

CSM contributions to CFS Meeting of Informal Working Group on CFS and COVID-19, 2 July:

Preparation of a CFS Virtual event on resilient food chains and workers' health and working condition

- We welcome the opportunity to contribute with our preliminary thoughts and suggestions to this important initiative for a virtual event focusing on the situations of workers in the food chain in the context of the pandemic.
- The situation of the **food workers should be at the center of this webinar. Workers should be definitively in the title of this CFS event.** This pandemic brought a public and global recognition that food workers are essential workers. This role was never taken into such high consideration before. Finally, the contributions of food and agricultural workers - and also the small-scale food producers and family farmers, women and men, from indigenous peoples, pastoralists and fisherfolks – are understood to be indispensable. We believe our equal rights are also essential to this CFS event.
- We suggest **including the ILO and the relevant ILO Conventions** in the discussion of this Webinar.
- The **ILO has adopted a policy brief at the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic with a series of instruments and tools that provide a valuable framework for emergency response measures** and the longer-term development of the agricultural sector on a sustainable basis. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/briefingnote/wcms_742023.pdf.
- ILO has also issued guidance for safe, healthy, return to work during COVID-19 https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_745568/lang--en/index.htm accompanied by 10 point Practical Guidance action checklist. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_745541/lang--en/index.htm
- **Meat processing:** Meat processing plants are labour intensive. Most workers in a plant stand side by side in close proximity in situations where the coronavirus can easily spread from worker to worker. This is key to understanding why meat processing plants have become hotspots for transmitting the coronavirus and for people becoming infected with COVID-19. On a plant can work from hundreds and or up to 4-5000 workers. Enforcing physical distancing of 2 meters, the use of PPE, the establishment of protective shields, slowing production lines and staggering starting times and breaks can save lives.
- There are cases of infected workers also in agriculture. Employers are responsible to make the workplaces safe and governments have obligations to put in place laws and regulations to protect workers health and life and to avoid other workplaces become the hotspots for transmitting the coronavirus.
 - Therefore, there is an urgent need for:
 - National enforceable health and safety standards at workplace
 - Labour Inspection to ensure the safety standards are enforced at the workplace
 - Cover all workers in food production with Labour Laws, including the migrant workers as they make up a high number of the workforce. Ensure paid sick leave to all.

- ILO Conventions are key to make improvement on health and safety in food production:
 - The **Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)**, in conjunction with other relevant instruments, sets out a series of principles for the establishment, functioning and organization of the system of inspection in agriculture, including recruitment and the powers and obligations of labour inspectors.
 - The **Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184)**, and its accompanying Recommendation No. 192, set out principles for the formulation and implementation of a coherent national policy on safety and health in agriculture.

- IUF and other organizations participating in the CSM have been extremely engaged in helping to protect workers' rights and worker's health and working condition during the pandemic, and we have published a list of COVID-19 demands to protect our members working in food supply chain worldwide, with a particular attention for women's rights and gender equality.

- Attention should be given to the **agricultural and food workers in general**, as their situation is alarming around the world. **When we talk about food chains, we cannot speak only about food and meat industries. Agricultural workers** in the fields are also suffering extreme violations of their rights and damage to their health. Additionally, **smallholder and family farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolks and indigenous peoples** are extremely important actors for providing food to people and communities worldwide. Covid-19 has shown once again that local food systems, built on short circuits and territorial markets, have been more resilient, sustainable, and more equitable than global food chains.

- **Concerning meat processing plants**, the situation of working conditions is highly problematic in many countries, including Germany, the USA and others. People work back-to-back, often without basic labour rights. The discussions underway now in Germany is to eliminate the role of employment agencies, which treated the migrant workers from Eastern Europe very badly. It must be made clear that it is the final employers who are responsible for ensuring decent working and living conditions.

- The problems in the meat processing plants are not problems that can be solved simply by introducing improved food safety standards or health protocols. The scope of this CFS Workshop should be broader. There must be **major changes in the model of production itself**. Employment standards, as defined by ILO, must be at the centre of these radical changes. Workers' rights must be effectively protected, and employers must respect them and be held accountable to them.

- **Migrant workers and women workers** should be at the center. Many of them are obliged to work below the basic standards that need to be applied to ensure adequate protection as elementary measure to protect lives. This includes access to protective equipment, access to proper housing, access to water and adequate sanitation facilities. These standards are not new. They exist and hence will need strong cooperation between ILO, WHO and FAO.

- In addition to the important ILO references, we need to also refer to CFS instruments which are key references for the discussions of this event - the **CFS Policy recommendations on Livestock and Sustainable Agricultural Development and on Connecting Smallholders to markets**; also, the **Declaration of the Rights of Peasants and Other People Living in the**

Rural Areas brings these perspectives together: the rights of peasants and food producers, as well as of waged workers and migrant workers.

- One sector that is heavily affected by Covid-19, is the **informal sector in the urban areas**. These workers already had very bad working conditions. Now they have lost their jobs, their income, they are left behind without any social protection, and no health insurance. Social protection and health are human rights. Policies that ensure a basic income to all would be of great importance.
- We believe that **these elements should be incorporated in the outline of the event and discussions, which should mirror how food workers in their different dimensions are affected by the COVID-19 and show the pathways by which their rights and working conditions, and living conditions can be better protected in the future.**
- As time for preparation of today was very tight, we will further consult with our constituencies and organizations, and **will come back with concrete nominations** of representatives of the workers and small-scale food producers who should be on the panel of the event. We also **will make suggestions for other panellists**, including the involvement of ILO or other UN representatives into the panel and the moderation of the event.
- We can agree with the date proposed for **21 July** and suggest that the timing considers including more participation from different time zones.