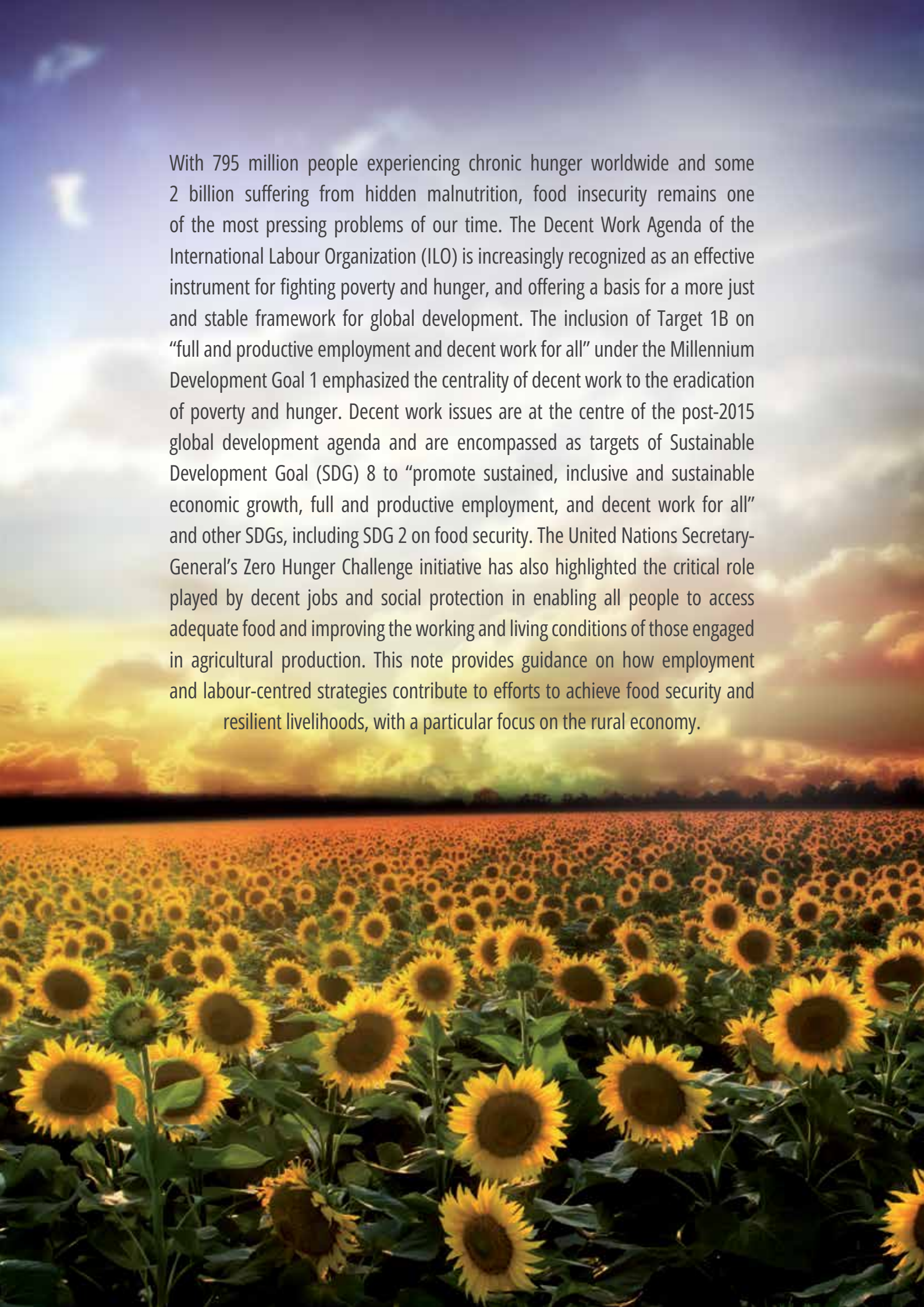




International
Labour
Office

Decent Work for Food Security and Resilient Rural Livelihoods

**DECENT WORK IN THE RURAL ECONOMY
POLICY GUIDANCE NOTES**

A vast field of sunflowers stretches towards the horizon under a dramatic, cloudy sky at sunset or sunrise. The sunflowers are in full bloom, with bright yellow petals and dark brown centers. The sky is filled with soft, golden light, with some darker clouds catching the low sun. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

With 795 million people experiencing chronic hunger worldwide and some 2 billion suffering from hidden malnutrition, food insecurity remains one of the most pressing problems of our time. The Decent Work Agenda of the International Labour Organization (ILO) is increasingly recognized as an effective instrument for fighting poverty and hunger, and offering a basis for a more just and stable framework for global development. The inclusion of Target 1B on “full and productive employment and decent work for all” under the Millennium Development Goal 1 emphasized the centrality of decent work to the eradication of poverty and hunger. Decent work issues are at the centre of the post-2015 global development agenda and are encompassed as targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all” and other SDGs, including SDG 2 on food security. The United Nations Secretary-General’s Zero Hunger Challenge initiative has also highlighted the critical role played by decent jobs and social protection in enabling all people to access adequate food and improving the working and living conditions of those engaged in agricultural production. This note provides guidance on how employment and labour-centred strategies contribute to efforts to achieve food security and resilient livelihoods, with a particular focus on the rural economy.

