to ensure that children and families, especially the poor and those in rural communities, can withstand the shocks of natural and man-made emergencies, such as drought and crop failure, or conflict. For example, ministries can build household resilience through diversification, more resilient crop or livestock varieties, weather insurance, social protection, food chain crises prevention systems, and disaster risk reduction. Again, child labour concerns should be mainstreamed into these activities so that approaches taken are child-friendly and contribute to eliminating child labour.



## What can agricultural ministries contribute to National Action Plans on child labour?

Agriculture-related ministries can play a vital role during the development and the implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) relating to child labour. Often the development of such plans is led by the Ministry of Labour, but with consultation among different ministries, with employers' and workers' organizations and with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies. Each of these will contribute taking into account their specific strengths and expertise, focusing on those parts of the action plan that are most appropriate for them. The involvement of agriculture-related ministries allows their specific expertise to be built into both the development and the implementation.

National Action Plans ideally include wide-ranging actions to reduce the vulnerability of children who might enter child labour. This can include work to strengthen their families and communities, to regulate and monitor possible workplaces (including farms and fisheries), and to work with producers', employers' and workers' organizations to build sectors that are robust and less likely to be open to the temptation of taking on unpaid or exploitable workers, including children. They usually also include data collection and analysis, and take into account the needs of both boys and girls.

Agriculture-related ministries can see child labour through an 'agriculture lens', ensuring that the particularities of child labour in agriculture are taken into account in the plan. They can make sure that the informal and small-scale farming or fishing enterprises, newer forms of agriculture such as fish farms, forestry and occupations that support agriculture such as collecting manure are not overlooked. They can also ensure that the activities planned include rural and remote areas, and target isolated and vulnerable families as well as communities.

Agriculture-related ministries also have a specific role to play in how the plans address youth under- or unemployment, particularly in agriculture. Taking a longer-term approach to child labour that looks to the child's decent working future is crucial to ensuring both the child's well-being and the development of her/his family and community.

If National Action Plans, or indeed any national strategy to eliminate child labour in agriculture is to succeed,

then there has to be coordination among ministries and between government and others who work to end child labour and strengthen the agricultural sector. Agricultural, labour and education policies should be coherent. Child labour concerns, as well as decent employment for young people of working age, should be fully integrated into agriculture policies and development plans. International agencies such as FAO have an important role to play in facilitating and strengthening such collaboration. FAO and the ILO, for example, work together to generate information to inform government policies and strategies, and to provide training for governmental (and non-governmental) actors.

### EXAMPLE



**In some countries, action plans have been developed to specifically address child labour in agriculture, in support of the overarching NAP. In Cambodia, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries coordinated the development of a plan to address child labour in fisheries, and in Mali there is a 'roadmap' on child labour in agriculture.**

## What do agricultural ministries have to offer to education in rural areas?

An important step to ensure that children do not enter premature labour in agriculture is to make sure that relevant, accessible and free education is available for children in rural areas, including girls. 'Relevant' means that children and families see that the education children receive will lead to better work prospects and prepare them for a healthy, happy and financially sound future. 'Accessible' addresses issues that are of real concern in rural areas: for example, how children, especially girls, travel to school safely and in reasonable time, and how schools cater to all children, including those with disabilities. 'Free' means just that: no charge and no hidden costs (for example charges for heating or supplies).

Agricultural stakeholders have an important role to play in relation to education since, for education and training to be seen as relevant to agricultural families, it must provide the technical understanding and

experience that children need to become more skilled workers. The provision of agriculture-related vocational education and the promotion of apprenticeships in agriculture-related sectors are two ways of contributing directly both to reducing child labour and promoting youth employment.

The Ministry of agriculture has a particularly important role to play in ensuring that labour and education policies include provision of appropriate training and employment opportunities for young people working in agriculture or looking to find alternative decent work. Agriculture-related ministries and ministries of labour, rural development, education and training, and other appropriate ministries should collaborate to ensure that plans are comprehensive and that the needs of children in rural areas, on family smallholdings or otherwise vulnerable to entering child labour in agriculture, are mainstreamed into policy and plans.

