



NHSMUN

**FAO**

**BACKGROUND GUIDE**

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**Director-General**  
**Jordan Baker**

**Delegate Experience**  
**Nastasja Vásquez**

**Global Partnerships**  
**Daniela Maciel**  
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**Grace Harb**

**Adiva Ara Khan**  
**Anshul Magal**  
**Analucia Tello**  
**Sofia Velasco**  
**Renata Venzor**

Dear Delegates,

My name is Shea Davison, and I am your Session I Director for the Food and Agriculture Organization. It is my absolute pleasure to welcome you all to NHSMUN 2025! My Co-Director, Kareem Shaheen, and I have been hard at work preparing for a conference filled with engaging debate. We are incredibly excited to hear your ideas and solutions in committee and hope that you use this background guide as a starting point for further research.

My NHSMUN journey started out in 2023 where I attended the conference as a delegate in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. I then went on to act as the Assistant Director of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2024. Outside of NHSMUN, I was the Co-President of my high school's MUN team. Due to these experiences, I am fully aware of the bravery that goes into each speech and solution we hear in committee and want to thank you in advance for all the work I know you will put into this conference! NHSMUN is extremely special to me and has allowed me to grow as a speaker and as an individual. I intend to make NHSMUN as memorable and educational as possible for each one of you.

I am a sophomore at the University of California at Berkeley. I am studying Political Science with the aspiration of attending Law School following graduation. I am a part of the Cal Greek community and am currently serving as the External Vice President of Greeks Against Sexual Assault or GASA. I am usually at Berkeley Law where I work as a Student Development Assistant. Outside of work, you can find me doing yoga with friends or screaming my lungs out at a football game despite barely understanding the sport. I love forcing my friends to watch rugby, I'm obsessed with a good hike and of course, I adore debate!

I am so excited to introduce you all to our two topics: "Mitigating Labor Exploitation and Human Trafficking in the Agricultural Sector" and "Addressing Food Insecurity, Famine and Agricultural Rehabilitation in Conflict Zones." These topics were selected to delve deeper into the FAO's mission and give delegates the opportunity to explore the agricultural industry on a social-political scale. With such complex subject matter, we tried to go into as much detail as possible and explored as many subtopics as feasible during this process. Kareem and I recognize that these topics are multifaceted and encourage you to explore these issues through further research. If there is anything that Kareem or I can do to support you as you prepare for committee, please do not hesitate to reach out to us! On behalf of your FAO dais, good luck researching, and I look forward to seeing you in March!

All the best,

Shea Davison

FAO Director

Session I

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Hello,

My name is Kareem Shaheen, and I will be your Head Director for Session II of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). I am a fourth year attending the University of California, Irvine (UCI) and am majoring in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Philosophy, pursuing a pre-law track. I started Model UN as a freshman in high school and became my school's Secretary General for my final year. In my first two years at UCI, I competed on the travel team and assisted in directing the UNHRC committee. Last year (2023-2024), I served as Head Director for the IAEA committee and the Internal Vice President of the competing team. And now for my last year at UCI I will be head director of the UNDP committee and the head delegate of the competing team. Outside of hosting and competing, I also professionally coach Model UN.

Outside of Model UN, I love to draw, go to the gym, watch TV shows, and spend time with my friends. I am trying to become more of a foodie, both cooking and finding new places. Any recommendations of recipes or good spots would be very appreciated, so please send them my way.

I am so excited to see you all debate this topic as it is one that is personal to me. My dad's side of the family had their start in the agricultural sector in Iraq. Seeing the changes within the country's past 50 years and how it correlates to its agricultural development has been such an interesting case study to follow. It also has taught me how important the agricultural sector is. The agricultural sector is the backbone of a country, arguably one of the most important industries a region needs for sustainability. However, that does not mean that it is without its faults. The international agricultural sector has historically been plagued with exploitation. Legislation and change have been inconsistent in success, and we still see issues continue today.

This topic is a real-world issue that delegates and politicians today struggle with solving due to all of its pitfalls. I look forward to all the unique and creative solutions you come up with when tackling this topic. I expect you all to have some fruitful discussions and fun while you're at it.

Sincerely,

Kareem Shaheen

FAO Director

Session II

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## A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2025! We are Terry Wang and Jordan Baker, and we are this year's Secretary-General and Director-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse Model United Nations conference for secondary school students. We are thrilled to welcome you to New York City in March.

As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. Our organization provides a uniquely tailored experience for all through innovative and accessible programming. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience, and this idea permeates throughout numerous aspects of the conference:

**Realism and accuracy:** Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. Each NHSMUN committee is a simulation of a real deliberative body so that delegates can research what their country has said in the committee. Our topics are chosen from the issues currently on the agenda of that committee (except historical committees, which take topics from the appropriate time period). We also strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. Our delegates have the incredible opportunity to conduct first-hand research, asking thought-provoking questions to current UN representatives and experts in their respective fields of study. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

**Educational emphasis, even for awards:** At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN so special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN as an activity. NHSMUN seeks to reward students who excel in the arts of compromise and diplomacy. More importantly, we seek to develop an environment in which delegates can employ their critical thought processes and share ideas with their counterparts from around the world. Given our delegates' plurality of perspectives and experiences, we center our programming around the values of diplomacy and teamwork. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership that strives towards consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

**Debate founded on strong knowledge and accessibility:** With knowledgeable staff members and delegates from over 70 countries, NHSMUN can facilitate an enriching experience reliant on substantively rigorous debate. To ensure this high quality of debate, our staff members produce detailed, accessible, and comprehensive topic guides (like the one below) to prepare delegates for the nuances inherent in each global issue. This process takes over six months, during which the Directors who lead our committees develop their topics with the valuable input of expert contributors. Because these topics are always changing and evolving, NHSMUN also produces update papers intended to bridge the gap of time between when the background guides are published and when committee starts in March. As such, this guide is designed to be a launching point from which delegates should delve further into their topics. The detailed knowledge that our Directors provide in this background guide through diligent research aims to increase critical thinking within delegates at NHSMUN.

**Extremely engaged staff:** At NHSMUN, our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Before the conference, our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained rigorously through hours of workshops and exercises both virtual and in-person to provide the best conference experience possible. At the conference,

delegates will have the opportunity to meet their dais members prior to the first committee session, where they may engage one-on-one to discuss their committees and topics. Our Directors and Assistant Directors are trained and empowered to be experts on their topics and they are always available to rapidly answer any questions delegates may have prior to the conference. Our Directors and Assistant Directors read every position paper submitted to NHSMUN and provide thoughtful comments on those submitted by the feedback deadline. Our staff aims not only to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

**Empowering participation:** The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions most likely to make a meaningful impact on the world. That is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. We believe that to properly delve into an issue and produce fruitful debate, it is crucial to focus the entire energy and attention of the room on the topic at hand. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of each delegate's country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. MUN delegates are well researched and aware of the UN's priorities, and they can serve as the vanguard for action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Therefore, we are proud to connect students with other action-oriented organizations to encourage further work on the topics.

**Focused committee time:** We feel strongly that face-to-face interpersonal connections during debate are critical to producing superior committee experiences and allow for the free flow of ideas. Ensuring policies based on equality and inclusion is one way in which NHSMUN guarantees that every delegate has an equal opportunity to succeed in committee. In order to allow communication and collaboration to be maximized during committee, we have a very dedicated administrative team who work throughout the conference to type up, format, and print draft resolutions and working papers.

As always, we welcome any questions or concerns about the substantive program at NHSMUN 2025 and would be happy to discuss NHSMUN pedagogy with faculty or delegates.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Terry Wang  
Secretary-General

Jordan Baker  
Director-General

## A Note on Research and Preparation

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to NHSMUN in March.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging, but to assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). In particular, these guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. In delegations with two students, we strongly encourage each student to research each topic to ensure that they are prepared to debate no matter which topic is selected first. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the NHSMUN Research Guide. To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections:

**I: Topic Background** – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

**II: Country Policy** – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

**III. Proposed Solutions** – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages** long double-spaced with standard margins and font size. **We recommend 3–5 pages per topic as a suitable length.** The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for sending a copy of its papers to their committee Directors via [myDais](#) on or before **February 21, 2025**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, a position must be submitted on or before **January 31, 2025**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the dais of each committee and returned prior to your arrival at the conference.

Complete instructions for how to submit position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at [info@imuna.org](mailto:info@imuna.org).

**Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.**

## Committee History

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was founded on October 16, 1945, in Quebec City, Canada, in response to the urgent global need to address hunger and malnutrition.<sup>1</sup> Following the end of World War II, nations recognized that ensuring adequate access to food was essential for global peace and stability. After widespread disruption to agricultural production, factories that manufactured fertilizers, pesticides, and farming equipment were either destroyed or repurposed, leading to significant disruptions in the trade and distribution of agricultural products. The FAO was established as a specialized technical agency, tasked with providing information and assistance to countries to improve all components of biodiversity such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and food production. It also seeks to achieve international agreement on policies for the sustainable use and conservation of genetic resources for food and agriculture, along with ensuring fair and equitable sharing of the benefits derived from their use.<sup>2</sup>

Initially focused on increasing food production, its mission expanded to include sustainable development, climate change adaptation, the eradication of rural poverty, securing sustainable increases in the supply and availability of food, conserving and enhancing the natural resource base, and generating knowledge of food and agriculture, fisheries and forestry.<sup>3</sup> The organization now plays a pivotal role in addressing issues such as food waste, economic growth, malnutrition, and the impact of environmental degradation on agriculture.<sup>4</sup> FAO has identified key priorities on which it is best placed to intervene, such as: helping eliminate hunger, food insecurity, malnutrition, making agriculture more productive and sustainable, reducing rural poverty, ensuring inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems, as well as protecting livelihoods from disasters.

Throughout its history, the FAO has collaborated with various international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). These partnerships have been crucial in combating hunger and promoting nutritional security worldwide. Notable achievements include the launch of initiatives like the “Decade of Family Farming” which highlights the vital role family farmers play in ensuring food security, improving livelihoods, and sustainably managing natural resources. Family farming, which accounts for nearly 80 percent of the world’s food production, is seen as a key driver in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in rural areas, where it helps protect the environment and foster resilience.<sup>5</sup>

Despite its accomplishments, the FAO faces significant challenges in fulfilling its mission. Issues such as climate change, food insecurity in conflict zones, and the growing global population have complicated efforts to ensure food availability for all. These limitations are likely to influence the FAO’s ability to address future topics and will require innovative solutions and stronger international cooperation. To achieve lasting impact, the FAO must focus on developing sustainable, long-term strategies that not only address immediate food security concerns but also empower communities to adapt to changing circumstances and build resilience for the future.

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1 “About FAO | FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,” AboutFAO, n.d., <https://www.fao.org/about/about-fao/en/>.

2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Biodiversity and Agriculture: A Contribution to the Global Biodiversity Assessment. Rome: FAO, 2020. [https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/biodiversity\\_paia/PAR-FAO-book\\_lr.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/biodiversity_paia/PAR-FAO-book_lr.pdf).

3 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “FAO’s Mission and Vision Statements.” Accessed September 26, 2024. <https://www.fao.org/4/x3551e/x3551e02.htm>.

4 “FAO: its origins, formation and evolution 1945-1981,” n.d., <https://www.fao.org/4/p4228e/P4228E02.htm>.

5 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “Family Farming.” Accessed September 26, 2024. <https://www.fao.org/reduce-rural-poverty/our-work/family-farming/en/>.





## TOPIC A:

# ELIMINATING LABOR EXPLOITATION IN AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Photo Credit: Jonathan McIntosh



## Introduction

Mitigating labor exploitation and human trafficking is essential to ensuring effective and efficient farming practices, as well as the fair treatment of workers. The agricultural industry is often plagued with labor exploitation issues. This is connected to a historical trend of corruption and human trafficking. By tackling these issues, the agricultural sector can build sustainable and legitimate labor practices.

Labor exploitation is a broad term that refers to unfair work conditions. These unfair practices typically benefit employers.<sup>1</sup> Labor exploitation often occurs through unfair wages, poor and/or dangerous conditions, or extreme work hours. These conditions are seen as unethical, and in some cases illegal. Human trafficking on the other hand, is the unlawful transportation or coercion of people to benefit from them in some regard. Human trafficking can include labor or sexual exploitation. Many migrants become trafficked because of deception or coercion.<sup>2</sup>

Child labor is a form of labor exploitation and/or trafficking. Children, especially those in areas impacted by conflict or poverty, are at especially high risk of labor exploitation. Debt bondage is the state in which someone is forced into labor, because of owing a debt. Debt bondage is a common form of coercion that leads to labor exploitation or human trafficking within the agricultural sector. This is because those who are migrant farmers tend to come from lower economic backgrounds and rural areas. Due to these factors, migrant farmers are more likely to hold debt and be exploited as a result.

Understanding the conditions and regulations of the agricultural sector helps to understand this topic. Conditions may be evaluated on the criteria of safety, equality, job security, compensation, work hours, and representation in the organization. While there have been global steps to improve labor conditions, there are still many gaps. Sex trafficking and sexual exploitation also impact the agricultural sector. Women tend to experience more dangerous working conditions, and

receive lower wages compared to men. In addition to gender-based bigotry, migrant workers often experience harsher conditions.<sup>3</sup> Migrant workers also experience higher rates of workplace exploitation than their counterparts. Migrants often feel pressured to accept poor working conditions because their migrant status may be at risk if they lose their employment. Furthermore, wage theft and deception include practices that steal pay from an employee. Workers may be deceived into unfair contracts and are often not compensated.

A complex structure involved in the agricultural sector and labor is the production supply chain. Supply chains are the networks of resources, individuals, organizations, and technology to produce goods and services for consumers. Effective and efficient supply chains are able to deliver high-quality and cost-effective products. As such, holding actors accountable is a difficult task as each step of the process is highly separated. An example of an ongoing case study involving labor exploitation and human trafficking is the Brazilian carnauba wax industry. Many laborers in Brazil rely on harvesting wax from the carnauba palm trees to earn a living. Because all the power is in the hands of big businesses, they often turn a blind eye to bad practices. Another case study today on this topic is how the native women of Mexico on coffee farms are treated. The native people of Mexico are a group that has been trafficked for labor and sexual exploitation through the agricultural sector. This affects women and children more than others as they are the most vulnerable to trafficking.<sup>4</sup>

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) are goals that the United Nations General Assembly set in 2015 to be reached

<sup>1</sup> "What is labour exploitation?" End Labour Exploitation, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://endlabourexploitation.co.uk/about/>.

<sup>2</sup> "Human Trafficking," National Human Trafficking Hotline, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/human-trafficking>.

<sup>3</sup> "Immigrant Farmworkers and America's Food Production - 5 Things to Know," September 14, 2022, FWD.us, <https://www.fwd.us/news/immigrant-farmworkers-and-americas-food-production-5-things-to-know/>.

<sup>4</sup> "CST\_vulnerable factsheet\_pg1," The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, accessed August 13, 2024, [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/child\\_sex\\_trafficking\\_who\\_is\\_vulnerable\\_to\\_being\\_trafficked.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/child_sex_trafficking_who_is_vulnerable_to_being_trafficked.pdf).

by 2030. These goals are set by the UN General Assembly to achieve sustainable development around the world. The SDG that is closest to this topic is SDG 8, “Good Jobs and Economic Growth”.<sup>5</sup> The exploitations talked about in this topic are against human rights. SDG 8 states that access to good jobs is a human right. SDG 8 also states that the victims of this topic have had this right taken away from them.<sup>6</sup>

This topic is important to address. The agricultural sector is the backbone of the world. People need food to survive, and without good access to food, areas struggle, and sometimes fail. Therefore, rebuilding and making the agricultural industry better without severely worsening its ability to provide for the people is difficult to balance. However, it should not be ignored. Labor exploitation and human trafficking are violations of human rights. Delegates in this committee must address these issues fast and effectively.

