



Concept note for a thematic session on

Child Labour in Agriculture

at the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, Durban, South Africa

Thursday 19 May 2022, 12.30 – 14.15

The Background

Agriculture continues to be the main employer of children, accounting for 70 percent of child labour worldwide. According to the 2020 Global Estimates, an additional four million children were drawn into child labour in agriculture over the 2016-2020 period. As a result, an estimated 112 million boys and girls are now working in child labour situations in the agricultural sector, including crop farming, fisheries and aquaculture, livestock, and forestry.

Agriculture provides livelihoods and contributes to the food security and nutrition of millions of people around the globe. Nonetheless, household poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition remain widespread in rural areas. Working arrangements in agriculture are often informal, casual or seasonal and hazardous in nature, frequently leaving rural workers without opportunities to access decent work. In addition, the majority of farmers, worldwide, are small-scale and family-based producers and operators with poor access to adequate information, knowledge, markets, finance and productive inputs, and social protection. Furthermore, the enjoyment of their human rights, labour rights and tenure rights is rarely ensured. These challenges are exacerbated for rural women and girls.

As a result, many small-scale producers and operators are trapped in a vicious circle of low productivity and unstable incomes that make them more prone to depend on family labour and consequently child labour as a survival strategy. These producers and workers, their families and communities are also overexposed and vulnerable to the impacts of economic, social, and natural shocks, even more in the context of colliding crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and conflicts. The key drivers of child labour in rural areas include poverty, lack of access to quality education and relevant curricula, health services, job skills training and decent work opportunities, and markets. Without the appropriate policies, support and investments to provide access to these rights and better working conditions, it is challenging to break the vicious cycle of poverty and child labour in agriculture.

These drivers are as multifaceted as agriculture itself, which makes child labour in agriculture an issue that requires cross-sectoral measures. Hence, it is important to integrate child labour prevention considerations not only in agriculture and labour policies and programmes but also in policies related to education, social protection and health amongst other. In addition, measures to end and prevent child labour need to be adapted to contexts and sub-sectors (crop farming, fisheries and aquaculture, livestock, forestry). Addressing the issue thus requires a comprehensive approach that involves diverse agricultural actors in national, regional and global efforts. Producer organizations, agriculture



trade unions, agriculture extension agents, ministries of agriculture, international financing institutions and development partners have a decisive role to play in addressing the root causes of child labour in agriculture in a coordinated and effective way. Without their commitment, increased collaboration, and a breakthrough in agriculture, SDG target 8.7 will not be reached.

Building on the momentum created in 2021 by the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour (IYECL) and the solutions presented at the FAO's Global Solutions Forum: Acting Together to End Child Labour in Agriculture, the high-level thematic panel will present solutions, renew commitments from agricultural actors and call for more and effective cross-sectoral collaboration and targeted investments.

Issues to be addressed

To respond to these challenges and end child labour in agriculture, it is clear that agricultural stakeholders and actors in rural areas need to be considered and involved. The high-level panel on agriculture will bring together local, national, regional and global actors who are contributing to addressing child labour in agriculture in different sub-sectors. The panellists will share and discuss game-changing solutions and provide their insights on the following:

- What is needed to enable the contribution of agricultural actors to end child labour through national processes?
- In the short term, what immediate actions shall agricultural actors prioritize to address the root causes of child labour in agriculture (rural poverty, food insecurity, barriers to decent youth employment, vulnerability to economic and climate-related shocks, lack of social protection and barriers to free quality education)?
- In the medium-long term, what actions can agricultural actors take to make sustainable and resilient agrifood systems a driver to end child labour?