Agriculture-related ministries can also be involved in supporting and promoting such initiatives as school feeding programmes, so that families have an incentive to send children to school. This might also include programmes to purchase provisions for school feeding initiatives from poor farmers or producers.

*Agricultural stakeholders can help ensure education and training is relevant and attractive to the needs of agricultural families.*

## How can agricultural ministries help to raise awareness?

By effectively mainstreaming the importance of child labour prevention in agricultural policies and programmes, ministries of agriculture can increase awareness in agricultural communities and family enterprises. This can help where there is a tradition of involving children in agricultural work and a lack of awareness of hazards and the risks of child labour.

Ministries of agriculture can run or support information campaigns to help families understand the importance of education and the risks of child labour. Information campaigns help families and whole communities to better understand why child labour in agriculture is not good for children, the family or the community. They can lead to changes in behaviour that work

in the interests not only of children but also of the community. Campaigns must be targeted to take into account the most common ways of sharing information in a community. In some instances, this may involve mobilizing community and religious leaders, in others mass media campaigns may be more effective.

*Ministries of agriculture can share key messages on child labour through rural radio, farmer field schools and extension services.*

## How can agriculture-related ministries promote youth employment?

When children reach the legal age for work, government can play a role in providing (or supporting others to provide) vocational training to ensure that 15 to 17 year-olds are trained to work safely. Promoting career paths in agriculture, fisheries, livestock and horticulture and training young people to take such paths go some way to encouraging them to stay on the land.

Encouragement, however, is not enough. Agriculture-related ministries have an important task in ensuring that barriers to young people accessing decent work in agriculture are taken down. For example, ministries can work to dismantle regulatory hurdles that restrict access to loans and financial services for young people. Supporting mobile and school banking programmes can also contribute to young people's starting their working life on a sounder financial footing and potentially setting up on their own.

Other hurdles that young people of working age may have to overcome include training courses that have stringent entry requirements, such as access to computers or Internet that is not available in remote rural areas, or locations for courses that require unrealistic distances to be travelled. Some training may require higher levels of education or language ability than are attainable by rural children with limited schooling. Agriculture-related ministries can work with suppliers of education and training, and collaborate with ministries of education and training, to take into account the specific needs of young people looking to find decent work in agriculture.



CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

# How agricultural extension agents can help end child labour

**Agricultural extension agents are on the frontline, interacting with farmers, fishers and livestock raisers on a daily basis.** They address some of the root causes of child labour in agriculture – such as rural poverty, dependence on unpaid family labour, and exposure to hazards – by supporting shifts to improved practices and technologies. With access to families working in remote, rural communities, they also have an important role to play in information sharing and behavioural change.



## What are agricultural extension agents?

Extension activities are widespread throughout the developing world and most governments have set up formal, structured extension services to run extension programmes and projects. While agriculture-related ministries have long provided extension services, this task is now also undertaken by a range of service providers. Organizations representing producers, workers and employers, as well as NGOs and even private companies may also offer activities that are commonly included in the term 'extension services'.

## What do agricultural extension agents do?

Agricultural extension services support farmers and other rural actors to improve their livelihoods and well-being. Typically, extension services support

### EXAMPLE



In Malawi, the Department of Agricultural Extension Services within the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development initiated a nation-wide campaign against child labour in agriculture. First, they included child labour-related messages in their regular extension materials. Then they developed a series of leaflets and posters specifically on eliminating child labour that were distributed through district agricultural offices across the country. In parallel, the ministries extension services developed a documentary on child labour in agriculture. Using a mobile van, they screened the film in remote villages across the country.

The tours targeted agricultural sectors such as tea, coffee, fisheries and cattle-herding, among others. The tour dates were announced in advance through local radio channels. More than **10,000 rural women, men and youth** viewed the documentary and debated it afterwards with extension agents. Representatives from a number of the villages where the video was screened pledged to raise the issue of child labour in the local council meetings and to adopt local by-laws as a deterrent for the use of children in tasks that are unsuitable to their age. Before the campaign, the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture built capacity of extension agents in district agricultural offices across the country in collaboration with the ministries of agriculture, labour and social affairs.

improved understanding, techniques and infrastructure for agricultural families and communities. They can help families generate more income by improving production and storage practices and increasing access to markets. They increase profits as well as resilience, by supporting sound management of resources and the environment. Extension agents facilitate access to information and technology and provide assistance in developing organizational and management skills to more effectively run agricultural enterprises.