## History and Description of the Issue

### Working Conditions and Regulation

Global food security, or the ability of the international community to provide adequate sustenance for all its citizens, is a difficult task to achieve. Everyone needs food to live, and as such it becomes an increasingly demanding market. Thus, pressures to optimize the international agricultural sector also have dramatically increased. Current pressures from war and conflict also make the environment less capable of providing to the masses.<sup>7</sup> Technological advancements have made this issue more complex. Technology has been a blessing and a curse to the agricultural sector. While productivity is increased with helpful tools, military activity increases and adds harmful chemicals to the environment. Regardless, people still need

to eat. Unethical practices have become commonplace to cut corners to optimize production efficiency. This includes exposure to toxic pesticides, excessive physical exertion, intense weather conditions, and injury caused by dangerous tools.<sup>8</sup> With high fatality and injury rates, these practices have made the agricultural sector rank among the most dangerous professions. This is double the average of other industries.<sup>9</sup> This trend has only increased over history and will continue if effective international legislation fails to be implemented.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has maintained a strong commitment in upholding healthy labor practices within the agricultural sector. To actively promote such values, the FAO has maintained a strong partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO). This partnership has emphasized the importance of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda.<sup>10</sup> The Decent Work Agenda works to create jobs, social protections and dialogue, and rights at work. This partnership has been able to generate global agreement on the significance of decent work to crisis recovery and sustainable development. The G20, G7, EU, African Union, and other transnational and regional bodies have all verbally confirmed a commitment to this cause.

However, these goals and collaborations have not successfully eliminated poor working conditions. The effectiveness of the collaboration had some successes, however only half of their projects throughout 2019-2020 have been able to meet their immediate objectives.<sup>11</sup> These objectives are globally agreed upon and uphold a set of labor standards. One ILO progress report states they had been particularly successful in the development of strategic relationships. However, they had failed to be successful in their other goals. There were missed opportunities to incorporate and strengthen social dialogue and tripartite mechanisms in project design and implementation.

5 “Goal #8: Decent work and economic growth | International Labour Organization,” ILO, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/topics/decent-work-and-2030-agenda-sustainable-development/goal-8-decent-work-and-economic-growth>.

6 “FAO and the Sustainable Development Goals | FAO,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/about/strategy-programme-budget/strategic-framework/fao-sdg/en/>.

7 “Food security and affordability - Consilium,” European Council of the European Union, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/food-security-and-affordability/>.

8 “Backgrounder: Child Labor in Agriculture,” N.p.: Human Rights News, June 11, 2002, <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/crp/back0610.htm>.

9 “Report IV (1) - Safety and Health in Agriculture - Fourth Item on the Agenda,” International Labour Conference, 2000, <https://learning.itcilo.org/ilo/jur/en/bibl/89-rep-IV-1-eng.pdf>.

10 “Decent work | International Labour Organization,” ILO, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/topics/decent-work>.

11 “Decent work results and effectiveness of ILO operations;” ILO, September 2020, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms\\_756537.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_mas/@eval/documents/publication/wcms_756537.pdf).

This can be seen as only 40 percent of their projects included a tripartism performance strategy. Tripartism is a recent economic system which emphasizes collaboration between trade unions, employers, and government bodies.<sup>12</sup> Their partnership helps facilitate healthy social dialogue through cooperation, consultation, negotiation and compromise. By recognizing this framework, solutions can achieve better conditions for workers, social cohesion, and transparency. However, this goal is yet to be reached. The agricultural industry still has a lack of trust and grievances between these different layers.

These missteps in previous attempts are clear within the project's performance vulnerability. Non-discrimination and equality in compensation have failed historically, and recent attempts have continued to do so. This is seen as multiple forms of bigotry are commonplace in the international agricultural sector. Gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and immigration status are all common variables in discrimination in the agricultural industry. This primarily manifests in access to equal pay, livestock ownership and reasonable credit accessibility.<sup>13</sup> These workers that are susceptible to these forms of discrimination within the agricultural sector are classified as vulnerable workers. Thus, employers are expected by both international and national regulations to practice due diligence. Due diligence is the obligation of an employer to assess risk to its employees and act effectively upon it.<sup>14</sup> Without due diligence, bad labor practices and conditions continue. Due diligence also includes actions of the employer themselves. As such, any neglect to stop bad labor practices by an employer is a failure of practicing due diligence.

While there are multiple bodies that enforce regulations to uphold an expected standard, we fail to see that standard universally. This is because there are multiple issues and

circumstances that make enforcement of regulations difficult. One of these is multilateral regulation dissonance. Multilateral regulation dissonance occurs when different regulatory bodies have different conflicting standards. This conflict creates confusion and natural violations in labor practice.

One case study of multilateral regulation dissonance is that of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The UAE has a labor system that is known as the kafala system, which delegates employers as responsible for their migrant workers.<sup>15</sup> In application, the kafala system revokes autonomy from migrant workers, restricting their ability to enter, reside, work, and often exit the country. This labor framework is considered a system of modern slavery, sharing many restrictive similarities to indentured servitude. Indentured servitude is a contract between two parties that requires one to work for the other for a set amount of time in exchange to pay off an indenture, or loan.<sup>16</sup> In this case, the migrant status of many workers in the UAE is actively in jeopardy as the indentured is to pay their employer for their migrant status. This leverage enables employers to engage in extreme forms of labor exploitation. Violations of these exploitations include discriminatory minimum wage, and restricted travel. Furthermore, it includes inequality compared to domestic workers, and a lack of a functioning labor court with grievance procedures. Due to these exploitative natures, transnational bodies such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) have called upon reform in the UAE.<sup>17</sup> The ITUC is a collection of different trade unions, or groups of laborers that advocate for their labor rights. An important thing to note is that no UAE trade union is a member of the ITUC, and as such their calls for reform have not been effective. Unionization in some regions is more challenging than others. Even though the ITUC does not consist of any governmental bodies, their influence has

12 "What is Tripartism," Ministry of Manpower, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/tripartism-in-singapore/what-is-tripartism>.

13 "Ethical Trading Initiative," Addressing Worker Vulnerability in Agricultural and Food Supply Chains, October 4, 2016, [https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared\\_resources/vulnerable\\_workers\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.ethicaltrade.org/sites/default/files/shared_resources/vulnerable_workers_toolkit.pdf).

14 "Forced Labor Due Diligence," Responsible Labor Initiative, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.responsiblelabor.org/forced-labor-due-diligence/>.

15 "Disempowered, dehumanized, deported: Life under the kafala system," Walk Free, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/spotlights/life-under-the-kafala-system/>.

16 Michael J. Boyle, "Indentured Servitude: Definition, History, and Controversy," Investopedia, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/i/indentured-servitude.asp>.

17 "UAE labour law reforms fail to address abuses of workers' rights," November 22, 2021, International Trade Union Confederation, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/uae-labour-law-reforms-fail>.

passed legislation in over 156 countries and territories.<sup>18</sup> This reform includes an end to the kafala system and all its negative effects. These changes are modeled after the 2014 Protocol to the ILO Forced Labour Convention (C029).<sup>19</sup> This iteration of C029 of the ILO expresses a removal from transnational provisions, limiting the ability for employers to see migrant laborers as transferable tools of service. By doing so, the ITUC directly aims to combat against the UAE's status as "no guarantee of rights" for migrant workers as recorded in the Global Rights Index.

Another reason that international regulations generally have difficulty in implementation is due to the jurisdictional constraints of the FAO and the United Nations. Countries have a right to national sovereignty, or a fundamental principle that gives states authority and independence to govern their domestic affairs.<sup>20</sup> As such, the FAO cannot directly enforce any labor laws or human rights protections and primarily operates in an advisory position. An advisory position means that they operate as a platform for partnership development. Thus, it is more accurate to see the FAO, as a starting framework for other actors to unite in their efforts to promote policies.<sup>21</sup>

Multilateral regulation dissonance and limited authority have considerably limited the FAO's authority. As a result, there has been minimal progress in properly upholding the labor guidelines within the international agricultural sector. Solutions must effectively utilize the collaboration of actors that use the FAO platforms to overcome these limitations on transnational regulatory bodies. The FAO must be seen as a regulatory body in of itself to ensure effective and ethical labor rights.

## Child Labor

Certain laborers are more susceptible to bad working conditions and are hurt more by it. These vulnerable laborers are both more commonly affected by improper working conditions and experience it worse. However, some classifications of vulnerable classes also have cultural and generational sensitivities surrounding it. One of these vulnerable classes is that of child laborers. Child labor has always been a tough topic within the international agricultural sector. Child labor in the farming sector has been an issue ever since the pre-industrial era. It took on its current version in the early 1800s during the Industrial Revolution.<sup>22</sup> This was possible due to this era's rise in technological advancement, as the cost and need for skilled labor decreased. Therefore, the ability to extort children out of labor within the agricultural sector in developed regions dramatically increased.<sup>23</sup> However, as these forms of low-skill technology gradually became an international norm, child labor began to grow prevalent within lower average-income regions. Lower-income households have a higher degree of susceptibility to participate in child labor practices due to desperation because of a lack of financial resources.

Child labor is still a continuing issue in the modern world. According to UNICEF, in the world's poorest countries, over 20 percent of children actively engage in child labor, with 70 percent of such laborers working in the agricultural sector.<sup>24</sup> Many enter work between five to seven years old, a low threshold enabled by the low requirement in skill. This includes fields such as farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock management. However, this is not labor in which these children are compensated for. Many child laborers are unpaid, 67.5 percent, a statistic that is magnified within

18 "LIST OF AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS," International Trade Union Confederation, June 2, 2024, [https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/no\\_03\\_-\\_list\\_affiliates\\_-\\_010213.pdf](https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/no_03_-_list_affiliates_-_010213.pdf).

19 "Convention C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)," NORMLEX, accessed July 17, 2024, [https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C029](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029).

20 "National sovereignty," United Nations Network on Migration, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/taxonomy/term/742>.

21 "About FAO | FAO," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/about/about-fao/en/>.

22 "Handout Child Labor During the Industrial Revolution museum of tolerance," Museum of Tolerance, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.museumoftolerance.com/assets/documents/children-who-labor-handout-2.pdf>.

23 Eman M. Elshaikh, "Child Labor," KhanAcademy, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/whp-origins/era-6-the-long-nineteenth-century-1750-ce-to-1914-ce/64-transformation-of-labor-beta/a/read-child-labor-beta>.

24 "Child labour rises to 160 million – first increase in two decade," UNICEF, June 10, 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-labour-rises-160-million-first-increase-two-decades>.



Child migrant workers  
Credit: Bill Gillette

the international agricultural sector.<sup>25</sup>

The ethical concerns of child labor are immense but are further accentuated within the agricultural sector due to how dangerous the field is. The agricultural sector is volatile when concerning work-related accidents, even experiencing the highest death rate per 100,000 workers out of all labor sectors.<sup>26</sup> It is estimated that 170,000 agricultural laborers are killed each year.<sup>27</sup> Common accidents include animal injuries, machinery, moving vehicles, and more.<sup>28</sup> This aspect has yielded that 59 percent of all children in hazardous working conditions are specifically in the agricultural sector.<sup>29</sup>

The primary driving factor behind the inclusion of child labor within labor exploitation in the agricultural sector is poverty.<sup>30</sup> Poor socioeconomic conditions create many bad effects on children and increase their vulnerability to bad labor practices. This includes difficult access to adult labor, lack of

effective resources for education, and cultural norms regarding the social perception of child labor. The latter of these effects is especially problematic and difficult to disassemble, as traditional norms are deeply rooted in cultural beliefs. Regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean are all notable hotspots of child labor.<sup>31</sup> Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to have 90 million child laborers by 2030.<sup>32</sup> Cultural beliefs are principles and values that a certain culture deems to be valuable for societal cohesion while cultural norms are the manifestations of such values. Due to this, there is a required degree of sensitivity when coming to combat such norms. There must be a balance between completely delegitimizing all cultural beliefs and removing unethical cultural norms.

When combating this subtopic, it is important to effectively address the semantics of what classifies as detrimental and

25 “Child labour in agriculture | International Labour Organization,” ILO, accessed August 11, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/sectors-and-topics/child-labour-agriculture>.

26 “Injuries, illnesses, and deaths in agriculture, 2015–19 : The Economics Daily: U.S.,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 22, 2021, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2021/injuries-illnesses-and-deaths-in-agriculture-2015-19.htm>.

27 ILO/97/23, “ILO warns on farm safety Agriculture mortality rates remain high Pesticides pose major health risks to global workforce,” October 22, 1997, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-warns-farm-safety-agriculture-mortality-rates-remain-high-pesticides>.

28 “Farm & Agricultural Accident Statistics,” Tranter Cleere, 2015, <https://www.trantercleere.co.uk/accident-claims/farm-accidents/farm-agricultural-accident-statistics>.

29 ILO, “Child labour in agriculture | International Labour Organization”

30 Kathryn Reid, “Child labor: Facts, FAQs, and how to help,” World Vision, August 9, 2024, <https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-labor-facts>.

31 “More than 1 in 5 children are engaged in child labor in the world’s poorest countries,” Anadolu Ajansı, June 11, 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/more-than-1-in-5-children-are-engaged-in-child-labor-in-the-worlds-poorest-countries/2919826>.

32 Florian Zandt, “Infographic: Which Region Has the Highest Number of Child Laborers?” Statista, June 20, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/chart/32470/estimated-number-of-children-age-5-17-in-child-labor-in-regions-with-highest-prevalence/>.

punishable child labor. Non-hazardous agricultural activities can yield high benefits with child participation.<sup>33</sup> It acts as a healthy medium of intergenerational skills and can act to ensure children’s food security. So, what is the threshold for problematic child labor in the agricultural sector vs a healthy balance? Child labor in this case is categorized as being prevalent enough in a child’s livelihood that it compromises other more paramount priorities. This includes when it acts in danger to the child’s physical health, and mental health, and interferes with pursuits in education and self-development. Factors to consider when it comes to determining the degree of acceptability are the conditions of work, adult oversight, the age of the children involved, and how dangerous the activity is.

Despite the global commitment to end child labor by 2025, we still see a continuing rise in children who get caught in child labor. From 2018 to 2022, there was an increase of 8.4 million child laborers who engaged in child labor with the agricultural sector.<sup>34</sup> Limited coverage of agricultural and family-related engagement within national-level legislation acts continue the facilitation of child labor. This limits many legal frameworks that don’t have proper distinctions of what child labor is and how it overlaps with family-related engagement. Furthermore, many lesser-developed regions have a fragmented workforce, and fail to have successful mobilizations of unionization efforts. Finally, due to a lack of resources or a high degree of remoteness, it becomes difficult to have mediating bodies effectively monitor and uphold regulations. Even locating and creating a database of these locations has become challenging with the recent rise of supply chain complexity in an increasingly globalized international market.

When addressing the issue of child labor in the agricultural sector, it is important to recognize that this is an issue of human rights. Children ought to have the right to determine their future and pursue that path. However, instances of forced labor have become so prevalent within the agricultural sector that they are restricted from pursuing other endeavors and actively jeopardize their life and safety. To properly

address the crises of common ethics of child labor, the FAO has repeatedly vocalized addressing the underlying causes of child labor. Within the agricultural sector these root causes include poverty within rural areas and lack of social programs and frameworks that can act as socioeconomic safeguards.

As of July 2024, the current iteration of the FAO framework on ending child labor in agriculture aims to tackle the issue at all levels. This includes global, regional, and national susceptibilities that continue to facilitate the ongoing threat of child labor. The framework attempts to increase coherence and synergy among varying bodies in the respective sectors. This is to ensure that the lack of transparency in information is not a hindrance to solving this issue. This framework primarily addresses the actions of the FAO itself but is also relevant to all FAO-related governing bodies and participating Member States. These other included actors utilize the framework to have a general outline of effective practices in the mitigation of child labor. This framework has shown to be especially successful in Asia and the Pacific Islands. In 2008, this region had 113.6 million child laborers, and this has been cut by over half by 2020, and is expected to reach a record low of 22.7 million by 2030.<sup>35</sup> Properly understanding the current version of the framework is required to not have redundant, and thus ineffective solutions on this topic. It is also imperative to understand that while aspects of the framework may be logically effective in solving the issue, implementation may not be as easy. This discrepancy between theory and practice is required to be understood to propose effective and long-lasting solutions in combating child labor within the agricultural sector.

Child laborers are also susceptible to human trafficking and exploitation. Children are the future and should be protected. While it is a significant issue, vulnerabilities faced by laborers do not end there. Children among other vulnerable groups are also at heightened risk of sexual exploitation. The threat of exploitation is large in environments where supervision is minimal, and power dynamics are used for coercion. This affects many vulnerable groups and actively highlights more

33 Michael Bourdillon, “Ignoring the benefits of children’s work,” openDemocracy, November 14, 2017, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/beyond-trafficking-and-slavery/ignoring-benefits-of-children-s-work/>.  
 34 UNICEF, “Child labour rises to 160 million – first increase in two decades”  
 35 Zandt, Florian, “Infographic: Which Region Has the Highest Number of Child Laborers?”

insidious problems within the agricultural sector.

## Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation is the abuse or attempted abuse of an individual through the leverage of power, trust, or vulnerability for any sexual purpose.<sup>36</sup> Exchanging money, employment, goods, or services in exchange for sex are all common examples of sexual exploitation in the agricultural sector.<sup>37</sup> Many laborers in the agricultural sector are classified as vulnerable workers. As a result, they experience pressures that make them especially susceptible to forms of sexual exploitation. Many are migrant workers, financially impoverished, or children, and feel restricted in their autonomy. Specifically, forced sexual harassment, assault, and trafficking, are the forms of exploitation that many of the vulnerable workers within the agricultural sector are subjected to.

Sexual exploitation of any kind is a human rights violation. By revoking the autonomy of victims, one is unable to practice and exercise their liberties and is strictly prohibited under international human rights law. Because of this, it is imperative

<sup>36</sup> “Gouvernement du Québec,” Gouvernement du Québec, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.quebec.ca/en/family-and-support-for-individuals/violence/sexual-exploitation/definition>.

<sup>37</sup> “Defining sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment,” UNHCR, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/how-we-work/tackling-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment/what-sexual-exploitation>.

<sup>38</sup> “About trafficking in persons and human rights,” OHCHR, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/trafficking-in-persons/about-trafficking-persons-and-human-rights>.

<sup>39</sup> Anna Fleck, “Chart: Sexual Exploitation Drives Forced Labor Profits,” Statista, March 19, 2024, <https://www.statista.com/chart/31940/estimated-illegal-profits-from-forced-labor-by-category/>.

to tackle the issue of sexual exploitation within the agricultural sector from a human rights-based approach. This puts the victim of the exploitation at the center of all effective credible action. It also works to target the underlying root issues that cause sexual exploitation and leaves victims vulnerable in the first place. In addition to this it assists in revoking impunity to traffickers and restoring justice to the victims. This would be done through tackling patterns of discrimination, unjust distribution of power, social complicity, and the market demand for goods that have come from exploitation.<sup>38</sup>

In the international market, sexual exploitation is a large variable and is the biggest driver of forced labor profits in 2024. According to the ILO, in just the first three months of 2024, sexual exploitation accounted for some USD 172.6 billion worldwide of forced labor profits.<sup>39</sup> This breaks down furthermore into its specific regions. Europe and Central Asia account for USD 58.6 billion, Asia and the Pacific Islands account for USD 48.8 billion, the Americas account for USD 16.1 billion, Africa accounts for USD 16.1 billion, and the Arab states (Middle East and North Africa) account for USD



Woman and child at farmers' rally, Bhopal, 2005

Credit: Ekta Parishad



14.6 billion.

Sexual harassment is any form of unwanted sexual behavior that makes someone feel uncomfortable, humiliated, or scared.<sup>40</sup> This can manifest verbally or physically, and is particularly common in the agricultural sector. In 2020, studies showed that female farmworkers face sexual harassment at a rate of two to three times more likely than in other work sectors.<sup>41</sup> This is due to multiple reasons. First, the agricultural sector is heavily populated by vulnerable workers. This power imbalance leads to a higher likelihood of perpetrators engaging in exploitative sexual harassment. Second, lack of proper training creates environments in which sexual harassment becomes more common. Due diligence is expected to be practiced by employers to prevent an environment in which sexual harassment occurs. However, many employers are not equipped with effective protocol to uphold due diligence. Many employers are in areas in which they are not trained how to uphold a healthy and fair working environment. At the local level, particularly in less developed rural areas, training is not a requirement for employers to go through. Thus, bad conditions are more likely to occur. Avenues for assistance and precautionary measures are not always present within the workplace, driving up the frequency of sexual harassment. This ought not to be misconstrued with individual training events, but long-lasting healthy practices that limit sexual harassment.<sup>42</sup>

Sexual assault happens when someone physically touches another party in a sexual manner without consent.<sup>43</sup> In the agricultural sector, sexual assault is primarily committed against women by men in positions of power. These positions include

foremen, farm labor contractors, farm owners, and other co-workers.<sup>44</sup> Immigrant women are most vulnerable to sexual violence. Both their migratory status and their gender poses further vulnerability to sexual violence. It is important to note that any form of power difference can lead to sexual assault. This is one of the strongest factors in predicting frequency of sexual assault. Those that are exploited for labor or are actively trafficked are in these positions and are vulnerable to this reality.

An example of this can be seen in the United States of America (USA). Women in the USA make up 28 percent of the state's farm workers, leaving them as the minority within their industry. In addition to this, 23 percent of laborers are foreign born and documented and another 41 percent are foreign born and undocumented according to the USDA.<sup>45</sup> As such, these migrant laborers, primarily Latinx in identity, that fall under these large categories are especially susceptible to sexual violence. Studies have recently shown that 80 percent of Mexican and Mexican American women have experienced sexual harassment, and some more extreme forms of sexual violence.<sup>46</sup> In perspective, this is over double the frequency when compared to women that do not share a Mexican or Mexican American identity within the agricultural sector.<sup>47</sup>

Sex trafficking is the forced recruitment, transportation, and transfer of another person through means that revoke their autonomy for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Force, fraud, and deception are all means in which people become subject and victim to trafficking. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC), 71 percent of all sex trafficking victims are women and girls.<sup>48</sup>

40 "Sexual Harassment | U.S." Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.eeoc.gov/sexual-harassment>.

41 "Sexual Harassment Prevention | Pacific Northwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center," DEOHS, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://deohs.washington.edu/pnash/sexual-harassment>.

42 "Why Harassment Training is Important for Your Organization," EVERFI, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://everfi.com/blog/workplace-training/why-harassment-training-is-important-for-your-organization/>.

43 "What is sexual assault?" Rape Crisis, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/types-of-sexual-violence/what-is-sexual-assault/>.

44 Kathleen Sexsmith, Francisco A. Reyes, and Megan A. Griffin, "Sexual violence is a pervasive threat for female farm workers – here's how the US could reduce their risk," *The Conversation*, July 31, 2023, <https://theconversation.com/sexual-violence-is-a-pervasive-threat-for-female-farm-workers-heres-how-the-us-could-reduce-their-risk-204871>.

45 "Farm Labor," USDA ERS, accessed July 17, 2024, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/>.

46 Nicole J. Kim, Victoria B. Vásquez, Elizabeth Torres, R.M. B. Nicola, and Catherine Karr, "Breaking the Silence: Sexual Harassment of Mexican Women Farmworkers," *Journal of Agromedicine* 21, no. 2 (January 21, 2016): 154–62, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1059924x.2016.1143903>.

47 Gayle Mahoney, "Sexual Violence Is a Pervasive Threat for Female Farm Workers — Morning AgClips — Rural Minds," *Rural Minds*, September 3, 2024, <https://www.ruralminds.org/mental-health-news-for-rural-america/sexual-violence-is-a-pervasive-threat-for-female-farm-workers-morning-agclips>.

48 "Report: Majority of trafficking victims are women and girls; one-third children," *The United Nations*, December 22, 2016, <https://>

The FAO has called upon significant and transformative changes to the formal and informal social systems that actively disempower women on farms and in the food sector around the world.<sup>49</sup> By doing so, the FAO expects a significant decrease in cases of sexual exploitation in all its forms within the agricultural sector. To properly understand the full issue, one must see all the enabling characteristics of sexual exploitation. The workplace environments and the disenfranchisement of women, within regions that culturally diminish their value, are both active facilitators that must be properly addressed to diminish sexual exploitation long term. The issue of sexual exploitation within agriculture is not a root issue, but rather a symptom of the improper treatment of certain classes due to their vulnerability status. This relates to the broader challenges that migrant workers face today. Migrant workers are another vulnerable class in agriculture. These workers are driven by the need to look for a better life for themselves and loved ones, however, face poor conditions because of their susceptibility. The nature of their work, language barriers, and fear of deportation creates an environment where labor exploitation and human trafficking can thrive. Understanding the experience that migrant workers actively face is important in understanding the systematic issues that breed such vulnerabilities in the international agricultural sector.

## Migrant Workers

A migrant worker is an individual who moves to another country to find employment in a field of work. The country in which a migrant worker moves to for work is commonly referred to as a host country. In their new host country, migrant workers commonly face discrimination at a significantly higher rate than that of their other colleagues. They experience unfair recruitment practices, higher rates of trafficking, unequal

access to employment rights, and experience workplace racism.<sup>50</sup> Migrant workers make up a large portion of the agricultural industry. For example, in the United States, 76 percent of the agricultural workforce is migrant workers.<sup>51</sup> Since migrant workers make up such a notable portion of the agricultural sector, the conditions and experiences they face must be considered to foster a healthy and ethical industry.

Considering this, migration is directly linked to the work and efforts of the FAO. Since the FAO aims to alleviate poverty, provide sustainable agricultural management, and end food insecurity, the concerns of migrant workers are of paramount importance.<sup>52</sup> Migrant workers are especially left vulnerable to the many issues that those in the agricultural sector face. The FAO is in a unique position to properly support countries on the topic of migrancy status and human rights. Their mission aligns with the concerns that agricultural migrant workers have and enables transparency between relevant states. The FAO aims to specifically support countries in addressing the rural dimensions of migration, its implications for rural populations, and its impact on the future of agriculture and food systems.

In many regions, migrant workers are essential for the framework of food systems. They make up many of the levels of the agricultural production system, including farming and distribution. Since the time of year is an important factor within agricultural production, many face employment that is heavily dependent on seasonal factors.<sup>53</sup>

Rural areas are heavily affected by the influx of agricultural migration.<sup>54</sup> This is because their rural areas of origin lose skilled agricultural laborers. Those who stay behind, predominantly women and children, are negatively impacted. It is also

[www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/12/report-majority-of-trafficking-victims-are-women-and-girls-one-third-children/](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/12/report-majority-of-trafficking-victims-are-women-and-girls-one-third-children/)

49 Kathleen Sexsmith, Francisco A. Reyes, and Megan A. Griffin, "Reducing the Risks to Female Farm Workers," Food Manufacturing, August 1, 2023, <https://www.foodmanufacturing.com/safety/news/22868897/reducing-the-risks-to-female-farm-workers>.

50 "Migrant Workers • Business & Human Rights Navigator," Business & Human Rights Navigator, accessed July 18, 2024, <https://bhr-navigator.unglobalcompact.org/issues/migrant-workers/>.

51 Iqbal Pittalwala, "Mired in silence: Southern California's farmworkers lack health resources, study says," University of California, January 5, 2023, <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/mired-silence-southern-californias-farmworkers-lack-health-resources-study-says>.

52 "FAO and migration | FAO," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/migration/en/>.

53 "Migration | Policy Support and Governance Gateway | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations | Policy Support and Governance," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/policy-themes/migration/en/>.

54 "FAO's work on rural migration," FAO Knowledge Repository, October 27, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7266en>.

important to note that rural areas host many displaced peoples. Six out of ten refugees and over half of internally displaced peoples reside currently within rural areas.<sup>55</sup> A refugee is any person who has been forced to flee or escape their country of origin to another because of war, persecution, or any form of violence.<sup>56</sup> An internally displaced person (IDP) is any person or group that has been forced to leave their homes or places of residence without crossing an internationally recognized border.<sup>57</sup> Both of these types of migrants are important to discuss when it comes to the effect on the agricultural sector in both their region of origin and current area of semi-residence. Their region of origin refers to where they are originally from. The area of semi-residence is where they have been displaced to. When it comes to their region of origin, what factors led them to being displaced, and how can this be prevented? Large influxes to their region of semi-residence can also cause shifts to that region's industry. With such many workers, good conditions and fair compensation are both likely to in turn decrease. Their forced displacement affects local dynamics and community relationships, particularly when it comes to the distribution of natural resources and services. Due to this the FAO has stated that they aim to assist the issues facing migration with both a humanitarian and resilience-building approach. Resilience building is the incorporation of both bottom-up and top-down activities in order to facilitate community unionization, logistical capacity, and resources.<sup>58</sup>

Migrant workers often experience unfair recruitment practices at a significantly higher rate. This manifests in multiple ways, one of which including the persistent migrancy pay gap. The ILO has found that in high income countries, migrant workers earn nearly 13 percent less than national workers. In the most extreme cases, the pay gap widens to 42 percent

less than national workers.<sup>59</sup> This is because many employers leverage their migrant employee's migrancy status to get away with lower pay. They also could be paid less for other reasons. Bigotry is a common factor when it comes to pay discrepancy. If someone is in a vulnerable class, such as migrant status, one could hold biased ideas against them and be less willing to voluntarily compensate them. In addition to this, some migrant workers are forced to put up an immigration bond to work. An immigration bond is a type of bail bond that allows for someone to be released from immigration detention while their case is being processed.<sup>60</sup> When the obligor posts up the bond, they make a guarantee that the noncitizen must complete their obligations to the government during their stay.

Migrants are also commonly lied to about the conditions or terms of their labor. An example of this can be found within the tomato farms of Southern Italy.<sup>61</sup> Many of these workers come from Africa or from Eastern European countries. These workers were recruited with promises of decent wages and fair working conditions. However, they instead found themselves working for long hours at extremely low wages. The conditions in the fields were so bad, that many had to set up and live inside makeshift camps, isolated from any sanitation or basic services. They also had their autonomy stripped away from them as they could not flee. Any instance of potential retaliation or escape was met with physical abuse perpetrated by employers upon their migrant employees.

Migrant workers are especially vulnerable to trafficking. In fact, the 2022 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery determined that migrant workers are three times more likely to be forced into human trafficking in the private sector compared to local workers.<sup>62</sup> This issue is getting worse, with an estimated

55 "Forced Displacement in Urban Areas - What Needs to Be Done | IASC," Interagency Standing Committee, April 19, 2018, <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2018-04/forceddisplacementinurbanareasweb2.pdf>.

56 "What is a Refugee? Definition and Meaning," USA for UNHCR, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>.

57 "About internally displaced persons | OHCHR," OHCHR, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-internally-displaced-persons/about-internally-displaced-persons>.

58 "Resilience Building," People in Need's Knowledge and Learning Centre, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://resources.peopleinneed.net/documents/29-1805-pin-rdd-strategy-resilience-building-v5-final.pdf>.

59 Olivia Long, "The migrant pay gap: Understanding wage differences between migrants and nationals," European Website on Integration, December 14, 2020, [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/migrant-pay-gap-understanding-wage-differences-between-migrants-and-nationals\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/migrant-pay-gap-understanding-wage-differences-between-migrants-and-nationals_en).

60 "Post a Bond," ICE, August 20, 2024, <https://www.ice.gov/detain/detention-management/bonds>.

61 Andrew Wasley, "Tomato slaves. Across Italy an invisible army of... | by Andrew Wasley | Migrant Workers," Medium, May 25, 2014, <https://medium.com/migrant-workers/tomato-slaves-b342d6a36ce8>.

62 "Global Estimates of Modern Slavery 2022," Walk Free, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.walkfree.org/reports/global-estimates-of-modern-slavery-2022/>.

10 million more migrant workers getting caught in human trafficking from 2017 till 2021. This rising statistic and preexisting problem gets compounded with recent crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, and armed conflicts left more people vulnerable to migration status and getting trapped within human trafficking. These are all examples of crises. Crisis destabilizes regions and dramatically shifts their economies. As such, people sometimes attempt to flee these regions or are forced to. This can include destruction of infrastructure, personal persecution, or any unsafe living condition. Because of this sudden shift, many that are caught in human trafficking come from destabilized regions in crises.