1. Rationale and justification

With 795 million people experiencing chronic hunger worldwide and some 2 billion suffering from micronutrient deficiencies (hidden malnutrition), food insecurity remains one of the most pressing problems of our time.¹

The dramatic rise in food prices of 2006-08² and the economic downturn that ensued placed a serious strain on many poor households around the globe, adversely affecting their employment and incomes, a large part of which is often spent on food. The impact of volatile food prices was greatest in low-income countries with meagre food stocks, where in 2007 and 2008, food price spikes pushed an estimated 105 million people below the USD1.25 poverty line.³ ILO analysis confirms the negative poverty effect associated with higher food prices, demonstrating that a further 30 per cent rise in food prices may have increased poverty rates by 3 per cent in countries with chronic food shortages, such as Bangladesh or Malawi. To maintain their living standards, low-paid workers in these countries would have to find one week of additional employment every month.⁴ In contrast, the gains from higher food prices hardly benefit small-scale farmers or producers, but accrue mainly to high-income

groups, in particular intermediaries and operators in financial markets. Furthermore, price volatility deters small agricultural producers from making investments that could enhance their productivity and yields, thus negatively affecting production and wasting decent work opportunities.⁵

Food security is causally linked to economic growth and employment; and, the linkages are bidirectional and mutually reinforcing.⁶ The harmful impact of malnutrition on human capital, productivity and growth is increasingly well known. Poor diet of workers may cost countries up to 20 per cent in productivity loss, either due to undernutrition or the excess weight and obesity afflicting a significant number of people, mostly in industrialized economies but also in some developing countries.⁷ A study aimed at estimating the economic impact of child undernutrition in a number of African countries showed that the costs to health, education and productivity were as high as 3.7 billion USD in Egypt (equivalent to 1.9 per cent of GDP) and 4.7 billion USD in Ethiopia (16.5 per cent of GDP).⁸

¹ IFAD, FAO and WFP: *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015: Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: Taking stock of uneven progress*, Rome, 2015; IFPRI: *Global Hunger Index: The Challenge of Hidden Hunger*, Washington, DC, 2014.

² During the period between September 2006 and June 2008, international food prices almost doubled. The price index for all major foods rose by 78 per cent, with the indices for cereals and edible oils more than doubling. IFAD: *Rural Poverty Report 2011*, Rome, 2010.

³ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank: *Global Monitoring Report 2012: Food prices, Nutrition, and the Millennium Development Goals*, Washington, DC, 2012.

⁴ ILO: "Investing in food security as a driver of better jobs", in ILS: *World of Work Report 2011: Making Markets Work for Jobs*, Geneva, International Institute for Labour Studies, 2011, p. 76.

⁵ Ibid, p. 84.

⁶ FAO and OECD et al.: *Review of Opportunities for Economic Growth and Job Creation in relation to Food Security and Nutrition: Report to the G20 Development Working Group*, September 2014, pp. 4-5. The preparation of the report was led by FAO and OECD, with inputs from the ILO, IFAD, the World Bank Group, etc.

⁷ C. Wanjek: *Food at Work: Workplace solutions for malnutrition, obesity and chronic diseases*, Geneva, ILO, 2005.

⁸ African Union Commission et al.: *The Cost of Hunger in Africa: Social and Economic Impact of Child Undernutrition in Egypt, Ethiopia, Swaziland and Uganda*, Addis Ababa UNECA, 2014, p. 5. It has also been shown that childhood anaemia is associated with a 2.5 per cent drop in wages in adulthood. S. Horton and J. Ross, "The Economics of Iron Deficiency", in *Food Policy*, 2003 (28), pp. 51-75.