Extension agents play an important support role to those working in agriculture, because much of the work is done on small family farms, in small fishing operations or in remote forests, where farmers, foresters, livestock herders and fisher folk work in isolation. They help isolated producers to make changes in their businesses and behaviour to break out of poverty and improve their daily lives. They also gather information from farmers, fisher folk, livestock owners and others involved in the daily realities of agricultural life, and feed this information back to inform research on the challenges and priorities of the agricultural sectors. The result is the kind of knowledge and understanding that leads to better agricultural policy, improved practices and more effective action.

## How can agricultural extension agents contribute to reducing child labour in agriculture?

Agricultural extension agents have a key role to play in addressing the root causes of child labour. Research shows that most children in child labour are not in a third-party relationship with an employer but work in family enterprises. This means that creating an economic environment in which families do not feel it necessary to put a child to work, and appreciate the long-term advisability of sending a child to school, is crucial to reducing child labour.

Extension services are extremely important to efforts to eliminate child labour in agriculture because, even when their actions are not child labour-specific, they address the context in which child labour occurs, by promoting rural development and by addressing poverty and the lack of decent employment opportunities for young people in rural areas.

Extension agents make information available that helps agricultural families and communities improve productivity and reduce food loss, thereby improving



incomes and providing the means to send their children to school. They also increase their resilience by supporting animal health and the sustainable management of natural resources that agriculture depends on, such as soil and fish stocks, and the ability of farmers and fishers to adapt to changing environments. This makes them less vulnerable to shocks that would have otherwise led to child labour, so they can keep their children in school.

Extension services help agricultural enterprises, large and small, to become more effective, efficient and resilient, reducing the likelihood that families might use child labour as a coping strategy. Ultimately, they underpin enhanced agricultural development and contribute to building an environment in which families and communities are less dependent on cheap labour and so are less likely to put their children to work.

### What specific actions can they take on child labour in agriculture?

Agricultural extension agents have an important role to play in information sharing and the identification of alternative practices. Because they work across the country, they are able to reach even remote rural and nomadic communities. Beyond sharing information on the law, hazards, and education, they have a crucial role to play in helping producers identify alternatives. They can help families see a way in which they can change their practices or technologies to no longer rely on child labour. Where these changes require

additional resources, they can share this information with government authorities and private sector actors who can improve access. Where additional support to children is needed, they can provide referrals to gain support from social services.

It is also clearly important to address family-focused child labour in agriculture in middle- and high-income countries. Here, despite robust economic conditions, farming families may simply look upon children working from an early age as traditional and harmless. Extension agents can help share information to demonstrate to agricultural families in developing and developed countries alike that, while children might lend a 'helping hand', they should not be put to work prematurely and should go to school.

***As trusted information providers, agricultural extension agents are able to access even family farms, and can provide advice on how to reduce child labour, developing solutions together with farmers.***

## How can they prevent hazardous work and promote decent work for rural youth?

Extension services can help smallholders and fisher folk to understand hazards and risks that they and their workers/family members are exposed to, and how to protect children from exposure. They can support shifts to reduce hazard where possible, for example by using less toxic substances and shifting to safer agricultural practices. This might relate to the use of non-toxic pesticides, proper maintenance and use of equipment (including where it requires appropriate training), dangers inherent in some practices such as deep-sea diving and dynamite fishing, and generally safe working conditions.

They can help producers understand which tasks children should not be engaged in, and how to manage the activities so that children of working age are not exposed to the hazards in their other tasks. Promoting safety through better understanding is important so that children who reach the legal working age can find decent, safe work in the agriculture sector.

More broadly, extension services may aim to increase decent youth employment in agriculture, for example by the development and support of vocational training and apprenticeships. They may include occupational health

and safety promotion, awareness raising and campaigns to encourage young people to see agricultural work as a viable employment option. Increasing the capacities of young people who have reached the minimum legal working age of 15 and supporting them in achieving decent work can help prevent them from falling into the worst forms of child labour.