Migrant workers within the agricultural sector face further difficulty when it comes to their working environments. Due to the leverage that their employers usually hold over them, many don't have the ability to exercise basic employment rights. In addition to this, they are usually denied access to financial pay for their services.<sup>63</sup> As mentioned before, many migrant workers are paid at a significantly smaller wage when compared to national workers, but often, they are denied their pay altogether. In addition to this they are denied many other benefits that are commonplace to other employees. Social security in the USA is any government system that provides monetary assistance to peoples that may not have sufficient financial income and resources. This social protection is actively denied from migrant workers, with the ILO estimating that the number of migrant workers that have been deprived of this right enter the millions.<sup>64</sup> They are also commonly denied from entering trade unions or accessing union labor rights. Trade unions are collaborative efforts of employees within an industry or organization to advocate for better working conditions through action and bargaining. Many times, the concerns and rights of migrant workers are not mentioned within these efforts, and sometimes migrant workers are actively excluded from the conversation. On top of all the means in which they have been actively wronged, they cannot

even seek proper justice or restorative action for the labor rights they have been deprived of. This is because they usually are also deprived of legal proceedings and remediation efforts. This is due to gaps in national policy that fail to address the wellbeing of migrant workers.

There is a consistent lack of concern for the wellbeing and rights of migrant workers. A factor that may contribute to this is racism and discrimination. Due to their migration status, there is a high likelihood that migrant workers would fall into a racial or ethnic minority as they are not working in their host country. This applies to nearly all migrant workers, with only outlying cases to show otherwise.<sup>65</sup> In the USA, 47 percent of immigrant employees reported experiencing discrimination within their work.<sup>66</sup> This includes being harassed or threatened at work due to immigration status, given worse shifts or little control over working hours, and given fewer opportunities for raises and promotions.

The experience of migrant workers is a magnifier of preexisting issues within the agricultural sector, and as such understanding the experience of migrant workers is imperative for a deeper understanding. The FAO has made verbal commitments to bettering the experience of migrant labor, recognizing their difficulties and alleviating it in both a legislative and social level. Further efforts need to be made to see long term benefit as these issues persist and have only gotten worse over time.

The issues that migrant workers deal with are compounded by the threat of debt bondage. Migrant workers and other vulnerable classes rely on financial assistance for multiple reasons. Many times, they do not have access to local social services and as such rely on financial help from bad actors. These bad actors make these debts unmanageable and take advantage of these vulnerable classes. As we move from the issues that migrant workers face onto that of debt bondage, it is made evident that the economic experiences and desperation of workers breeds exploitation. The lack of oversight creates

63 "What is Remuneration? | Definition and Examples," ADP, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.adp.com/resources/articles-and-insights/articles/w/what-is-remuneration.aspx>.

64 "Social Protection for Migrant Workers, Refugees, and their Families," N.p.: ILO, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://www.ilo.org/topics/labour-migration/areas-work/labour-migration/social-protection-migrant-workers-refugees-and-their-families>.

65 Philip Martin, "Labour migration data," Migration Data Portal, June 12, 2024, <https://www.migrationdataportal.org/themes/labour-migration>.

66 Marisa Gerber, "Immigrant workers describe discrimination they face on the job," Los Angeles Times, October 19, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2023-10-19/immigrant-workers-report-high-leves-of-discrimination-on-the-job>.

grounds for these forms of exploitation to persist until today.

## Debt Bondage

Debt Bondage, also known as debt slavery or bonded labor, is where a laborer is forced into labor to repay a debt that they have incurred.<sup>67</sup> Debt bondage affects approximately 8.1 million people in the world today, with the majority of people being forced into labor within the agricultural sector.<sup>68</sup> However, many experts estimate that this statistic is deflated and that the current issue at hand may be significantly worse. To understand the full degree of issue when it comes to debt bondage, one must understand its characteristics to tackle the various causes of debt bondage.

The first requirement of debt bondage is having a debt. A debt acts as an obligation for a person to repay that debt in some fashion.<sup>69</sup> This is a constricting obligation, meaning that one cannot escape this duty without paying. An individual or a member of their family incurs a debt, generally through some form of a loan or advanced payment. This debt can be attributed to various reasons. This includes limited financial resources for basic survival needs, medical expenses, the covering of costs for travel and migration, etc. The latter of these examples is especially prevalent when it comes to debt bondage. Migrant workers, especially those who are undocumented, are susceptible to being caught in debt bondage.<sup>70</sup>

This leads to the second characteristic of debt bondage, the use of labor as repayment. Individuals who have incurred debt are compelled to work for their creditors to repay their debt. These individuals often lack the financial resources to do so otherwise.<sup>71</sup> Undocumented migrant workers in the agricultural sector suffer conditions of labor that are

significantly worse.<sup>72</sup> In addition to this, the compounding of debt does not need to follow any regulatory bodies. This is because the details of their debt agreement and financial value of labor are off the record, and undocumented workers do not have effective means to report labor violations. Reporting would jeopardize their well-being due to their undocumented status. These conditions are cruel, and compensation is slim, entrapping laborers in a series of human rights violations.

The length is indefinite in period, as the time required to pay back their debt is undefined. They are set to repay their debt by matching the cost of their debt. The value of their labor is also set by their debtor, meaning they can set predatorily low rates. This assigned cost of labor is usually substantially deflated due to a lack of effective regulation. Furthermore, debt incurs exponentially over time making it nearly impossible to repay.<sup>73</sup>

If their compensation for labor is so limited, what is restricting those caught in debt bondage to pursue other forms of income to repay their debt? The contracts in which people sign with their creditors have a requirement that their labor is conducted under them. This is because of the financial reward they get from the cyclical nature of debts and their interest over time. The discrepancy in the financial cost creditors wish to get according to their contractual obligations versus the actual pervasive nature of their contract operates as a form of financial and labor exploitation. Laborers caught in contracts of debt bondage have their mobility and autonomy taken away from them due to their contract. This is pervasive in accountability and regulation as it is difficult to catch.<sup>74</sup>

The agricultural sector is a dangerous one and a series of required regulations must be followed to ensure the safety and well-being of laborers. However, this primarily applies to

67 "What is bonded labour?" Anti-Slavery International, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/bonded-labour/>.

68 Miranda Lintzenich, "The Deal with Debt Bondage," *Dressembler*, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.dressembler.org/blog/debtbondage>.

69 "Who we are modern slavery - Human trafficking, forced labour and debt bondage," GLAA, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.gla.gov.uk/who-we-are/modern-slavery/who-we-are-modern-slavery-human-trafficking-forced-labour-and-debt-bondage>.

70 Slobodan Djajić, and Alexandra Vinogradova, "Undocumented Migrants in Debt," *Labour Economics* 21 (April I, 2023): 15-24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.labeco.2012.12.004>.

71 "Bonded Labor | Debt Bondage or Peonage," *End Slavery Now*, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.endslaverynow.org/learn/slavery-today/bonded-labor>.

72 "About Human Trafficking - United States Department of State," *State Department*, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/humantrafficking-about-human-trafficking/>.

73 Isabelle Guérin and G. Venkatasubramanian, "The Socio-Economy of Debt. Revisiting Debt Bondage in Times of Financialization," *Geoforum* 137 (December 1, 2022): 178-184, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2020.05.020>.

74 GLAA, "Who we are modern slavery - Human trafficking, forced labour and debt bondage."

legitimate practices. Many of those who utilize debt bondage to their advantage do so illegitimately. As a result, insurance of proper working conditions is no longer seen as a requirement, but a hindrance and limiter on financial prospects.<sup>75</sup> Debt bondage is usually defined by labor exploitation and poor working conditions, yielding psychological and physical harm to participants. However, why would creditors risk the well-being of those who are in debt to them? Would it not be detrimental to the long-term use and financial yield if the means of their financial compensation are no longer able to work?

This is answered by the last core component of debt bondage which is the generational transfer of bondage.<sup>76</sup> Many times, creditors are not concerned with the well-being of their indebted laborers if they become unable to continue their labor. If this occurs, there is a clause in their contract that states that the debt can be passed on through generational bondage. Generational bondage is when a person in debt is unable to pay back their debt for any reason and that debt is passed on to a family member of that person. This traps not just individuals but ensures families in a cycle of bonded labor.<sup>77</sup> Any time that is lost due to loss of skill and efficiency only acts to prolong the debt itself, yielding higher interest rates and grander stockpiles of debt.

The cyclical nature of debt bondage is exploitative and is categorized as multiple violations of human rights. The magnitude of debt bondage within the agricultural sector is so immense that it calls into question why this long-lasting issue has not seen resolution. Many attempts have been made by international bodies to do so including the Forced Labour Convention (No. 29), the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105), the Palermo Protocol, and more. However, they have all failed to create long-term effective

solutions in the abolishment of debt bondage.<sup>78</sup> These legislations had implementation challenges, were weakly enforced, lacked local awareness, and provided insufficient support for victims. As a result of these factors, previous attempts have been unsuccessful. Solutions that tackle debt bondage require multiple factors within the agricultural sector to be analyzed.

Firstly, whilst effective legislation is generally present, it is generally not matched by effective enforcement. Thus, strengthening pre-existing laws and ensuring strict and wide-encompassing enforcement is a must. Many who fall into debt bondage are usually unaware of the exploitative nature of their contracts, due to financial illiteracy and inexperience. As such, raising public awareness of debt bondage and things people should look out for to avoid instances of debt bondage would dramatically decrease those who become entrapped in it.<sup>79</sup> Regardless of awareness, many are caught in debt bondage as it becomes their only way out of financially undesirable situations. Therefore, providing effective social programs and alternatives to incurring such a debt will enable many to avoid it together. Economic support such as access to fair credit and better opportunities can help prevent individuals from falling into debt bondage. Finally, support services such as rehabilitation to survivors of debt bondage can assist with rehabilitating them into society. Often, even if they can escape their conditions, people can still be left psychologically scarred and left without resources. The situation is even more dire if all the money the victim had, went towards their creditor.

Debt bondage within the agricultural sector remains a critical human rights issue that requires effective and concerted efforts. Collaboration must be seen from all legislative institutions, international organizations, and the global civil society to effectively eradicate it.<sup>80</sup>

75 "FORCED LABOR IN SUPPLY CHAINS: - Addressing Risks and Safeguarding Workers' Freedoms," Fair Labor Association, accessed August 13, 2024, [https://www.fairlabor.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/forced\\_labor\\_guidance\\_update\\_july-2019.pdf](https://www.fairlabor.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/forced_labor_guidance_update_july-2019.pdf).

76 Claire Meyer, "Bonded Labor Threatens Supply Chains," ASIS International, October 1, 2020, <https://www.asisonline.org/security-management-magazine/articles/2020/10/bonded-labor-threatens-supply-chains/>.

77 Natalie Torres, "Generational Financial Trauma: How It Holds You Back From Your Goals and How You Can Break the Cycle | Homeownership Hub," Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.fairway.com/articles/generational-financial-trauma-how-it-holds-you-back-from-your-goals>.

78 "A/RES/55/25 United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime," The United Nations, January 8, 2001, [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_55\\_25.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_25.pdf).

79 "FACT SHEET: LABOR TRAFFICKING (English) | The Administration for Children and Families," The Administration for Children and Families, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/archive/otip/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-labor-trafficking-english>.

80 Wendy Zeldin, "Article United Nations: Report on Debt Bondage," Library of Congress, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/item/global-legal-monitor/2016-09-26/united-nations-report-on-debt-bondage/>.

Debt bondage is an overarching issue that opens the door to further abuses. Deception, wage theft, and other forms of exploitative practices all act to harm the experience of vulnerable workers. Workers caught in this cycle are misled in the terms of their employment. They also may be forced to work for little to no pay. They also may have their wages be illegally deducted from. These injustices have been recognized by the international community and actions have been taken. But, despite these efforts, we still experience and witness issues today. Understanding the historical context of UN involvement and the policies we have implemented is crucial to addressing the ongoing challenges. Where we previously failed needs to be recognized so that we can learn from our mistakes and succeed moving forward.

### Deception and Wage Theft and UN Involvement and Policies

Wage theft and deceptive practices are common within the agricultural industry today. Wage theft happens when an employer does not fully financially compensate workers according to their local law. This can include paying less than a minimum wage, not paying overtime, or not allowing them

<sup>81</sup> Paul Kim, “Business Insider: Wage theft is when an employer withholds benefits, such as breaks or compensation, that an employee has already worked for,” National Employment Law Project, July 12, 2022, <https://www.nelp.org/wage-theft-is-when-an-employer-withholds-benefits-such-as-breaks-or-compensation-that-an-employee-has-already-worked-for/>.

<sup>82</sup> “Deceptive recruitment and coercion - InfoStories,” International Labour Organization, accessed July 19, 2024, <https://webapps.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Forced-Labour/Deceptive-Recruitment-and-Coercion#introduction-deceptive-recruitment-and-coercion>.

to eat and rest.<sup>81</sup> Many times, wage theft goes unreported. This can be because they are not aware of what they are owed, or they fear retaliation that can jeopardize their job. Deception is the most common form of recruitment when it comes to the concept of forced labor. This is when an employer of some sorts falsely advertises the conditions of the job they are recruiting for.<sup>82</sup> If one is withheld on their compensation, it is a form of deception, and wage theft acts as one of the most pervasive subcategories of deception in labor.

The FAO has not explicitly discussed wage theft and deception as a concept or issue. However, it very much aligns with the goals and missions of the FAO. The FAO aims to better the future of agriculture and food systems, and since deception is the most common form of forced labor, it is one that commonly plagues the agricultural industry.

If one enters labor with conditions they did not agree to, what is stopping them from leaving and pursuing other avenues? Many are actively coerced into staying through multiple reasons. Many have already been addressed, such as debt bondage, physical restriction, and threat to migrancy status. However, one that directly falls into the category of contract

FAO Headquarters  
 Credit: Scopritore



deception is contract substitution. Contract substitution is when a worker signs a contract in their home country, only to have them replaced with a less favorable one upon arrival.<sup>83</sup> One can agree to favorable working conditions before migrating, however once they arrive at their new location, they are entrapped by their contractor. This is because they often do not have an effective means to return home by themselves. Previous international solutions that rely on these new iterations of their contract fail to acknowledge the existence of an original contract. Laborers are forced to sign these new contracts as they are physically entrapped outside their home country and do not have any other alternative. Even if they try to reject the new conditions, they are likely physically threatened or punished for trying to retrieve their original terms of contract. Many illicit employers do this to avoid regional government issues as law enforcement can effectively persecute them without semi-legitimate contractual agreement.

However, many can even bypass this contract substitution by having the aid of corrupt local governments.<sup>84</sup> Many lucrative agricultural production sites have the aid of local law enforcement to prevent workers from seeking legal recourse of assistance. Since many sites of agriculture are conducted in rural and isolated areas, proper monitoring is usually limited, leaving a blind spot for both the national and international bodies of regulation. Malicious actors within these local regulatory bodies are commonly bribed financially with a portion of the profits made at the expense of forced laborers.

Wage theft and deception have been common within the agricultural sector throughout history. Bad actor employers sometimes attempt to optimize their financial gain at the expense of their employees. So, if an unethical employer sees a means to not fully compensate so they can keep it to themselves, they would do so. This is not resulting from legislation, but rather individual lack of ethics. Since it can be

found within an individual's human nature to compel them to engage in wage theft or deception, it is not restricted by an era. As such, it has been present throughout history. An example of this can be seen within the late 19th century and early 20th century Congo Free State (present day Democratic Republic of Congo).<sup>85</sup> The Congo Free State under this era was under control of King Leopold II of Belgium. During this time, the Belgian government exploited labor of the Congolese people for rubber extraction to extract and export. Laborers were forced to meet labor quotas and were actively deceived about the conditions of their labor. The Belgian colonial empire during this time promised the Congolese people long term compensation and that their partnership would be for the benefit of both the individual laborers and the region. This was not the case, as both workers and the region have been actively deprived of compensation and received only brutal punishment as a replacement. Millions of the Congolese died and many of the children were abducted, creating long term turmoil within the region. This extreme example of mass deception, theft, and labor exploitation demonstrates an extremity within the agricultural sector. The Congolese are still affected by the colonial actions taken by the Belgian empire today. Many of which actively seek some form of compensatory reparations, even though the full extent of the damage is irreversible.<sup>86</sup>

Many actions taken by the United Nations have been implemented in response to promoting accurate and legitimate working practices in response to wage theft, deception, and other forms of labor exploitation. Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 classifies a right to work as a human right. A part of this includes legitimate and decent conditions of work that are upheld by the employer and that without any forms of discrimination are entitled to fair and equal pay.<sup>87</sup> The ILO has been the most notable body of the United Nations that has worked to

83 Sarah Beech, "Contract Substitution: A Means of Enslaving the Most Vulnerable," Dressemer, April 29, 2021, <https://www.dressemer.org/blog/contractsubstitution>.