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To be effective in reducing food insecurity, economic growth needs to be inclusive, reaching the poor through increased employment opportunities and higher incomes. The evidence suggests that agricultural growth that is led by growth in labour productivity can have a particularly positive impact on food security, and therefore on the reduction of poverty and hunger.⁹ Growth in the agriculture sector not only positively impacts food security and resilience to food price volatility, including through greater output and lower prices, but also improves incomes and jobs in the farm sector and stimulates the creation and expansion of new non-farm income-generating activities in the rural economy.¹⁰ The economic success of many developing countries – for example, in South-East Asia – has been underpinned by pro-poor agricultural and rural development. There, changes in agricultural growth showed direct, significant association with poverty reduction in the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹ According to a World Bank study, every 1 per cent increase in agricultural income per capita reduces the number of people living in extreme poverty by 0.6 to 1.8 per cent.¹²

For poverty reduction and growth to be sustainable, agricultural growth is not enough. It needs to go hand-in-hand with structural transformation of poor countries' economies, which can only be achieved if it is underpinned by the accumulation of domestic capabilities. Capabilities reside in the particular

mix of knowledge, skills and competences of the labour force, enterprises and societies. The more complex and diversified the knowledge base, the more dynamic an economy can be to adopt more complex technologies, diversify into a wider range of products, and accelerate the speed of productive transformation and creation of good jobs.¹³

During the past few years, however, in many developing and emerging economies reallocation of workers from agriculture to higher value-added activities is occurring at a very low pace, and agricultural productivity growth remains low.¹⁴ In such a context, the focus on the agro-food sector – the promotion of decent work along agro-food value chains and investments in basic education and skills training that equip workers to improve (agricultural) productivity and start their own businesses – as well as the promotion of decent employment opportunities in other sectors, remain of critical importance to building resilient livelihoods.

This note provides guidance on how employment- and labour-centred strategies could contribute to efforts to achieve food security and resilient livelihoods, with a particular focus on the rural economy.

⁹ ILO: "Why Agriculture Still Matters" in *World Employment Report 2004-05*, Geneva, 2005.

¹⁰ Ibid.; E. Lee: "The Role of Agriculture in Developing Countries" (unpublished manuscript), Geneva, ILO, 2013; FAO and OECD et al., 2014, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5. It should also be noted that while positively impacting upon productivity, some sources of labour productivity growth can lead to employment reduction in agriculture, with adverse implications for poverty, especially in the short run. To minimize these effects, adequate social protection mechanisms must be in place, especially if other sectors are not able to absorb the surplus labour.

¹¹ D. Henley: "The Agrarian Roots of Industrial Growth: Rural Development in South-East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa," in *Development Policy Review*, 2012, Vol. 30 (s1), pp. 25-47.

¹² L.J. Christiaensen and L. Demery: *Down to Earth: Agriculture and Poverty in Africa*, Washington, DC, World Bank, 2007.

¹³ I. Nübler: *Industrial policies and capabilities for catching up: Frameworks and paradigms*, Geneva, ILO, 2011; I. Nübler: "A theory of capabilities for productive transformation: Learning to catch up" in Salazar-Xirinachs et al.: *Transforming economies: Making industrial policy work for growth, jobs and development*, Geneva, ILO, 2014.

¹⁴ ILO: *World Employment Social Outlook: The Changing Nature of Jobs*, Geneva, May 2015, p. 25.

2. Scope and definitions

The 1996 World Food Summit defined food security as existing “when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”. It is widely agreed that food security has four dimensions:

- (1) *Availability*, which refers to the availability of sufficient quantities of food of appropriate quality and depends on domestic production, imports and aid;
- (2) *Access to food*, which relates to the affordability and allocation of food, and is influenced by employment, income and poverty patterns;
- (3) *Utilization*, which encompasses the impact of such factors as diet, the economic empowerment of women, access to services, including water and sanitation facilities, health care and education, etc., and;
- (4) *Stability*, which relates to whether both physical and economic access to adequate food and proper utilization of it are able to take place on a continuous basis. In addition to chronic food insecurity, related to structural factors associated with poverty and low incomes, and related to the stability dimension are the concepts of seasonal food insecurity and temporary food insecurity. Seasonal food insecurity is associated with the occurrence of a predictable sequence of events, usually of limited duration, and seen as recurrent and transitory, whereas temporary food insecurity happens when people lose access to food as a result of a sudden shock such as conflict, economic crisis, natural disaster, or loss of employment or productivity.

Food security may also be defined from a nutritional perspective, which measures the prevalence of food security in terms of quantity of calories or energy, or quality in terms of dietary diversity. Nutrition and food security are often used in conjunction to highlight their complementarity and overlap in terms of policy response.

A multi-dimensional and complex objective, food security requires a comprehensive approach that addresses its multiple and overlapping drivers. As employment and labour dimensions are central to both food consumption and food production, the ILO has an important role to play in efforts aimed at tackling the challenge of food insecurity. Its comparative advantage is in facilitating the creation of full and productive employment and improving the quality of existing jobs, with a particular focus on the agro-food sector, extending social protection and promoting dialogue and effective implementation of relevant international labour standards in the rural economy.