*Agricultural extension agents can support shifts to safer technologies and practices, reducing hazardous work for children of legal working age.*

## Can extension support organizations to amplify impact?

Some extension services are directed at helping farmers to organize themselves as both workers and producers, in less or more formal cooperatives or unionized structures. This strengthens the voice of smaller farmers and enhances their bargaining power. As these structures develop, they may themselves become providers of extension services. Agricultural cooperatives, for example, may gather and share information on a new seed, or on new markets for fish, or may undertake awareness-raising projects on child labour and implementing safer practices to reduce hazardous work.

### EXAMPLE



**FAO has developed the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) approach**, which recognizes that, in many developing countries, standard education and available vocational training do not equip young people in rural areas with the knowledge and skills they need to take up decent employment opportunities. Education and training not tailored to the needs of young people in rural areas also limit their ability to pursue viable alternatives, including starting their own rural enterprises. JFFLS trains vulnerable young people in the agricultural, business and life skills they need to earn a decent living, and to become more productive and active members of their communities. It includes a specific module on child labour, recognizing that these young agricultural workers may one day become employers themselves. Guided by a facilitator, JFFLS participants learn about agricultural and business topics and techniques, and then link them to

more general life lessons and skills. For example, students may learn about protecting their crops from diseases, and then use this as a basis for learning about how to protect themselves from diseases that can threaten their livelihood and well-being. There is also a specific module on child labour prevention and protection from hazardous work. The flexible JFFLS approach allows the specific content of the JFFLS training to be developed by the facilitator according to local needs.

For younger JFFLS can be integrated into school curriculum or extra-curricular activities. For young people of legal working age, JFFLS can also be run as junior versions of the Farmer Field Schools often run by ministries of agriculture, other extension services, and producers' organizations, together with local government authorities to help youth get the support they need after training.

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CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

# The role of agricultural producers' organizations in addressing child labour

Agricultural producers work part or full time in large-, medium- or small-scale agriculture. They are a diverse group and include self-employed smallholders and family farmers, pastoralists, artisanal fishers, landless people, women and indigenous peoples. Both individually and through their organizations, producers can help prevent and reduce child labour in agriculture.





## What are agricultural producers' organizations?

Producers' organizations are membership-based organizations or federations of organizations with elected leaders accountable to their constituents. They take on various forms such as cooperatives, associations and societies. Producers' organizations represent their members to chambers of agriculture, commerce and trade. They may be commodity-specific or bring together producers across commodities, such as national producers' unions.



## What do they do?

Producers' organizations have varying purposes and functions at different levels, be it local, regional or national, and provide a range of services to members: they improve access to information, input and output markets and management of natural resources. They also work on such matters as pricing, the management of import/export of agricultural products, methods for increasing production as well as access to services including credit, marketing and local processing. In this way, they support their members to successfully engage in agricultural value chains.

Producers' organization may also advocate for producers' interests and represent producers in policy dialogue.

## How can agricultural producers' organizations contribute to reducing child labour in agriculture?

Producers' organizations can contribute to developing sustainable agriculture and building resilience in the sector, reducing the vulnerability of agricultural families and communities. When producers' organizations are successful in making it more profitable and sustainable for adults to work in agriculture, then it is more likely that their children will go to school and not be used as labour.

Producers' organizations are able to provide or support a range of specific services that contribute to ending the dependence of family farms and enterprises on child labour. These include training to improve the skills of adult workers in order to increase their efficiency and promoting sustainable and appropriate technologies and alternative practices that improve safety and productivity. Organizations can also help their members to have better access to inputs and credit – for example, through the development of community savings and credit unions – in order to help agricultural families and communities to better manage their resources and to grow in self-sufficiency. As efficiency and productivity increase, family enterprises are more likely to be able to employ adults in decent work and end their dependency on child labour.