84 "UNODC to take on corruption enabling forced labour in the fishing industry," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, July 17, 2017, <https://www.unodc.org/roseap/en/what-we-do/anti-corruption/topics/08-forced-labour-in-the-fishing-industry.html>.

85 Samuel Momodu, "Congo Free State (1885-1908) •," Blackpast, January 20, 2023, <https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/congo-free-state-1885-1908/>.

86 Annette Ekin, "The children colonial Belgium stole from African mothers," Al Jazeera, February 3, 2021, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/2/3/the-children-colonial-belgium-stole-from-africa>.

87 "Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations," The United Nations, December 10, 1948, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.



directly address wage theft and deception as it most falls under their mission. The ILO most notably held the Protection of Wages Convention (No. 95) of 1949 to ensure that wages are regularly paid and condemned any form of unlawful deduction of such pay.<sup>88</sup> Finally, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) (2018) indicates in objective 6 to facilitate fair and ethical and ethical recruitment and to prevent wage theft and deception.<sup>89</sup> This objective especially emphasizes the disproportionate effect that migrant workers experience when it comes to these iterations of forced labor.

While these international statements help outline how prevalent the international community believes addressing these forms of extortion are, they are not a solution in themselves. One set of solutions is the UN General Assembly resolution 70/1 (2015), also known as “Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.<sup>90</sup> Operative clause 27 aims to build stronger economic foundations in order to foster fair and decent work for all. It also specifically aims to end forced labor and human trafficking, both issues as aforementioned common within the agricultural sector. However, even though its plan of action has not met its deadline of 2030, its current progress seems unlikely to achieve this goal. This is particularly because the solutions provided cast too wide a net, with lack of consideration for regional variables that may make limiting wage theft and deception more pervasive.

This can be addressed when looking at another resolution that has been passed is the UNHRC Resolution 34/17 (2017) also known as “Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights”. This resolution addresses the adverse issue of how local factors and regional sovereignty

work in hand with upholding human rights and means of navigation<sup>91</sup>. This resolution has also not seen mass success in practice due to its narrow scope. As such, in tackling the issue of wage theft, deception, and other iterations of forced labor, one ought to find a middle ground between these two concerns to tackle more pervasive human rights violations.

## Current Status

### Supply Chain Complexity Today

It is important to understand the supply chain in the international agricultural sector. The supply chain refers to all the levels that work together to form the farming industry. There are three core levels of the supply chain. These include upstream, midstream, and downstream.<sup>92</sup> Upstream in this chain refers to input suppliers. Input suppliers provide seeds and farming equipment to the farms themselves. All resources used on farms are provided by the upstream.<sup>93</sup> Secondly, there is the midstream. The midstream refers to the farms and ranches themselves. They act to produce the product of the industry, in this case, food.<sup>94</sup> Then there is the downstream, the final level of the agricultural supply chain. They are the processors, wholesalers, and retailers. Those that take the product and make it market-ready. This includes any process that takes the raw material that the farms provide to get it into the hands of customers. Packaging, marketing, and selling food are all part of the downstream process.<sup>95</sup>

The supply chain may seem simple, but it gets more complex. The three levels of the supply chain are only umbrella terms and not the entire chain. Each level of the supply chain has its

<sup>88</sup> “Convention C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949 (No. 95),” NORMLEX, accessed July 19, 2024, [https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C095](https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C095).

<sup>89</sup> “UN Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,” ILO, February 17, 2019, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/un-global-compact-safe-orderly-and-regular-migration>.

<sup>90</sup> “A/RES/70/1 Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” The United Nations, October 21, 2015, [https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_70\\_1\\_E.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> “A/HRC/RES/34/17 Regional Arrangements for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights,” The United Nations Human Rights Council, April 11, 2017, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g17/089/85/pdf/g1708985.pdf?token=tLeF5pvGd22owkxMuR&fe=true>.

<sup>92</sup> David Zilberman, et al. “Choices Magazine Online,” Choices Magazine Online, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.choicesmagazine.org/choices-magazine/theme-articles/agriculture-and-environmental-policy/understanding-supply-chains-is-crucial-for-good-agricultural-policy>.

<sup>93</sup> “A Deep Dive into Upstream and Downstream Supply Chain,” N.p.: GEP, October 16, 2023, <https://www.gep.com/blog/strategy/upstream-and-downstream-supply-chain-a-deep-dive>.

<sup>94</sup> Janina Grabs, et al., “The role of midstream actors in advancing the sustainability of agri-food supply chains,” *Nature Sustainability* 7 no. 5, (March 18, 2024): 527-35, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-024-01296-9>.

<sup>95</sup> “Downstream investment grew 124% in 2021; upstream saw more deals,” *AgFunder News*, April 13, 2022, <https://agfundernews.com/data-snapshot-downstream-investment-grew-124-in-2021-but-upstream-saw-more-deals>.

unique supply chain. For example, let's look at the upstream supply chain. The purpose of the upstream supply chain is to provide the means of production for the midstream, like seeds and tools. Those seeds and tools need raw materials to create them, creating another upstream. They also need a place to properly be developed into the product itself, which would be another midstream. Furthermore, they need to be processed and distributed to our original upstream, which creates another downstream. This can go on beyond just two layers deep. The supply chain is a complex structure that is made up of many supply chains that go on multiple levels.

Supply chains recently have become even more complex. We live in an advancing world in which all the world's economies are somewhat tied to each other. This structure where countries across the world are all a part of the same global capitalist economy is called neoliberal globalization.<sup>96</sup> In this structure, the entire world acts as states' markets and treats them all as their customers. Because of this, there will be a higher demand for products. To meet this demand, big corporations in industries use the efficiency of complex supply chains. This is even more notable in the agricultural sector as everyone needs food therefore, the demand and supply will also be higher.

Now why is the complexity of the supply chain important to understanding the issue of labor exploitation and human trafficking in the agricultural sector? Because it is so complex and there are so many layers, there are also an equal number of locations in which each step occurs. Each location is its place of business and acts independently of the other steps. For example, if it was known that one supply chain was not following a law or regulation, one would have to search every level of that supply chain. There are around 570 million farms in the world.<sup>97</sup> With each of these farms being associated with their respective supply chains, there are easily over a billion locations that could conduct unfair labor practices or human

trafficking.

Human trafficking is a global crime. This means that regardless of location, the international community would punish such actions if caught. Traffickers commonly use the agricultural industry as a means for its operations. This is because the supply chain is so complex in agriculture that they can avoid getting caught.<sup>98</sup> Those trafficked in agriculture also generally remain out of public sight. Their labor is generally on the farms, isolated from other members of society. The location of many of these farms are in isolated rural areas. As a result, it becomes difficult to see warning signs of labor exploitation and human trafficking due to the complexity and sparseness of the supply chain.

Outsourcing is the act of receiving a good or service from an external source as opposed to an internal one.<sup>99</sup> In the supply chain, many larger companies generally outsource either their upstream or midstream. These are also usually the largest parts of their supply chain. There are also two forms of outsourcing, domestic and international.<sup>100</sup> Domestic outsourcing is when someone outsources within their own country, and international is when they do so from a foreign country. Many larger companies outsource internationally for a few reasons. One of which is that it generally is more cost-efficient. Domestic outsourcing, particularly in more developed states, is expensive. Since larger-scale companies tend to operate out of developed countries, they tend to outsource from rural states.

Another reason larger companies tend to internationally outsource is to increase operational efficiency. Operational efficiency is the business process that measures how well a company uses its resources to produce results.<sup>101</sup> Different factories of production around the world usually specialize in producing a specific product. As such, their operational

<sup>96</sup> Adam Volle, "Neoliberal globalization | Definition, Neoliberalism, Characteristics, Criticisms, & Facts," Britannica, July 30, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/money/neoliberal-globalization>.

<sup>97</sup> Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, "Farm Size and Productivity," Our World in Data, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://ourworldindata.org/farm-size>.

<sup>98</sup> Shelley Cavalieri, "The Eyes that Blind Us: The Overlooked Phenomenon of Trafficking into the Agricultural Sector," National Human Trafficking Hotline, January 6, 2011, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/The%20Eyes%20that%20Blind%20Us.pdf>.

<sup>99</sup> Alexandra Twin, "Outsourcing: How It Works in Business, With Examples," Investopedia, last modified July 25, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/o/outsourcing.asp>.

<sup>100</sup> Rupesh Garg, "Choosing Wisely: International vs. Domestic Outsourcing Strategies in 2024," Frugal Testing, April 20, 2024, <https://www.frugaltesting.com/blog/choosing-wisely-international-vs-domestic-outsourcing-strategies-in-2024>.

<sup>101</sup> Katie T. Hanna, and Alexander S. Gillis, "What is operational efficiency? | Definition from TechTarget," TechTarget, accessed August 12, 2024, <https://www.techtarget.com/searchbusinessanalytics/definition/operational-efficiency>.

efficiency will be higher than factories that do not specialize in that product. Because they are specializing in a niche product, they are usually located outside of a buyer's home country.

The agricultural sector usually has their upstream and downstream locations located in rural areas.<sup>102</sup> Rural locations are deeply tied with agriculture due to their land and conditions. Rural areas traditionally have more land available for agriculture and farms as they need a lot of land. They also have good environmental conditions that whilst may not be good for residential conditions, it is ideal for agricultural production. Rural areas also deeply benefit from agriculture. This is because it acts as the primary economic source of the rural areas. As such, there is also a benefit to the region when it comes to supply chain complexity. This promotes money to go from more developed countries to lesser developed rural economies. This is healthy for the international community as it can theoretically help lessen income inequality.<sup>103</sup> Global income inequality is the concept where there is a large difference in financial resources from one country to another. By promoting healthy trade and collaboration, income inequality can be reduced.

While it is important to acknowledge the benefits of supply chain management and how it can benefit rural regions, this is not always the case today. Labor exploitation acts as a way that supply chain inequality can stifle a rural region instead of benefit. Wage theft and other labor violations make this theoretical healthy collaboration one that is not reality.<sup>104</sup> Human trafficking as well takes advantage of the compartmentalization in a supply chain to benefit bad actors. Because there are so many levels of the supply chain and because they take place in isolated rural areas, bad actors can continue operating. Solutions need to properly address how to tackle the complexity of the supply chain. This should mainly be done by addressing how to properly monitor and uphold

healthy work conditions and regulations in isolated rural areas.

The world we live in today sees this occur with both labor exploitation and human trafficking. There are multiple ongoing case studies that demonstrate how the complex supply chain acts to enable these unhealthy practices from happening.

### **Case Studies: Brazilian Carnauba Wax Plantations and Mexican Coffee Farms**

There are multiple ongoing instances in which the supply chain complexity enables issues such as labor exploitation and human trafficking in the agricultural sector. One of these studies can be seen in Brazil.

Carnauba wax is produced almost exclusively in Brazil from the leaves of the carnauba palm *Copernicia prunifera* plant.<sup>105</sup> It can be used for many purposes. It is used in food, leather, furniture, lipstick, cars, pharmaceuticals, and more. Because Carnauba wax is so versatile, it will make up a large portion of the global market with 305.3 million USD in 2023.<sup>106</sup> It is expected to increase by 3.8 percent per year until 2030. This makes the carnauba wax a highly desirable resource. However, the plant can only thrive within Brazil. The plant is native to Brazil northeastern region and requires its semi-arid climate and drought conditions to foster. This region in Brazil is known as Piauí, a state known for its diverse geographical landscape.<sup>107</sup> Piauí is the host of the plantations for the Carnauba plants.

Despite this natural wealth, the region still lags economically. The harsh environments of the region and the difficulty in harvesting makes retrieving carnauba wax a grueling task. Those that harvest this plant endure poverty due to low compensation. Those that worked on the farms were subject to a multitude of poor working conditions and was recognized by the Brazilian government as slavery.

In addition to this, those on the farms commonly employed

102 "Agriculture and Rural Communities - Fourth National Climate Assessment," Fourth National Climate Assessment, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://nca2018.globalchange.gov/chapter/10/>.

103 Zia Qureshi, "Rising inequality: A major issue of our time | Brookings," Brookings Institution, May 16, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/rising-inequality-a-major-issue-of-our-time/>.

104 Xiaolan Fu, "International Collaboration and Innovation: Evidence from a Leading Chinese Multinational Enterprise," *Journal of World Business* 57, no. 4 (June 1, 2022): 101329, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2022.101329>.

105 "Carnauba wax | Description, Uses, & Facts," Britannica, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/carnauba-wax>.

106 "Carnauba Wax Market Size, Share & Growth Report, 2030," Grand View Research, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/carnauba-wax-market>.

107 "Piauí | Geography & Culture in Brazil," Britannica, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Piaui>.



A Mexican coffee farmer in Rufina  
Credit: Daniel Elisalde

child labor and the trafficking of such children. This was a direct infringement of the rights of those children as they were denied educational opportunities by being forced into labor to harvest the carnauba plant. However, Brazil operates as a healthy example of how to recover from the plight of child labor. From 2000 to 2014, Brazil has taken effective action in limiting the frequency of child labor in their country.<sup>108</sup> Studies have shown that this decrease was driven by the rural northeast regions of Brazil themselves on a local level. This is not to say it was done through inspection activities, as that was contradictory to the decrease. Attempts to inspect were seen to be shorthanded in fighting child labor and other forms of labor exploitation and human trafficking. This is because of the structure of the homelife of those that were caught in child labor. Often their families are complicit, and sometimes enable such conditions. This reduction is still an ongoing campaign of Brazil and should be partially seen as a successful attempt in decreasing issues in the agricultural industry.

Under Brazil's legal code, slavery is not just forced labor. It

<sup>108</sup> Temidayo J. Aranisola and Marcelo Justus, "Evolution of Child Labor Rate in Brazilian States: Policy Limits and Contradictions," *Economia e Sociedade* 29, no. 1 (April 1, 2020): 273-95, <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-3533.2020v29n1art10>.

<sup>109</sup> "4.2 Slavery and Abolition in the 19th Century | Brazil: Five Centuries of Change," Brown University Library, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-3/slavery-and-abolition/>.

<sup>110</sup> Jéssica Cruz, "The Brazilian farm workers exploited to harvest an everyday ingredient," BBC, March 30, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-68369339>.

<sup>111</sup> "Forced Labor in Brazil," International Labour Organization, May 13, 2008, <https://www.ilo.org/media/4766/download>.

<sup>112</sup> "Rural communities in Piauí, Brazil, request urgent action against ongoing violence, land grabbing and deforestation," FIAN International, June 19, 2023, <https://www.fian.org/en/news/article/rural-communities-in-piaui-brazil-request-urgent-action-against-ongoing-violence-land-grabbing-and-deforestation-3146>.

also includes any form of debt bondage, degrading work conditions, and long and unfair hours of work.<sup>109</sup> After the government of Brazil was able to determine this to be the case on the plantation sites of Piauí, government action was taken. Victims were rescued in 2023 as 114 workers became liberated from their slave-like conditions.<sup>110</sup> However, this is not the end of slave-like conditions within Brazil and the carnauba plant. These conditions, according to the ILO, are similar in other rural areas within Brazil and are closely associated with poverty.<sup>111</sup> This is not an individual case issue within Brazil, but rather a symptom of the greater issue within the region at large. As such, violations in Brazil have historically not been isolated to individual plants. However, violations of labor rights do not end there in their effects.

Rural communities from the state have vocalized frustrations due to the desire to harvest the carnauba plant. Because poor labor practices are present, perpetrators have tried to expand their land and increase monocropping the agriculture commodity.<sup>112</sup> Monocropping is the act of growing the same

crop on a land year after year. Not only does this damage the soil, as rotating between crops promotes healthy fertility, but it also limits the region in their own diversity of agriculture. As such, monocropping has made the region impoverished as they only grow one crop that cannot be typically eaten independently of other food preparation. As such, the people of the region are impoverished in Piauí with limited access to fresh produce as a result of this practice. Issues within the agricultural sector in Brazil continue today, with rural areas in the North/Northeast of the region still having instances of child labor, however it has been a recent example of how a nation can decrease the frequency of it. Whilst Brazil shows an example of how a region can gradually work towards better conditions of labor locally, there are examples in which regions have failed in their attempts.