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Target groups

Women

Rural economies face the problem of migration of labour in search of better jobs and incomes to urban areas, which are not capable of absorbing all rural workers. This pattern of migration from rural to urban areas has contributed to what has been termed the “feminization of agriculture”, particularly visible in Asia and Africa.¹⁵ At the aggregate level, women constitute 43 per cent of agricultural workers in the developing world, and their proportion in this sector is growing. Rural women produce 60 to 80 per cent of the food in developing countries.¹⁶

While women are increasingly expected to meet the bulk of food security needs of their households, alongside domestic and reproductive work, gender inequality continues to be a major cause and effect of poverty and hunger. Gender-based discrimination, prevalent in many parts of the world, is responsible for women’s limited access to capital, finance, and land rights. If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of hungry people in the world could be reduced by up to 150 million.¹⁷ Improving opportunities for women and strengthening their capacity to participate in decision-making at community level could have an important effect on increasing productivity and performances of small farms and enterprises, which would lead to increased income and stability of food security for rural households.

Youth and elderly

Young people (aged 15 to 24) – 85 per cent of whom live in developing countries and mostly in rural areas – account for a disproportionate share (23.5 per cent) of the working poor.¹⁸ They often face constraints in accessing productive assets. More educated on average than previous generations, today’s youth do not consider jobs in the agro-food sector an attractive option.¹⁹ An important objective of rural entrepreneurship and skills programmes should be to make the agro-food sector more attractive to young people – and other workers

in the rural economy – by improving infrastructure and access to services and providing inputs, expert advice and reliable market information.

Older people residing in rural areas are often excluded from social protection coverage and depend on agricultural activities for their livelihoods. Older people are particularly sensitive to disruptions in food availability and access. In developing social protection programmes for the rural economy, this group requires particular attention.

Smallholder farmers

Smallholders occupy an important position in the global agenda for food security due to their key role in agricultural production and as the most vulnerable segment of rural economies in the developing world. Some 80 per cent of rural livelihoods in developing countries are dependent on small-scale agriculture, and typically smallholders comprise the poorest households.²⁰ In the developing world, smallholder farmers produce close to 80 per cent of food, and manage an estimated 500 million farm units.²¹ Global initiatives and action plans that emerged in response to the 2007-08 food crisis, as well as the majority of technical assistance programmes, emphasize the need for action to support small-scale agriculture in order to build more resilient food systems. However, in the context of a changing global economy, a rural development strategy focusing exclusively on smallholders is unlikely to bring about success and may even hinder large-scale poverty reduction.²² Small-scale farms often lack access to the new technologies that help larger farms improve productivity and standardize and monitor their operations. Due to their limited purchasing power and access to credit, small farms often experience difficulties in accessing traded inputs such as seeds and feedstock – crucial elements for competitiveness in production – that are frequently controlled by multinational agribusinesses.²³ They also find it increasingly difficult to meet standards related to food quality, which require financial, informational and network resources, and, as a result, are forced to downgrade their activities or exit the market.²⁴ As global transport costs have fallen while infrastructure connecting urban centres and

¹⁵ ILO data reveals strong patterns of feminization of agriculture in Asia, especially in South Asia, where only 44.4 per cent of men were employed in agriculture in 2011 compared to 53.4 per cent in 2000, while 68.8 per cent of women were employed in agriculture in 2011, compared to 74.9 per cent in 2000. In this region, the percentage of men employed in the services sector is double that of women (32.5 against 15.9 per cent), according to ILO: *Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)*, Sixth Edition, Geneva, 2012.

¹⁶ ILO: *Promotion of rural employment for poverty reduction*, Report IV, ILC, 97th Session, Geneva, 2008.

¹⁷ FAO: *State of Food and Agriculture in the World: Women in Agriculture*, Rome, 2011.

¹⁸ ILO: *Global Employment Trends 2012: Preventing a deeper job crisis*, Geneva, 2012.

¹⁹ K. van der Geest: *Rural Youth Employment in Developing Countries: A Global View*, Rome, FAO, 2010.

²⁰ IFAD: *Rural Poverty Report 2011*, Rome, IFAD, 2010.

²¹ IFAD and UNEP: *Smallholders, food security, and the environment*, Rome, IFAD, 2013.

²² P. Collier and S. Dercon: “African Agriculture in 50 Years: Smallholders in a rapidly Changing World?”, in *World Development*, Vol. 63, 2014, pp. 92-101.

²³ E. Lee: op. cit.

