



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# Eliminating child labour to build sustainable agrifood systems



## Meeting the challenge

Child labour in agriculture is an extensive and critical problem in the world today. It hinders children's education, health and future employability, **perpetuating hunger and rural poverty**. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, global progress stalled and the number of children engaged in **child labour in agriculture rose**, for the first time in decades. This complicates the possibility of reaching the SDG 8.7 target of eliminating all forms of child labour by 2030. A breakthrough is needed in agriculture to meet these goals and make progress.

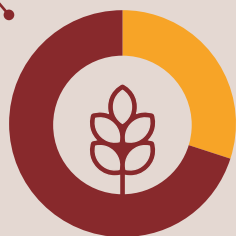
FAO strives to eliminate child labour in agriculture by addressing its root causes and promoting quality education for children, thus ensuring their access to decent employment in the future. In turn, this benefits rural communities and agrifood systems. Thanks to FAO's **advocacy** efforts, ending child labour in agriculture is a top priority in the Durban Call to Action, the landmark document from the Fifth Global Conference on Child Labour.

## In action

FAO addresses the **socio-economic drivers** of child labour in agrifood systems, through an integrated and gender-sensitive approach. The Organization works to improve the **school-to-work transition** for older children in rural areas, in order for them to access decent work opportunities in agrifood systems. FAO also helps to diversify the livelihoods of rural households to reduce their dependency on child labour, as well as fostering **safe work** in agrifood systems for children and youth who have reached the legal working age. This implies the promotion of safe, labour-saving agricultural practices and **sustainable alternatives** to hazardous pesticides. FAO also **raises awareness** at the community level about the consequences of child labour – using communication for development approaches, such as the FAO Dimitra Listeners' Clubs. To improve impact, the Organization fosters multi-stakeholder **partnerships** and South-South and Triangular Cooperation.

## Looking at the evidence

**70%**  
of child labour is found  
in the agricultural  
sector.



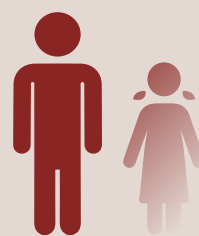
Of the **160 mln**  
engaged in child labour  
worldwide, 112 million  
boys and girls work in  
agriculture.



Amongst the youngest  
children subjected to  
child labour, aged 5-11,  
**more  
than 75%**  
work in agriculture.



Child labour is more  
prevalent among boys than  
girls. However, rural girls'  
work is often less visible:  
when household chores  
are considered, the  
**gender gap**  
narrows.



# Comparative advantage

Given its extensive knowledge of the agriculture sector and its longstanding experience in promoting education, decent rural employment, and inclusive transformation processes, FAO is strategically positioned to address the main drivers of child labour: rural poverty and food insecurity. Leveraging its solid relationship with agrifood stakeholders, FAO mobilizes **concerted actions** and **innovative solutions** in rural communities who are reliant on child labour. The Organization also facilitates **knowledge-sharing** and cooperation through an integrated approach which involves mobilizing livelihoods support, decent employment, social protection, **gender equality** and the management of natural resources.

FAO's **relentless commitment** to eliminating child labour is demonstrated in its **Framework on Ending Child Labour in Agriculture**, the launch of a dedicated **prevention facility**, and the systematic integration of child labour considerations in its programming and project implementation. Elimination of child labour in agriculture is an integral part of **FAO's Strategic Framework**, directly contributing to the Better Life and Better Production aspirations, which aim at promoting **inclusive economic growth**, as well as sustainable consumption and production.

“Now I understand better the negative effects of child labour and share my learnings with others in my village.”

**Kamitié Issouf Konate**  
Cotton farmer  
Burkina Faso

## Best practices and results

1

FAO's **Global Solutions Forum** mobilized over 1 000 participants to share concrete solutions to end child labour in agriculture. The event contributed to this topic being a top priority in the **Durban Call to Action**.

2

Through knowledge generation, awareness raising, capacity development and policy support, FAO has supported more than 20 countries **in Africa**, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to address child labour in agriculture.

3

Through the EU-funded **CLEAR Cotton project**, FAO reached more than 10 000 men, women, youth and children and helped sustainably improve the livelihoods of about 1 500 households in Burkina Faso, Mali and Pakistan.

## Expected results

The overall objective is to **reduce child labour** at scale in agrifood systems and increase sustainability. This will be achieved by:

- Mainstreaming and **integrating child labour considerations** into national, regional and global agricultural and corporate due diligence policies and programmes, enhancing the knowledge and capacity of agriculture stakeholders.
- Implementing dedicated **child labour prevention programmes** to strengthen rural livelihoods and promote sustainable practices in agricultural sub-sectors.
- Ensuring that large-scale programmes implement **tailored measures** to prevent and to end child labour in agrifood systems, from rural investment to emergency and **climate-smart programme**.
- Strengthening **cooperation** to end child labour in agriculture by facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogues and platforms and enhancing **knowledge sharing** on how to tackle child labour comprehensively.
- Supporting agrifood actors in meeting **due diligence requirements**, by addressing the structural drivers and characteristics of child labour along **specific value chains** – such as cotton, cocoa, and coffee.

### Contact

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## Contribution to the SDGs



## Partnerships to scale up impact

- ministries of agriculture, labour, environment, and social affairs;
- the United Nations system (ILO, UNICEF, WFP);
- members of the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture;
- international financial institutions;
- workers and producers' organizations;
- the private sector;
- academia; and
- non-governmental and civil society organizations.

Read more about the **Child Labour in Agriculture Prevention Facility**, our flexible and impact-oriented programme: [fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc0267en](http://fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc0267en)



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