Another case study of poor working conditions in the agricultural sector are the conditions within the coffee plantations of Mexico. Mexico is the world's 10th largest contributor of coffee in 2023/2024. They produce 3.87 million 60kg bags, making up two percent of the entire world's production.<sup>113</sup> The vast majority of this coffee, approximately 90 percent, is produced in four different states in the southern half of the country.<sup>114</sup> These include the cities of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz, and Puebla. This is because these regions within the southern half of the country are more optimal to the environmental conditions that are ideal for coffee plants to thrive.

It being such a large industry and massive producer of coffee in the world does not overshadow the labor exploitation and human trafficking that has been deeply tied into the industry. Many that work within these fields work up to 10 hours or more a day.<sup>115</sup> They are constrained to work in these

conditions, many being subject to sickness, exhaustion, and highly hazardous working conditions.<sup>116</sup> Many have called for the general solution to provide ethical certifications to local plants. When one goes to a grocery store and sees that their coffee was “ethically sourced” or is “ethically certified”, it is a marker of that. However, ethical certifications are not always accurate to reality. Mexican coffee plantations that have ethical certifications were seen in investigations to have employed child labor with particularly indigenous children as young as six years old.<sup>117</sup> This is significantly below the legal working age in Mexico which is 15, however, many turn a blind eye to this reality.<sup>118</sup> Many of these children have actively been trafficked into these conditions or are forced into it by family members. As such, their already restricted autonomy since they are children becomes further restricted as many times as possible it is their family that enables such behavior. Because of their indigenous status, they are especially at risk. Their childhood and ethnic background compound so that they are especially more of a vulnerable class. Their indigenous background makes them face social isolation, language barriers, and difficulty to access resources that can provide stability outside of these slave-like labor conditions.

Women also are not exempt from this treatment. In 2018, it is estimated that 70 percent of women make up the country's coffee production workforce.<sup>119</sup> This is a notable portion compared to other countries, and this experiences unfair labor conditions. The indigenous women that work on these farms make up a large portion of the workforce. Due to their indigenous status, they face many of the same issues that their indigenous counterparts of the children also face. Vulnerability status is a primary driver within the poor working conditions and trafficking of these people within the coffee industry of Mexico.

113 “Production - Coffee,” USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://fas.usda.gov/data/production/commodity/0711100>.

114 “Mexico,” Mercanta, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://coffeehunter.com/our-origins/mexico/>.

115 “Bitter Origins: Labor Exploitation in Coffee Production,” The Borgen Project, September 24, 2020, <https://borgenproject.org/labor-exploitation-in-coffee-production/>.

116 “Guidelines on Monitoring of Coffee Farms,” Verité, accessed August 14, 2024, [https://verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Verite\\_COFFEE-Project-Toolkit\\_Guidelines-on-Monitoring-of-Coffee-Farms\\_EN\\_FINAL.pdf](https://verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Verite_COFFEE-Project-Toolkit_Guidelines-on-Monitoring-of-Coffee-Farms_EN_FINAL.pdf).

117 David Scott, et al., “Caffeine Jungle: Child labor, struggling farmers found on ‘ethically’ certified coffee farms in southern Mexico,” ABC News, October 21, 2022, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/caffeine-jungle-child-labor-struggling-farmers-found-ethically/story?id=91735230>.

118 Roberto Cornejo, “Mexico Child Labor Laws: An Overview,” Start-Ops Mexico, July 17, 2024, <https://start-ops.com.mx/mexico-child-labor-laws-an-overview/>.

119 “Women coffee producers in Mexico,” ILO, accessed August 14, 2024, [https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@americas/@ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms\\_829533.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@americas/@ro-lima/documents/publication/wcms_829533.pdf).

Local bodies have not taken any notable action when it comes to addressing child labor, however independent citizens have. The rainforest alliance for example has fought for many progressive causes including fighting against deforestation, climate change, and better rural working conditions. The latter of these is their focus within the coffee plantations. However, overall, the issue is one that is still ongoing today, as the required amount of jurisdiction to better these working conditions has not yet been achieved

These poor working conditions are a failure of the United Nations General Assembly's goals that they have set. However, by recognizing both instances in which change has been successful, such as in Brazil, and areas where it has been unsuccessful, such as Mexico, can lead to greater understanding. There are more instances in which labor conditions and human trafficking run rampant through the agriculture sector outside of these two states. Some employ legislation, and some don't, and the results seem to be different depending on the respective location. As such, this shows that this topic will not work with a one size fits all approach. Instead, a deeper understanding of the systemic issues that breed labor exploitation and human trafficking in the agricultural sector need to be recognized and tackled independently.

## Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly released the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These are goals that outline the General Assembly's plans to achieve by 2030. These goals promoted healthy and sustainable development on a variety of topics for the entire global community.<sup>120</sup> One of these SDGs is SDG 8. This goal is titled "Decent Work and Economic Growth".<sup>121</sup> This promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth within a region. It also helps promote full and productive employment and decent working conditions for the entire global community. SDG 8 is the SDG that is most closely related to the topic of this

background guide. It relates to both fronts of this SDG. Labor exploitation and human trafficking both are related to the former, decent work. Labor exploitation is any type of unfair working conditions. Human trafficking is also addressed as the General Assembly includes any form of modern slavery as a violation of SDG 8's goals.<sup>122</sup> The latter half of SDG 8 is also important to this topic. The agricultural sector is one of the largest industries in the world. Gross production value in the agricultural market is currently (as of August 2024) projected to amount to 4.59 trillion USD.<sup>123</sup> A large portion of this is made up of imported agriculture. 949.7 billion USD is an important value of the 4.59 trillion as estimated for 2024.<sup>124</sup> This is also expected to increase at an annual growth rate of 3.76 percent between 2024-2029. This would result in the market being at a gross production value of 5.52 trillion USD in 2029.<sup>125</sup>

Considering this is such a large industry, careful steps need to be taken to ensure there are no harmful consequences from solutions. This caution is warranted as many rural regions, as mentioned before, are financially reliant on agriculture. If the agricultural sector is significantly harmed in its efficiency, then not only will regions economically hurt, but also humanitarily be hurt. Without effective productivity in farming, people in regions will struggle to eat. Solutions not only have to effectively ban all bad working conditions that are related to this topic in agriculture, but also strengthen the industry itself. This can be done by promoting habits that also increase agricultural productivity, not at the expense of the employees.

By thinking of this topic as a reconstruction of the agricultural industry, delegates can work to achieve solutions. This is not just for short term solutions that prevent individual instances, such as that of the Brazilian carnauba wax farms and the Mexican coffee plantations. This is for the industry at large, including all the levels of its supply chain. Upstream, midstream, and downstream, must all be addressed under a

120 "THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development," Sustainable Development Goals, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

121 "Goal 8 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs," Sustainable Development Goals, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>.

122 "Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth," The Global Goals, accessed August 13, 2024, <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/8-decent-work-and-economic-growth/>.

123 "Agriculture - Worldwide," Statista, last updated May 2024, <https://www.statista.com/outlook/io/agriculture/worldwide>.

124 "Agriculture - Worldwide," Statista.

125 "Agriculture - Worldwide," Statista.

new framework that helps all the affected peoples thrive both in conditions, and financial success of regions at large.

## Bloc Analysis

### Points of Division

A country's relationship with the global agricultural supply chain will act as the most prominent point of division in this topic. When one part of a supply chain is altered, the other parts experience consequences as a result. Different countries tend to benefit from different parts of the supply chain. This is because the entirety of the supply chain is too complex for one country to take on fully domestically. As a result, countries outsource to other states that specialize in certain parts of the supply chain. This topic asks you to restructure the agricultural supply chain structure itself to lay a groundwork that does not promote the atrocities that are labor exploitation and human trafficking.

Nations that profit at the downstream directly profit financially, and their main concern is the maintenance of the global supply chain. These countries tend to be those that are seen as global economic powerhouses. Nations that are part of the upstream and midstream are those that are at the heart of this topic. These are the countries that have rural agricultural economies and as such have the plots of agriculture that we have referred to. They are the ones most invested to solve this topic as it plagues their country, however they may experience restraints on their abilities to make such a change. Finally, the last bloc includes states that historically have voted against labor reform in the agricultural sector. They believe that international bodies that try and change that are overreaching their respective jurisdiction and would only economically harm their own country. This is not to be confused with the position that economically dominant economies will have. These states are primarily concerned with their individual place within the supply chain itself rather than the supply chain. In the end, they are primarily concerned with their own states'

efficiency within the supply chain over the humanitarian concern of this topic. Thus, they are primarily concerned with the maintenance of their own national sovereignty in this topic and would be against most international standards for labor reform.

Nations are not always guided by their economic relationship to the agricultural global economy, as some have unique relationships with it. These outliers are not to be disregarded. Delegates should investigate the history of their country and their past actions. Where have they been the most vocal and what do they want to achieve moving forward? The global supply chain and relationships to it are not always cookie-cutter, so further research is highly advised to have an accurate country policy and bloc formation throughout debate.

### Globally Dominant Economies

Economically dominant economies are closely tied to the global downstream of the agricultural supply chain. These countries are most concerned with the maintenance of economic velocity. This means that they are primarily concerned with maintaining and optimizing the rate at which trade and money flows throughout the global economy.<sup>126</sup> They are the primary beneficiaries of this and want to maintain the leverage they hold. These countries would not necessarily be against all reform; however their primary concern is that it would not jeopardize their own stake. Balance for these states or alternative forms of efficiency is what they would see as their primary objective in this topic. They may focus on forms of technological innovations and capacity building initiatives, both ways that can improve efficiency without being at the expense of victims. Capacity building is the process of improving an organization or industry's ability to perform or produce in a specific task.<sup>127</sup> In this instance, it would be making locations more capable of producing agriculture independently with more efficient industrialized labor structures.

<sup>126</sup> James Chen and Suzanne Kvilhaug, "Velocity of Money: Definition, Formula, and Examples," Investopedia, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/v/velocity.asp>.

<sup>127</sup> "Capacity-Building | United Nations," The United Nations, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/capacity-building>.

## Rural Agricultural Economies

Rural Agricultural economies are those that are directly affected by this topic. The sites of these topics occur most often in rural agricultural areas, and as such, these countries would likely feel the strongest about this topic.<sup>128</sup> Many of these states have taken domestic action to try and alleviate the issue at hand but to no avail. As such, many of these countries would ask for international assistance in doing so. They would want assistance in strengthening regulations and raising awareness to vulnerable rural communities. However, what they would most look for is aid in enforcement implementation.<sup>129</sup> Many rural regions simply do not have the enforcement capabilities required to cover all the locations that may be perpetrators of labor exploitation and human trafficking in the agricultural sector and need further assistance.

Rural agricultural economies also would want assistance to develop social programs to help keep their laborers inside their country. Many rural communities that are not able to provide for their laborers and people experience a phenomenon known as brain drain. Brain drain is when skilled laborers leave a region and turn to migrancy status due to a lower quality of life within their region of origin.<sup>130</sup> This can severely hurt a region, and these rural agricultural states would want assistance to provide for these people with social programs. Doing this will maintain stability and ensure that the agricultural economy can grow and be self-sufficient.

## States that Historically Vote Against Labor Reform

Finally, countries that historically vote against labor reform usually do so out of either caution or opposition. These countries would likely argue that these attempts at labor reform simply act to stifle their own personal economic

interests and infringe on their national sovereignty. National sovereignty is the principle that gives a state the authority and independence to govern their own affairs.<sup>131</sup> These countries would also likely experience concerns about the economic costs of implementing stricter labor regulations, and fear that it would impact their personal competitiveness in the global economy. These countries will still however acknowledge that the topic of labor exploitation and human trafficking are humanitarian issues that need to be addressed. They would instead be in favor of more voluntary guidelines or local solutions as opposed to international agreements. Their focus would be to empower individual countries to best elevate themselves without transnational interference.

## Committee Mission

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is the United Nations agency dedicated to solving world hunger.<sup>132</sup> Since being founded in 1945, the main goal of the FAO is to provide all people with consistent access to nutritious and healthy food.<sup>133</sup> Some of the FAO's primary objectives include eliminating hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition, increasing the productivity and sustainability of agriculture, reducing rural poverty, and creating inclusive and efficient food systems around the world. The committee is also responsible for fair, ethical, and safe labor practices across the global agricultural industry. FAO seeks to analyze the intersection of economic and environmental barriers to food accessibility. For the past decade, the Food and Agriculture Organization has created a Strategic Framework. This guides their vision towards sustainable and nutritious food security for all. This framework is organized into four main objectives: nutrition, production, environment, and life. The overall goal of this framework is to ensure "efficient,

128 "Agriculture," National Human Trafficking Hotline, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/en/labor-trafficking-venues/industries/agriculture>.

129 Madina Jarbussynova, "ON GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO PREVENT TRAFFICKING FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION IN SUPPLY CHAINS," Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe | OSCE, February 13, 2018, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/ documents/1/9/371771.pdf>.

130 Julie Young, "Brain Drain: Definition, Causes, Effects, and Examples," Investopedia, last updated June 20, 2024, [https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brain\\_drain.asp](https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/brain_drain.asp).

131 United Nations Network on Migration, "National sovereignty"

132 "About FAO," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/about/about-fao/en/>.

133 FAO/CHARTER. 1946, "Global Right to Food and Nutrition Network," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed August 14, 2024, [https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/righttofood/documents/project\\_m/grtfn/GRTFNNetwork-Charter.pdf](https://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/righttofood/documents/project_m/grtfn/GRTFNNetwork-Charter.pdf).



inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems”.<sup>134</sup> The FAO’s progress is reviewed every four years regarding the framework. Additionally, progress is monitored in terms of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, specifically the goals regarding poverty, hunger, and inequality.<sup>135</sup>

Labor exploitation and human trafficking are violations of basic human rights and fit into FAO’s mandate. Labor exploitation occurs when employees are taken advantage of or treated unfairly. Human trafficking occurs in the agricultural sector primarily to exploit the labor of trafficked peoples. Child labor is also included within labor exploitation. Addressing labor exploitation and human trafficking in the agricultural sector is necessary to build global food security and safe labor policies. Overall, it is the responsibility of FAO to ensure people working in the agricultural sector are using safe, ethical, and fair practices. FAO can advocate for countries to develop their agricultural labor policies. The committee may also provide aid for those impacted by labor exploitation and human trafficking. Delegates should consider economic, sociocultural, political, and legal structures that may provide solutions. However, the FAO cannot enforce any specific policies on countries. Therefore, delegates should also consider incentives for long-term policies.

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134 “FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 ,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed August 14, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/strategic-framework/en>.

135 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31”



FAO

NHSMUN 2025



## TOPIC B: ADDRESSING FOOD INSECURITY IN CONFLICT ZONES

Photo Credit: Stephen Morrison

## Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) was formed to address hunger and food insecurity around the world. This often includes addressing food insecurity in areas impacted by conflict. The consequences of conflict on food security became more prevalent during World War Two.<sup>1</sup> Repercussions include environmental issues, trouble accessing emergency food aid, and farmers losing a stable income. Conflict also hinders efforts to rebuild and improve systems, as hunger and war are intertwined.<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution denouncing using hunger as a war tactic. This was the first time the Council acknowledged this threat, which impacted millions of people.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it was aimed at countries involved in civil or international conflicts. The policy requested all countries to preserve food supplies, farms, marketplaces, and other means of distribution in times of conflict.<sup>4</sup> This document explicitly declared the starvation of civilians as a method of warfare as a war crime. Additionally, it requires that parties to the conflict allow humanitarian workers free access to communities in urgent need. The violent nature of war can be detrimental to a country's resources more often than physical weaponry is.<sup>5</sup> Food shortages and economic disruptions brought on by conflict often jeopardize a population's ability to survive. Warring factions can damage food supplies by purposefully destroying cattle ranches, farms, and other civilian infrastructure.<sup>6</sup>

Conflict typically worsens already existing food security. In 2023 alone, 330 million people faced acute food insecurity.<sup>7</sup> In active conflict regions, this is worsened by the difficulties involved in delivering food aid. Issues, such as infrastructural damage, can slow or block assistance efforts. When coupled with the instability of conflict, delivering food aid to those in need has become more difficult.<sup>8</sup> Inequality and food insecurity in conflict zones and impoverished communities rises. Aid in conflict zones must address immediate recovery, but also long-term rehabilitation efforts.<sup>9</sup> Long-term support helps build resilient food systems that can withstand future challenges.