²⁴ J. Lee et al.: “Global value chains and agrifood standards: Challenges and possibilities for smallholders in developing countries”, in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, vol. 109, no. 31 (July 31): 12326-12331 (Part of Special Feature on “Agriculture Development and Nutrition Security”).

remote rural areas often remains inadequate in developing countries, smallholders find it challenging to compete with imports.²⁵ While smallholders should receive a prominent place in rural development initiatives, successful strategies will require “a recognition that smallholders are heterogeneous in potential and that there is a scope for large-scale farmers as commercial enterprises, often in interaction with smaller-scale farmers using institutional frameworks that encourage vertical integration and scale economies in processing and marketing”.²⁶

Waged agricultural workers

The world’s half a billion waged agricultural workers, while helping to feed the world, often endure decent work deficits, and are unable to lift themselves and their families out of poverty and food insecurity.²⁷ In this context, the plantation sector requires particular attention. Plantations have long been organized to provide bulk agricultural commodities for export. In recent years, plantation systems have undergone extensive transformation and restructuring. They have become more integrated in the global economy, providing an important link between the rural and the national economy and global supply chains. As a result, these changes have provided both opportunities and challenges for the promotion of decent work for rural workers in plantations. As plantations are generally part of the formal economy, they should provide a more conducive environment for efforts to promote decent working conditions than agricultural activities in the informal economy, and improvements in work on plantations may have positive spillover effects for landless workers in the small farm sector. For example, strengthening labour inspection in the plantation sector may facilitate its extension into

the small farm sector, while increased unionization may positively impact the organization of workers engaged on small farms. The Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110) offers a mechanism for improving working conditions on plantations.

Tripartite constituents: Their roles and responsibilities

The ILO’s tripartite constituents have a unique role to play in promoting food security in rural areas where social dialogue and representative organizations are weak. Rural workers and producers’ organizations have played a key role in improving the bargaining power of agricultural workers vis-à-vis local authorities and contractors.²⁸ Employers’ organizations, representing farmers and producers across a range of sizes of farms and food production enterprises, are a key partner in developing effective laws and policies to promote sustainable food and agriculture.

Governments in a number of developing countries have the power to transform rural areas by improving infrastructure, in particular using employment-intensive methods, and public services, and encouraging the development of labour market institutions in rural areas. Legislative action from governments is required in countries where rural workers do not enjoy the same legal rights and social security coverage as their urban counterparts, to ensure freedom of association and access to social protection for all rural workers.

²⁵ E. Lee: op. cit.

²⁶ Collier and Dercon: op. cit., p. 93.

²⁷ FIAN International, IUF and MISEREOR: “*Harvesting Hunger: Plantation Workers and the Right to Food*”, Aachen, Heidelberg and Geneva, October 2014.

²⁸ ILO: *Learning from Catalysts of Rural Transformation*, Geneva, 2014.

3. The ILO's approach

The Decent Work Agenda is increasingly recognized as an effective instrument for fighting poverty and hunger, and offering a basis for a more just and stable framework for global development. The inclusion of Target 1B on “full and productive employment and decent work for all” under the Millennium Development Goal 1 emphasized the centrality of decent work to the eradication of poverty and hunger. Decent work issues are at the centre of the post-2015 global development agenda and are encompassed as targets of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 to “promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all” and other SDGs, including SDG 2 on food security. The United Nations Secretary-General’s Zero Hunger Challenge initiative, launched at Rio+20 in 2012, has also highlighted the critical role played by decent employment and social protection in enabling all people to access adequate food and improving the working and living conditions of those engaged in agricultural production. The important linkages between decent employment creation and food security have also been reflected in the work of G20. The G20 Food Security and Nutrition Framework endorsed at the 2014 Brisbane Summit established three multi-year objectives, one of which is *increasing incomes and quality employment in food systems*.²⁹

The ILO’s response to the challenge of food insecurity is rooted in its Decent Work Agenda and entails strategies and initiatives that focus on: the development and promotion of relevant international labour standards; the promotion of social dialogue, social protection and employment creation; capacity-building of constituents; and, technical cooperation projects targeting the agro-food sector and the rural economy at large.

Rights at Work and International Labour Standards

International labour standards are not only central to ensuring a rights-based approach to development, but also provide an enabling environment for improved productivity and performance.³⁰ Rural workers tend to be poorly protected by labour legislation due to the nature of their employment, the absence of a recognized employment status, or simply because law enforcement and compliance are ineffective in many remote areas. Building sustainable rural livelihoods would require paying special attention to the ratification of international labour standards and their effective implementation in rural areas. Among ILO instruments that have direct relevance to the agro-food sector are: Right of Association (Agriculture) Convention, 1921 (No. 11); Minimum Wage Fixing Machinery (Agriculture) Convention, 1951 (No. 99); and, Rural Workers’ Organisations Convention, 1975 (No. 141); the Plantations Convention, 1958 (No. 110); and the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184).

²⁹ The three objectives are: increasing responsible investment in food systems; increasing incomes and quality employment in food systems; and increasing productivity sustainably to expand food supply.

³⁰ See the policy guidance note on “Rights at Work in the Rural Economy”.