*Producers' organization can provide the necessary support for farmers to adopt practices or technologies that reduce their dependence on child labour and provide decent employment opportunities for youth.*

## What specific actions can they take to address child labour?

Producers' organizations have an important role to play in identifying the use of child labour in the supply chain. They have outreach to rural and remote family enterprises, and can help to ensure that small farmers are not exploiting child labour, including in their own families. Where child labour is 'invisible', such monitoring can make it more visible.

Producer organizations can encourage behaviour change through awareness campaigns among their constituents to prevent child labour. These might focus, for example, on codes of conduct, or national laws and regulations relating to children's economic activity (for example the minimum age for work). Grassroots campaigns can take many forms, from rural radio and other mass media promotions to community-level activities labour contractors.

Producers' organizations can mainstream child labour concerns in their policies and strategies. For example, small-scale community fisheries organizations in Cambodia included action against child labour as part of the sustainable management of small-scale fisheries in the guidelines: "Making a Brighter Future for Small-scale Fisheries through Community Fisheries in Cambodia".

### EXAMPLE →

In 2002, the Association of Sugarcane Producers in El Salvador signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to eradicate child labour in sugarcane production. The MoU looked at developing policies that mainstreamed child labour concerns. It included specific actions in awareness raising, and addressed capacity building and improving educational services and skills training. An important element of the MoU focused on introducing community-based child labour monitoring, involving families and communities in efforts to reduce child labour.



## How can they prevent hazardous work and promote decent work for rural youth?

Producers' organizations also have a specific task in relation to ensuring decent work for young workers who have reached the legal age of employment but are under 18. By informing their members on how to avoid hazardous work and improve occupational safety and health, this can ensure that 15 to 17 year-olds are more likely to be in decent work and not in child labour. Campaigns and training can help farmers, workers and rural communities to understand and reduce risk – for example by reducing the use of pesticides and adopting safe practices around machinery.

Producers' organizations can also work with government and workers' associations to regularly review hazard lists - defining jobs, activities and working conditions prohibited for children under the age of 18.

Producers' organization can take further measures to promote decent youth employment in agricultural production. They can organize and provide training and career opportunities, monitor decent work conditions, and help in practical matters such as with the negotiation of work contracts. They can also support access to productive resources like land and inputs and mentor young agripreneurs. They can encourage youth to join or establish youth branches within the broader organization to help them get their voices heard and influence policy.

### EXAMPLE →

The Kenya National Farmer's Federation (KENAFF) continuously works to address child labour within their constituencies through farmer empowerment, lobbying and advocacy along with rights-based education. The federation empowers farmers through capacity development activities and the promotion of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) emphatic on not engaging children in child labour. Its staff and members work with local authorities to report cases of children not going to school. Moreover, KENAFF trains all its members on rights-based approaches, including the use of training manuals where the rights of children are emphasized.



### EXAMPLE →

In Niger, the National Chambers of Agriculture Network (RECA) developed a practical guide to reduce hazardous work. The guide, which was developed through a participatory approach, identifies tasks typically performed by children in family and small-scale farming and livestock raising in Niger and provides concrete suggestions for reducing hazardous work.

## How can organization amplify impact?

Producers' organizations that have a strong, collective, representative voice are more likely to be successful in collective bargaining negotiations with employers and in product price talks. Such success contributes to improving the incomes of adult workers and producers. A strong voice also helps producers' organizations to influence public policy, legislation and regulation. In this regard, producers' organizations are able to ensure that the importance of eliminating child labour in agriculture is included in national, sectoral and district policies and plans.

### EXAMPLE →

In September 2017, rural workers' trade unions and small producers' organizations from 14 African countries came together with the support of the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture and issued a Call for Action and a commitment to eradicating child labour in agriculture.

[www.fao.org/rural-employment](http://www.fao.org/rural-employment) + [www.fao.org/childlabouragriculture](http://www.fao.org/childlabouragriculture)  
[decent-work@fao.org](mailto:decent-work@fao.org)



**Agricultural stakeholders have a crucial role to play in ending child labour, with the vast majority of child labour worldwide concentrated in the agricultural sector.**

**Making progress in achieving SDG 8.7 on eliminating child and forced labour requires a breakthrough in agriculture.**

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