Food insecurity is worsened as conflict disrupts economies and societies. The FAO encourages communities to work together,

use sustainable farming practices, and ensure consistent access to agriculture. By working together, countries ensure that farming leads to lasting peace and prosperity for all. Collaborative efforts not only address immediate needs, but also create a foundation for future stability and growth.

## History and Description of the Issue

### The Impact of Conflict on Food Insecurity

In the past decade, active armed conflict has risen to its highest levels since World War Two.<sup>10</sup> In 2024, over 110 armed conflicts are designated as needing to be consistently monitored. With this, addressing harm reduction strategies

1 Food and Agriculture Organization, The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agriculture, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/cc9b1623-99e2-4476-854a-ac24d58154b1/content/impact-of-disasters-on-agriculture-and-food-2023/the-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-agriculture.html>.

2 "Hunger and War," National Geographic, 2018, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/hunger-and-war/>.

3 National Geographic, "Hunger and War".

4 National Geographic, "Hunger and War".

5 National Geographic, "Hunger and War".

6 National Geographic, "Hunger and War".

7 "S" Hunger and Conflict," Bread for the World, May 23, 2024, <https://www.bread.org/article/hunger-and-conflict/#:~:text=Conflict%20also%20destroys%20valuable%20agriculture,driven%20by%20war%20and%20persecution.>

8 Willcock, Gordon, "The Challenge of Bringing Humanitarian Aid into Places of Conflict," Direct Relief, June 12, 2018. <https://www.directrelief.org/2017/01/humanitarian-logistics-in-conflicts/#:~:text=no%2Dgo%20areas-,Such%20physical%20obstacles%20often%20are%20coupled%20with%20administrative%20hurdles%20and,assistance%20to%20areas%20of%20need.>

9 "Does International Food Aid Harm the Poor?" NBER, accessed March 1, 2005, <https://www.nber.org/digest/mar05/does-international-food-aid-harm-poor.>

10 Food and Agriculture Organization, The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agriculture.

is crucial to the safety of global citizens.<sup>11</sup> The relationship between conflict and food insecurity is complex and often cyclical. A few of the risk factors of conflict include socioeconomic harm, environmental destruction, and loss of life. To address these risks properly, it is important to understand that the relationship between conflict and food insecurity often creates weaknesses in infrastructure and socioeconomic damage.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, conflict can increase a community's susceptibility to disasters, such as famine and food insecurity. Conflict also depletes funds for risk reduction initiatives. It may disrupt long-term investment in emergency food aid and agricultural rehabilitation. The impact of risk factors on conflict extends to active violence through resource scarcity. While conflict can create and intensify food insecurity, food insecurity can also be the root of violence. Hunger and damage to agriculture can increase tensions and extend the length of active armed conflicts. This creates a cycle where hunger leads to more conflict, and conflict leads to more hunger. Unfortunately, the impacts of conflict on hunger are not easily solvable. These issues often require long-term investment funds and the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure. Agricultural success often depends on long-term environmental factors including fertile soil, water, and land. These are often damaged by violent disputes, which leads to food shortages. Often, these shortages are dealt with through emergency food aid, which is not sustainable in the long term. Additionally, rebuilding a country's agricultural sector is a costly and time-consuming effort. This often forces lower-class communities to relocate in search of food, leading to displacement.

Conflict acts as the main driver of hunger in most of the world's food crises. Increased conflict around the world threatens to overwhelm humanitarian aid and investment funds.<sup>13</sup> Often, this is not addressed through harm reduction practices and risk factor analysis. Instead, actors in armed conflict have exploited nutrition insecurity and famine as weapons of war. In response, the United Nations adopted its landmark proposal resolution 2417 in 2018. This resolution denounces

the exploitation of world hunger and promotes accountability practices to break the cycle of armed conflict and hunger.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, without addressing the root issues of hunger and conflict, this resolution alone is ineffective. Hunger is often born through instability, which is perpetuated by conflict. Hunger is often a result of political failings and a lack of infrastructure, as opposed to genuine scarcity. Due to global disputes and economic agendas, food supplies are often not distributed fairly. Disputes often worsen due to increased tensions between groups, disabled supply chains, and a reliance on emergency food aid. This also debilitates local agricultural infrastructure. It has become clear that increasing violence can permanently destroy development worldwide and make nutritious diets unaffordable. Ongoing conflict threatens long-term progress and exacerbates food insecurity on a global scale. Concerningly, food insecurity's rapid rise seems to match the increase of ongoing conflicts in the world. Over 345 million people, more than twice the number in 2020, are projected to be food insecure in 2024. This makes it clear that conflict has acted as a driving factor in hunger.

The Food and Agriculture Organization studied the loss of crops and livestock in Ukraine. As one of the world's top food producers and exporters of oilseed and grain, Ukraine exemplifies the global impacts of war on food markets. Ukraine is one of the world's main grain exporters. Between September and October of 2022, 25 percent of the rural population was forced to reduce or halt agricultural production. This was largely due to damage to equipment, the crumbling of infrastructure, contamination of land due to mines, and workers' safety issues caused by war.<sup>15</sup> Temporary pauses in agricultural production caused by conflict can be found to have devastating effects. This is due to the seasonal nature of crop production and the financial reliance on exports in rural communities. In 2021, Ukraine's wheat exports contributed USD 5.1 billion towards their GDP. Ukraine's wheat production is estimated to continue exponentially declining for the next decade because of the dispute with Russia. Russia

11 Geneva Academy, Today's Armed Conflicts, <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts>.

12 "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agriculture", Food and Agriculture Organization.

13 World Food Programme, Conflict and Hunger, <https://www.wfp.org/conflict-and-hunger>.

14 World Food Programme, Conflict and Hunger.

15 Food and Agriculture Organization, The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agriculture.

has also been cited as stealing almost six million metric tons of wheat from Ukraine.<sup>16</sup> The destruction of Ukraine’s agricultural infrastructure was a Russian military tactic to limit Ukraine’s economic stability and agricultural production.<sup>17</sup> Initially, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has resulted in a 28 percent increase in global wheat prices as well. As Ukraine is one of the world’s main wheat and sunflower oil producers, Russian tactics have resulted in the rapid decline of Ukraine’s GDP and the global disruption of food markets, as well as world food prices skyrocketing to all-time highs in March 2022.<sup>18</sup> The cost of addressing these challenges also increased as the price of energy sources increased. Due to heightened transportation costs and economic shock, humanitarian aid and global funding are often restricted. The Russia-Ukraine war resulted in higher food and energy prices around the world as well. Russia’s attack strategies have also exploited their windows to export goods and gain a profit from the war. The recent conflict in Ukraine clearly shows how agricultural infrastructure can be targeted to harm a nation’s economy and global food markets.

Another example of the negative impact of conflict on food security is seen through the Syrian Civil War. In 2000, President Bashar al-Assad took office in Syria and promised economic reform. To improve the previous socialist economy, he attempted to create a market system. The new President began by eliminating state-owned monopolies. However, he also removed price ceilings and the country’s subsidy system, which mainly hurt rural laborers and the Syrian agricultural sector.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, a drought plagued Syria from 2006 through 2010, which only worsened the country’s socio-economic struggles. Due to a lack of infrastructure and intervention, the majority of the country’s farmland was abandoned, and farmers migrated toward urban cities. These farmers often faced food insecurity and were forced towards poverty. This also resulted in unemployment rapidly increasing, and the further instability of the economy.<sup>20</sup> Due to government mismanagement and accusations of corruption, protests began across Syria which later turned into the Syrian Civil War. Different groups formed to fight against Assad’s regime. These groups were based on various interests, such as addressing agriculture, political violence, infrastructure,

<sup>16</sup> Welsh, Catherine, “Russia, Ukraine, and Global Food Security: A Two-Year Assessment”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 27, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/russia-ukraine-and-global-food-security-two-year-assessment>

<sup>17</sup> Welsh, Catherine and Joseph Glauber. “Food as a Silent Weapon: Russia’s Gains and Ukraine’s Losses,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 29, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/food-silent-weapon-russias-gains-and-ukraines-losses>.

<sup>18</sup> Welsh and Catherine, “Food as a Silent Weapon: Russia’s Gains and Ukraine’s Losses.”

<sup>19</sup> Zachary Laub, “Syria’s Civil War: The Descent into Horror.” Council on Foreign Relations, February 14, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/article/syrias-civil-war>.

<sup>20</sup> Laub, “Syria’s Civil War: The Descent into Horror.”

A Malawian husks corn in Lilongwe, Malawi amid food insecurity crisis

Credit: Stephen Morrison



religion, humanitarian rights, etc., and often fought against each other as well.

Delivering aid, including food, to the region has also become increasingly difficult. President Assad would only allow food, medications, and other forms of aid to be delivered in government-controlled regions. However, conflict zones of Syria that were occupied by non-governmental groups were unable to receive any forms of aid. To address this, the UN Security Council proposed a resolution in 2014 that established clear paths for humanitarian aid to reach Syria. However, one of Syria's allies, Russia, vetoed this proposal in 2020 and therefore, aid was limited by approximately 75 percent.<sup>21</sup> Since this, foreign intervention has been severely limited or removed as aid has become further restricted. This has resulted in the World Food Programme (WFP) also intervening in the region. They have estimated that more than half of the Syrian population struggles with food insecurity, which is 12.9 million people. In addition to this, 2.6 million more Syrians are classified as being at high-risk of also battling food insecurity.<sup>22</sup>

As the FAO pushes for better global food security and resilience, it has become increasingly important for countries to cooperate to prevent conflict. Working together is crucial to ensuring everyone has access to food and creating a more stable future. However, the current landscape shows countries are not fully collaborating to address these issues. This fragmented approach to combating food insecurity and the lack of unified support for agricultural rehabilitation hinder progress. To solve this, countries must unite and tackle these challenges. The FAO can play a pivotal role in this through fostering cooperation, providing guidance on sustainable agricultural practices, and coordinating efforts to uphold the right to food for all. Only through coordinated global action will a stable and food-secure world exist for future generations.

## The Role of Emergency Food Aid in Addressing Hunger and Rehabilitation

Food aid has become a core element in addressing humanitarian crises around the world. Food aid is defined as assistance provided by another country or organization to help alleviate hunger without the expectation of reimbursement of any sort. Food aid can be seen as a beneficial and generous support system for countries experiencing food insecurity.<sup>23</sup> It is especially important to consider the important role of food aid in conflict zones.

Food aid exists in the forms of physical food, cash, food vouchers. This system aids millions by securing them nutritious meals. To alleviate world hunger, financially wealthy countries, such as the United States of America, have invested time and money into food assistance programmes that provide support around the world. The US has allocated more than 6.7 billion USD towards providing food aid to 167 million people in 57 countries. Therefore, the US is a prime example of a nation heavily involved in the fight against international hunger.<sup>24</sup> non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a crucial role in these efforts. NGOs often deliver ground support to distribute aid, develop sustainable agricultural practices, and advocate for policy changes that support food security. For instance, organizations like the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) collaborate with governments and local communities.<sup>25</sup> These organizations ensure that food aid reaches those most in need.<sup>26</sup> When non-governmental programs complement government efforts, it works to expand the reach of humanitarian assistance.

With existing funds to address this issue, one must question why global hunger continues to worsen. Food aid is effective in providing temporary relief to communities. However, it is widely ineffective in the long term because it is unsustainable. Eventually, it leads to further economic and agricultural harm.

21 Laub, "Syria's Civil War: The Descent into Horror."

22 Syria Emergency. (World Food Programme, September 2019), <https://www.wfp.org/emergencies/syria-emergency>.

23 Food Aid International. Food Aid Home. 2014, <https://food-aid.org/#:-:text=Food%20Aid%20International%20is%20a>.

24 U.S. Agency for International Development. International Food Assistance Report. 2022, [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/FY22\\_International\\_Food\\_Assistance\\_Report\\_IFAR.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-05/FY22_International_Food_Assistance_Report_IFAR.pdf)

25 CARE. CARE: Crises, <https://www.care.org/our-work/disaster-response/>

26 WFP. World Food Programme: Our Work, 2024, <https://www.wfp.org/our-work>



Individuals transport World Food Programme food aid from a distribution point at Epworth in Harare, Zimbabwe

Credit: Kate Holt

Currently, many countries rely heavily on food aid. Food assistance can act as a powerful instrument in fighting chronic hunger and saving lives.<sup>27</sup> In areas where natural terrain and previous disasters have established hostile agricultural conditions food aid is especially needed. These factors, in combination with conflict and slow agricultural rehabilitation, result in long-term hunger issues. Food aid is most effective when utilized in both directly and indirectly.<sup>28</sup> Indirect measures, such as nutrition education programs, agricultural advocacy, and rehabilitation efforts, allow for a sustainable approach to food assistance. This is done without creating a dangerous reliance on the Western world for world hunger solutions. The recent decline in national food aid furthers this issue, creating significant emergency aid shortages in conflict zones.<sup>29</sup>

The clear importance of emergency food aid continues to be recognized by NGOs and governments around the world. However, recent studies have found that emergency food aid

could be more harmful than helpful in developing countries and conflict zones. Research has found that food aid can influence conflict through systematically and empirically.<sup>30</sup> Food aid may contribute to violence if it is targeted by violent or corrupt groups. Also, it may hurt the legitimacy of government services and structures. While food aid can help citizens, violent groups may also take advantage of aid to manipulate citizens or weak governments. This work into the structure of food aid can transform efforts and how the FAO seeks to address world hunger.

Conflict is complex, with factors such as economic shock and political agendas often exacerbating war. Economic instability and power struggles often prolong conflicts, creating a cycle that is difficult to break.<sup>31</sup> While well-intentioned, the introduction of food aid into conflict zones can have unintended consequences on local economies. When large quantities of food aid, particularly grains, are suddenly injected into local markets, it can lead to a sharp decline in the prices

27 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The State of Food and Agriculture 1996: Food Security - Achievements and Challenges. (Italy: World Food Summit November 1996), <https://www.fao.org/4/w2612e/w2612e13.htm>.

28 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The State of Food and Agriculture 1996: Food Security - Achievements and Challenges.

29 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The State of Food and Agriculture 1996: Food Security - Achievements and Challenges.

30 Nunn, Nathan, and Nancy Qian, US Food Aid and Civil Conflict. (American Economic Review, 2014), 104(6): 1630–1666. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.104.6.1630>

31 Koppenberg, Maximilian, Mishra, Ashok K., & Hirsch, S, Food Aid, Poverty, and Conflict: Evidence from African Countries, (Food Policy, 2023). <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306919223001409>.

of locally produced crops.<sup>32</sup> This influx disrupts the fragile balance of supply and demand, causing existing crops to lose value. Consequently, local farmers and agricultural workers, who rely on these crops for their livelihood, suffer significant financial losses. The devaluation of crops can lead to reduced income for farmers, making it difficult for them to reinvest in their land and sustain their farming operations.

Moreover, the dependency on food aid can alter the agricultural industry. Local producers might shift their focus from traditional crops to those that are in higher demand by aid agencies. This may potentially lead to monoculture and reduced biodiversity, which is the lack of diversity amongst crops.<sup>33</sup> This shift can undermine local food security and resilience. This also makes the agricultural sector more vulnerable to external shocks. Additionally, the reliance on imported aid can discourage local production, which leads to a decline in agricultural self-sufficiency.

In the long term, the disruption caused by food aid can weaken the economic foundations of conflict-affected regions.<sup>34</sup> A prime example of this can be seen in Haiti following the 2010 earthquake. As one of the largest food distribution missions, more than four million Haitian citizens were delivered food relief in less than six months after the earthquake. Massive influxes of food aid, while crucial for immediate survival, led to a significant downturn in the local agricultural market.<sup>35</sup> Haitian farmers struggled to compete with the free or heavily subsidized food, leading to decreased production and income. As local markets became increasingly dependent on aid, communities found it harder to recover and rebuild after the disaster.<sup>36</sup> The Haitian government attempted to support farmers by promoting local food production and implementing

policies to revitalize the agricultural sector. However, these efforts were often overshadowed by the overwhelming presence of international aid.<sup>37</sup> While food aid is essential for immediate relief, its implementation needs to be carefully managed to avoid exacerbating existing economic vulnerabilities, as well as support sustainable agricultural development.<sup>38</sup>

Food aid can also change societal perceptions of local governments or organizations, altering public perception and influencing societal norms. Negative dependency is an issue where meeting current needs results in the local population not being able to meet those needs long-term. This creates an unsustainable dependence on outside forces.<sup>39</sup> This is due to the potential of food aid disincentivizing community action to produce food and seek sustainable solutions to hunger. Additionally, food aid opens populations up to coercion and exploitation in scenarios where governments may utilize food to reward or punish social attitudes.<sup>40</sup> When used as a political tool, food can easily be inequitably distributed and corrupt leading to further societal issues and conflict. Finally, a heavy reliance on food aid can result in a lack of trust within those in power, having significant political sway in local communities.