The issue of child labour, 60 per cent of which occurs in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry,³¹ requires special attention. The meagre incomes of farmers and waged workers are often insufficient to meet their economic needs, perpetuating child labour, which further perpetuates the cycle of poverty and lack of education in rural households, hampering sustainable access to food security.³² Following the recent economic crisis, a number of countries have observed significant school drop-outs – due to unaffordable school costs and lack of adequate food – as well as an increased incidence of child labour. The World Bank and IMF estimate that as a result of the crisis 350,000 more students will fail to complete primary school in 2015.³³

Employment and labour market policies and institutions

A low skill level and informal arrangements, which characterize rural labour markets in many developing and low income countries, contribute to low wages, weak bargaining power and low productivity.³⁴ Improving education and skills among rural workers, augmented by other relevant measures improving access to markets, information and technology, will positively impact productivity and incomes in the agro-food sector and, in the longer-run, facilitate livelihood diversification into the rural non-farm economy.

Entrepreneurship is being increasingly harnessed to help build more efficient and effective agricultural systems to alleviate food insecurity and meet other needs of the poor.³⁵ Enterprise development in both the agricultural sector and the rural non-farm economy can have important multiplier effects in terms of boosting incomes for rural households.³⁶

However, rural enterprises often face such challenges as: poor transport and communications infrastructure; lack of access to information, advice and business services; lack of access to finance; and, a poor institutional environment. Additionally, factors such as socio-cultural attitudes pertaining to gender roles tend to be stronger in rural areas, which may affect the patterns of enterprise development for women entrepreneurs.³⁷ With the expansion of the rural non-farm economy, there are increasing opportunities for enterprise development in the rural economy and the need to resolve the urban bias in investments and services.

Social protection

Social protection is increasingly recognized as an effective instrument in addressing food insecurity. Social protection schemes that guarantee basic income security and access to essential social services have a direct impact on both production and consumption. Evidence from developing countries has demonstrated that cash transfers are mostly spent on food and investments in livestock or agriculture. Increased consumption also supports agriculture-related demand for local services, which has a direct knock-on effect on agricultural production. Social protection programmes also need to be in place at times when labour productivity growth leads to a reduction in employment in agriculture, and when other sectors are unable to absorb the surplus labour, as this can contribute to poverty, especially in the short run.

³¹ ILO: *Accelerating action against child labour*, Report of the Director-General, ILC, 99th Session, Geneva, 2010.

³² ILO: *Promotion of Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction*, Report IV, ILC, Geneva, 2008.

³³ Institute of Development Studies: *Accounts of crisis: Poor people's experiences of the food, fuel and financial crises in five countries: Report on a pilot study in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya and Zambia, January–March 2009*, Brighton, March 2009; ILO: *World of Work Report 2012: Better Jobs for a Better Economy*, Geneva, 2012, pp. 16-17; World Bank and IMF: *Global Monitoring Report: The MDGs after the crisis*, Washington, 2010.

³⁴ ILO: *Promotion of Rural Employment for Poverty Reduction*, Report IV, ILC, 97th Session, Geneva, 2008

³⁵ L. Bonney et al.: "A note on entrepreneurship as an alternative logic to address food security in the developing world", in *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2013.

³⁶ J. R. Davis: "The Rural Non-Farm Economy, livelihoods and their diversification: Issues and options", *NRI Report No: 2753*, London, Natural Resources Institute, DFI and World Bank, 2003.

³⁷ ILO-IFAD-FAO: *Rural women entrepreneurship is "good business"*, Gender and Rural development Policy Brief No. 3, Rome, 2010.

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Due to the prevalence of informality in the rural economy, rural workers face major constraints in accessing social protection services. These gaps need to be addressed through appropriate and integrated policies, in accordance with the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).³⁸ Social protection floors (SPFs) not only shield rural households from food insecurity and vulnerability, particularly in times of crisis, but can also have an important multiplier effect in terms of enhanced human capital, which improves access to and stability of safe and nutritious foods.³⁹ Following a discussion of the report of its High-Level Panel of Experts on “Social Protection for Food Security” at its 39th Session in October 2012, the Committee on World Food Security recommended that international organizations “explore a way forward on integrating food security and nutrition issues in social protection floors”.

Occupational safety and health (OSH) is another critical area for the promotion of decent work in the rural economy, as agriculture is among the most dangerous sectors in this regard, due notably to exposure to hazardous chemicals

and machinery, and long working hours.⁴⁰ At least 170,000 agricultural workers are killed each year due to accidents in the workplace.⁴¹

Social dialogue

Rural workers often lack the leverage and organization needed to engage their partners in collective bargaining or social dialogue. Even if trade unions exist, they tend to have weak institutional capacity and limited resources. However, there is a strong link between the presence of unions, cooperatives and producers’ organizations, and improved productivity, decent work and food security.

The 2007-08 food crisis led to riots in more than 30 countries. Rising food prices can be a catalyst for social unrest. Especially in countries-at-risk, it is very important to build national confidence through measures to stave off, prevent or deal with rising food prices. Tripartite social dialogue is an important mechanism for building such consensus.⁴²

³⁸ See F. Durán-Valverde and C. Van Panhuys: “*Extending Social Protection to the Rural Economy*”, ACI/RE Policy Outline, Geneva, November 2013.

³⁹ ILO: *Supporting rural development through social protection floors*, Rural Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2012.

⁴⁰ *Improving working and living conditions for agricultural families programme (WIND)*, ILO, http://www.ilo.org/travail/whatwedo/projects/WCMS_122334/lang--en/index.htm [accessed 30 July 2015].

⁴¹ ILO: *Strengthening rural labour: inspection for high quality and productive jobs*, Rural Policy Briefs, Geneva, 2011.

⁴² According to an ILO annual survey, out of 106 countries with available information, 54 per cent of countries reported an increase in the score of the Social Unrest Index in 2011 (compared to 2010), which reflects the sense of socio-economic insecurity. The two regions of the world that showed the most heightened risk of unrest were Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East/North Africa. ILO: *World of Work Report 2012: Better Jobs for a Better Economy*, Geneva, 2012, p. 20.

4. The ILO's experience to date

The ILO has a wealth of experience in promoting decent work with a view to improving food security and building sustainable rural livelihoods.

The ILO is an active member of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security (HLTF), which is tasked with the promotion and coordination of a comprehensive and unified response to the challenge of achieving food security. The ILO joined the HLTF in June 2009, following the recommendation of the ILO Tripartite Technical Workshop on the Global Food Price Crisis and its Impact on Decent Work (Geneva, March 2009), and the 2008 ILC Resolution concerning the ILO's and the tripartite constituents' role in tackling the global food crisis. Since then, it has been working closely with other UN agencies to promote longer-term resilience of food-insecure communities through decent jobs and social protection. The ILO has contributed significantly to the Updated Comprehensive Framework for Action, which emphasizes the importance of creating an enabling environment for effective social dialogue on employment practices and encouraging the development of labour market institutions with a view to helping Governments and Workers' and Employers' organizations implement international labour standards.

The ILO is also an active participant of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). In October 2014, following a lengthy negotiation process, the 41st Session of the CFS adopted the *Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*. They are voluntary and non-binding, but represent the first global consensus among governments, the private sector, civil society organizations, UN agencies, development banks, foundations, research institutions and academia on how investment in agriculture and food systems can benefit those who need it most. The second of the ten principles

highlights how investments that inter alia respect rights at work, create quality jobs (through entrepreneurship and improved working conditions and incomes), promote social protection coverage and access to services could contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic development and the eradication of poverty. The 1998 ILO *Declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work* is referred to as one of the foundation documents for these Principles.⁴³

The ILO also has a number of technical cooperation projects that aim at improving food security through decent work. For example, *Decent Work for Food Security (DW4FS)* aims at improving the functioning of agro-food value chains by tackling decent work deficits throughout the chain, from production to consumption, using an integrated approach. Implemented jointly with FAO in the most vulnerable and disadvantaged districts of Indonesia's NTT province, DW4FS has an objective to promote food security and sustainable reduction in poverty of rural communities through increased labour productivity, improved working conditions and entrepreneurial opportunities in selected agro-food value chains with high employment and income-generation potential.

The *Yapasa – Rural Youth Enterprise for Food Security – programme* in Zambia, supported by the Swedish Government, seeks to generate pro-poor growth among rural youth by improving the functioning of agricultural markets and supporting services, using the "Making Markets Work for the Poor" approach. The programme aims to create new jobs for young people and to improve the financial performance of a significant number of rural and peri-urban SMEs. It also aims at boosting food security for the local population by way of increasing the volume of production of selected agriculture subsectors to pave way for the successive development of their market systems.

⁴³ CFS: *Principles on Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems*, Rome, October 2014.

5. Practical guidance and resources

With its tripartite constituency, in-depth expertise in employment and labour issues, and areas of comparative advantage such as standards and social dialogue, the ILO is uniquely placed to contribute to and strengthen existing UN efforts towards improved food security. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy for alleviating food insecurity, and initiatives must be sector- and context-specific. Their focus may, however, integrate one or more of the following areas:

- i. Ratification and effective implementation of international labour standards;
- ii. Strengthening of social dialogue and organization in rural economies,⁴⁴ including among smallholders, in order to increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis other market actors along the value chain, as they often lack the leverage and organization needed to engage their partners in collective bargaining or social dialogue;⁴⁵
- iii. Building the capacity of workers' and employers' organizations, farmer and producer associations and cooperatives to contribute to the development and implementation of strategies to combat food insecurity through decent work;
- iv. Promoting sustainable enterprises and green jobs to improve working conditions, while working towards a better functioning and ultimately sustainable food value chain;
- v. Developing skills that would improve productivity and help promote a structural shift in the labour market into higher value-added manufacturing and service sectors activities;
- vi. Promoting social protection in rural areas, in accordance with Recommendation No. 202;⁴⁶
- vii. Promoting investment in rural areas, including through the use of employment-intensive methods to build infrastructure (e.g. irrigation canals, reservoirs and roads);
- viii. Promoting cooperative organizations which can facilitate knowledge sharing and improvements in various areas such as storage and transport, thereby also contributing to the goal of reducing food waste and food loss;
- ix. Contributing to and promoting the operationalization of the Committee of World Food Security's 2014 'Principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems'.
- x. Promoting value chain development, particularly in the agro-food sector, through technical cooperation programmes such as Decent Work for Food Security, which follow an integrated and comprehensive approach.
- xi. Addressing concerns over the environmental impact of agricultural growth and facilitating a shift to a Green Economy through the promotion of climate-smart agricultural practices which address the interlinked challenges of food security and climate change, and aim at achieving the following three objectives: (1) sustainably increasing agricultural productivity, incomes, food security and development; (2) adapting and building resilience of agricultural and food systems to climate change; and (3) reducing greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ ILO: *Giving a voice to rural workers - General Survey concerning the Right of Association and Rural Workers' Organizations instruments*, Geneva, 2015.

⁴⁵ L. Riisgaard and N. Hammer: "Prospects for Labour in Global Value Chains: Labour Standards in the Cut Flower and Banana Industries", in *British Journal of Industrial Relations* Vol. 49/1, pp. 168–190, 2011.

⁴⁶ Please see the policy guidance note on "Extending social protection to the rural economy".

⁴⁷ FAO: *FAO Success Stories on Climate-Smart Agriculture*, Rome, 2013.

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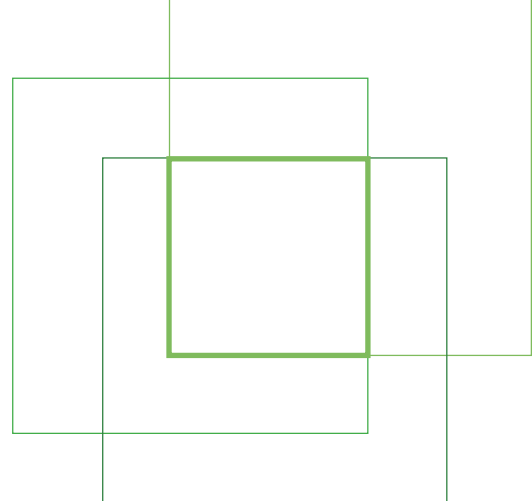
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Overview of Policy Guidance Notes on the Promotion of Decent Work in the Rural Economy



Supporting inclusive agricultural growth for improved livelihoods and food security

- Decent Work for Food Security and Resilient Rural Livelihoods
- Decent and Productive Work in Agriculture

Promoting economic diversification and triggering productive transformation for rural employment

- Economic Diversification of the Rural Economy
- Promoting Decent Work for Rural Workers at the Base of the Supply Chain
- The Role of Multinational Enterprises in the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas
- Transitioning to Formality in the Rural Informal Economy
- Sustainable Tourism – A Catalyst for Inclusive Socio-economic Development and Poverty Reduction in Rural Areas

Promoting access to services, protection and employment-intensive investment

- Providing Access to Quality Services in the Rural Economy to Promote Growth and Social Development
- Extending Social Protection to the Rural Economy
- Developing the Rural Economy through Financial Inclusion: The Role of Access to Finance
- Employment-Intensive Investment in Rural Infrastructure for Economic Development, Social and Environmental Protection and Inclusive Growth

Ensuring sustainability and harnessing the benefits of natural resources

- A Just Transition towards a Resilient and Sustainable Rural Economy
- Decent Work in Forestry
- Harnessing the Potential of Extractive Industries
- Water for Improved Rural Livelihoods

Increasing the voice of rural people through organization and the promotion of rights, standards and social dialogue

- Rights at Work in the Rural Economy
- Promoting Social Dialogue in the Rural Economy
- Building Local Development in Rural Areas through Cooperatives and other Social and Solidarity Economy Enterprises and Organizations
- Decent Work for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in the Rural Economy
- Empowering Women in the Rural Economy
- Decent Work for Rural Youth
- Promoting Fair and Effective Labour Migration Policies in Agriculture and Rural Areas

Improving the knowledge base on decent work in the rural economy

- Enhancing the Knowledge Base to Support the Promotion of Decent Work in Rural Areas

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