When managed correctly, food aid has the ability to stimulate local markets while providing much-needed support.<sup>41</sup> When paired with indirect assistance, such as agricultural stimulation and education, food aid can act as a step toward a sustainable solution for food security.<sup>42</sup> When focusing on food aid in conflict zones, it is clear that emergency assistance is highly necessary to save the lives of millions. However equal efforts and intentions must be placed in protecting and promoting previously established agricultural industries. This is done to mitigate long-term destruction. The act of providing

32 Nunn, Nathan, and Nancy Qian, "US Food Aid and Civil Conflict."

33 Barret Dyson, "Food Aid's Intended and Unintended Consequences" Cornell University, <https://barrett.dyson.cornell.edu/files/papers/Frameworkv2Mar2006.pdf>

34 Barret Dyson, "Food Aid's Intended and Unintended Consequences".

35 Kushner Jacob, "Haitian farmers undermined by food aid," The Center for Public Integrity, January 11, 2012, <https://publicintegrity.org/accountability/haitian-farmers-undermined-by-food-aid/>.

36 Wisner, Sandra, "The international community must own its role in Haiti's food", The New Humanitarian, September 14, 2022, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/09/14/Haiti-food-crisis-international-aid](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/opinion/2022/09/14/Haiti-food-crisis-international-aid).

37 Wisner, "The international community must own its role in Haiti's food".

38 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The Impact of Disasters and Crises on Agriculture and Food Security 2017, 2023. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/23497464-14a3-470c-ac33-8af639b1cae0/content>.

39 Barret Dyson, "Food Aid's Intended and Unintended Consequences".

40 Barret Dyson, "Food Aid's Intended and Unintended Consequences".

41 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The State of Food and Agriculture 1994: The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Agriculture, <https://www.fao.org/4/a0800e/a0800e04.pdf>.

42 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, The Impact of Disasters and Crises on Agriculture and Food Security, 2017.



immediate assistance is helpful now. However, ignoring the importance of assisting farmers and protecting farmland is irresponsible on a global scale.

## Challenges and Approaches to Agricultural Rehabilitation

When addressing agricultural damage and rebuilding infrastructure, underlying issues, such as environmental damage and fragility within the state, must be addressed to ensure sustainable change. Challenges are often sorted into three categories: physical destruction, socio-economic hardships, and political instability. Sustainable rehabilitation requires innovative solutions.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most obvious challenges of agricultural rehabilitation is the physical destruction and dangers individuals face when implementing solutions.<sup>44</sup> Areas are notoriously unsafe after conflict due to damaged infrastructure and the potential of weapons left in the area. Farmers, community members, and volunteers aiding rehabilitation are also at risk of injury or fatality if unstable buildings collapse. Additionally, unexploded mines and weapons left post-conflict pose danger to anyone in the area. The physical destruction caused by war to agricultural land and livestock is extremely hard to recover from.<sup>45</sup> Those who lost their agricultural livelihoods and income face drastic consequences on their financial stability. Even if these individuals do manage to find the fiscal support needed to rebuild their infrastructure and purchase more crops or livestock, the environmental impact of conflict will be felt long-term. Bombing and chemical warfare can completely destroy fertile soil and contaminate water sources

needed for agricultural production.<sup>46</sup> Damage to forests and greenery poses the risk of sandstorms. Additionally, flash flooding can permanently harm farmers and their land. For example, the ongoing conflict in Syria has resulted in the destruction of vast tracts of farmland, the loss of livestock, and the contamination of water sources.<sup>47</sup> Syrian farmers who lost entire fields of crops or herds of animals face the daunting task of rebuilding their livelihoods with limited resources. This challenge is exacerbated by the environmental impact of the conflict. Bombing and chemical warfare have left once-fertile soil barren and polluted water sources, making it difficult for agriculture to recover.<sup>48</sup>

Another challenge in this process is the socio-economic hardships faced by states recovering from conflict and the impact they have on agricultural rehabilitation. Post-conflict areas face serious infrastructural damages to not only hospitals, schools and homes, but also markets, roads and public transport.<sup>49</sup> In a post-conflict world, those in power must focus on the essentials their communities need for survival, healthcare and shelter are key elements in that process.<sup>50</sup> For example, in South Sudan, years of civil conflict have left the country with devastated infrastructure. This makes it extremely difficult for farmers to transport goods to market or access necessary supplies.<sup>51</sup> In a post-conflict world, those in power must prioritize the essentials their communities need for survival. As communities seek to house individuals and build hospitals for those injured or sick due to conflict, they also must simultaneously attempt to rebuild roads and modes of transport to help aid and food reach those in need. All of this requires extensive funding, which is not often

43 Longley, et al, *Agricultural Rehabilitation: Mapping the Linkages between Humanitarian Relief, Social Protection, and Development*. London: Humanitarian Policy Group at ODI. <https://media.odi.org/documents/271.pdf>.

44 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agriculture," *Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food 2023*, (Rome: FAO, 2023), <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/cc9b1623-99e2-4476-854a-ac24d58154b1/content/impact-of-disasters-on-agriculture-and-food-2023/the-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-agriculture.html>.

45 Gat, Aviva. "What Global Conflict Means for Farmers and Food Safety," Paskal Group, November 19, 2023, <https://paskal-group.com/what-global-conflict-means-for-farmers-and-food-safety/>.

46 Madanoğlu, Ömer Faruk. "Chemical Attacks by Israel Threaten Gaza's Agriculture, Farm Workers' Health," *Anadolu Agency*, March 20, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/chemical-attacks-by-israel-threaten-gazas-agriculture-farm-workers-health/3169955>.

47 Gaafar, Roba. "The Environmental Impact of Syria's Conflict: A Preliminary Survey of Issues," *Arab Reform Initiative*, April 7, 2021, <https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-environmental-impact-of-syrias-conflict-a-preliminary-survey-of-issues/>

48 Gaafar, Roba, "The Environmental Impact of Syria's Conflict: A Preliminary Survey of Issues."

49 Kallio, Enni, "Land Degradation in War and Conflict Regions," *Yale University*, July 13, 2015, <https://environment-review.yale.edu/land-degradation-war-and-conflict-regions-0#:~:text=Wars%20and%20armed%20conflicts%20affect,key%20for%20post%2Dconflict%20recovery.>

50 Kallio, Enni, "Land Degradation in War and Conflict Regions."

51 World Report, "World Report 2024: South Sudan," *Human Rights Watch*, 2024 <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/south-sudan>.

available especially with declines in emergency financial aid in recent years.<sup>52</sup> Projects seeking agricultural rehabilitation are shelved temporarily as they seemingly are not a high priority. This is because emergency food aid alleviates the need for immediate local food production. The issue with this is that agriculture rehabilitation and crop/produce production take time. However, if those in power wait too long to start the process, they run the risk of not having local produce to feed the population when the food aid and funding projects cease. Additionally, the international funding and emergency government funds are limited and due to the priority of housing and healthcare, agriculture often does not fit into the budget after conflict.<sup>53</sup> This not only creates the potential of food insecurity, but it can also drastically alter the GDP of states who relied heavily on agricultural exports. The lost profits in the agricultural sector post-conflict perpetuate the cycle of economic hardship and exasperate poverty in already damaged states. In the long-term, this delays infrastructural development and socio-economic recovery.<sup>54</sup>

Another challenge in the process of agricultural rehabilitation efforts is political instability and the fragility of post-conflict states. Conflict can result in a lapse in public support and potentially corruption. Political institutions face both safety concerns and financial hardships during conflict which prevents consistent institutional support for the public.<sup>55</sup> This coupled with the difficulties and extreme loss experienced by individuals experiencing conflict, a lack of public support for political institutions is common. This creates issues in the process of implementing rehabilitation efforts post-conflict, which often require public support. Additionally, a lack of trust amongst farmers and laborers poses difficulties to education and assistance programs. A community in disarray is unlikely, and often unable, to fully partake in rehabilitation programming if their basic needs are not met first. Public

perception is one threat to political insecurity, opposing powers and opportunism and individuals may utilize political instability to promote their personal agendas and take political control. For instance, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), ongoing political instability and conflict have severely hampered efforts to address agricultural rehabilitation.<sup>56</sup> The DRC's government has struggled to prioritize and implement comprehensive agricultural programs due to corruption and internal power struggles.<sup>57</sup> As a result, essential agricultural rehabilitation efforts have been delayed. This prevents farmers from recovering their livelihoods and impedes progress toward sustainable agricultural development. This makes way for issues of corruption and long-term democratic backsliding. Democratic backsliding is disintegration of political norms and fundamental freedoms. Corrupted leaders are highly unlikely to install the programs and efforts necessary for agricultural rehabilitation into their political agendas. This also delays the positive progress that needs to be made for sustainability in the agricultural sector.<sup>58</sup>

Another barrier to long-term improvement is the inequalities of technological advancement in developing countries. The agricultural industry has become heavily reliant on modern technology for fiscal prosperity. Machinery and equipment expedite agricultural processes, as well as allow for efficiency within production lines. Scientific advancements in crop health and genetic modification have allowed farmers to create more profitable farms in various conditions.<sup>59</sup> However, conflict, especially in developing countries, can create a setback in these processes and heavily disadvantage farmers in international markets. The loss of machinery and equipment is incredibly hard to recover from in a post conflict scenario resulting in many losing their business and their income. The unequal distribution of scientific advancements to developing and/or recovering countries is exasperated by the harsh economic

52 "UN Appeals for \$46 Billion to Fund Aid in 2024." Al Jazeera, December 11, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/11/un-appeals-for-46-billion-to-fund-aid-in-2024>.

53 "Alarming Drop in Global Funding to People in War and Crisis." Norwegian Refugee Council, July 2024, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2024/july/alarming-drop-in-global-funding-to-people-in-war-and-crisis/>.

54 Muscat, Robert J., "Reviving Agriculture in the Aftermath of Violent Conflict: A Review of Experience." *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 2, no. 2 (2005): 77–92. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48603358>.

55 "New Era of Conflict and Violence." United Nations, 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/un75/new-era-conflict-and-violence>.

56 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Political Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo," <https://www.bmz.de/en/countries/democratic-republic-of-the-congo/political-situation-56152>.

57 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, "Political Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo."

58 Science Direct, Political Instability, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/political-instability>.

59 "Inclusivity in Agrifood Systems," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/inclusivity-in-agrifood-systems/en>.

impacts of war. These hinder the funding and importation required to implement effective and efficient systems into local farming operations.

With so many hardships to overcome, innovative solutions by the FAO are vital towards long-term solutions to agricultural destruction in conflict areas.<sup>60</sup> Sustainable solutions require full comprehension of the political, social, economic and technological drawbacks to successful implementation. In addition to this, such solutions must be affordable to local governments and individuals, while also promoting safe implementation in still-dangerous conflict areas.<sup>61</sup> The FAO has promoted research of conflict zones and agricultural production in areas requiring emergency assistance. Based on this research, they have put forward innovative solutions. However, each solution needs improvement based on implementation. Agricultural rehabilitation is primarily focused on research initiatives, emergency supplies, financial assistance, and technological support.<sup>62</sup>

Investment into research has allowed the FAO to produce vital information for the international community, while creating incredible groundwork to form actionable change.

Research initiatives have been vital in agricultural rehabilitation. These provide insights and data that help to inform policies and practices.<sup>63</sup> The FAO invests heavily in studying crop resilience, pest management, sustainable agrifood systems, and the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector. This research has yielded valuable information that has helped to develop effective strategies for addressing agricultural challenges. However, the application of research findings can be slow, and the benefits often do not reach the most vulnerable populations efficiently enough. Additionally, there can be a gap between research and practice, with farmers in conflict zones struggling to implement advanced techniques due to a lack of resources, training, funding or infrastructure.<sup>64</sup>

Providing emergency supplies, such as seeds, fertilizers, and

<sup>60</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “FAO Policy Support: Tools and Publications,” <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1271161>.

<sup>61</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “FAO Policy Support: Tools and Publications,”

<sup>62</sup> “Transforming Food and Agriculture to Achieve SDGs,” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/d7e5b4ae-80b6-4173-9adf-6f9f845be8a1/content>.

<sup>63</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “Research and Extension,” <https://www.fao.org/research-and-extension/en/#:~:text=FAO's%20role%20in%20Research%20and,the%20potential%20of%20agricultural%20innovation>.

<sup>64</sup> McCarthy, Ultan, Uysal, Ismail, Badia-Melis, Ricardo, Mercier, Samuel, O'Donnell, & Ktenioudaki, Anastasia, “Global food security – Issues, challenges and technological solutions” Science Direct Volume 77, (July 2018), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0924224417305125>.

HSC-26 distributes food aid to Haitian citizens

Credit: Petty Officer 2nd Class Jack Aistrup



farming tools, is a critical short-term solution to stabilize agricultural production in conflict zones.<sup>65</sup> These supplies help farmers resume their activities quickly, lessen financial hardships, and prevent food shortages. While emergency supplies are essential for immediate relief, they are not a sustainable solution long-term. Over-reliance on emergency aid can create dependency. Without a transition to more sustainable agricultural practices, communities remain vulnerable to future crises. Moreover, the logistics of delivering emergency supplies in conflict zones can be challenging, and often leading to delays and uneven distribution.<sup>66</sup>

Financial assistance, through grants, loans, and subsidies, supports farmers in recovering from losses and investing in effective and sustainable rehabilitation solutions.<sup>67</sup> Microfinance services typically target those who do not have access to larger banking institutions. They provide individuals with small loans and are particularly important for small-scale farmers, as well as providing them with the capital needed to improve their operations.<sup>68</sup> However, financial assistance programs can have significant shortcomings. Access to finance is often limited for the most vulnerable farmers due to political instability, lack of access to technology, or inadequate financial literacy. Additionally, without proper oversight, funds can be misallocated or misused, failing to reach those most in need. There is also the risk that financial aid might not address underlying structural issues in the agricultural sector. This leads to short-term fixes rather than sustainable development.

Technological support involves providing farmers with modern machinery, equipment, and training to enhance efficiency and productivity. The FAO's Identification, Delivery, and Empowerment Application (IDEA) model is a key framework for this. IDEA focuses on five main functions:

beneficiary data registration and verification, entitlements delivery and tracking, reporting and visualization, two-way communication with beneficiaries, and monitoring.<sup>69</sup> Beneficiary data registration and verification ensure aid is distributed correctly. Tracking monitors verify the distribution of resources and ensure transparency. Reporting and visualization create accessible data reports for proficient decision-making. Two-way communication with beneficiaries ensures their needs are heard and addressed.<sup>70</sup> Monitoring assesses the progress and impact of interventions. Despite the potential of the IDEA model, its implementation faces several challenges. High costs and limited access to modern equipment can prevent small-scale and resource-poor farmers from thriving. A lack of technical knowledge and training can limit the effective use of new technologies as well. Infrastructural issues, such as unreliable electricity and internet access, further hinder successful deployment. The IDEA model offers a comprehensive approach to integrating technology into agricultural rehabilitation. However, the gap between technology development and practical application in conflict zones remains to be a significant barrier to widespread agricultural recovery and sustainability.

## Sustainable Farming Practices

Defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, sustainability is a key pillar of the United Nations mission.<sup>71</sup> The FAO works to support Agenda 2030 and its goals by making sure that solutions for food insecurity also protect the environment.<sup>72</sup> The agricultural industry is closely linked to climate change. It not only contributes to greenhouse gas emissions but is also heavily affected by

65 Rural Recovery in Fragile States. Overseas Development Institute, 2024, <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/10.pdf>.

66 Overseas Development Institute, Rural Recovery in Fragile States.

67 “New Investment in Production Systems and Market Access for Burkina Faso’s Smallholders.” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, July 23, 2024, <https://www.fao.org/investment-centre/latest/news/detail/new-investment-in-production-systems-and-market-access-for-burkina-faso-s-smallholders/en>.

68 Kagan, Julia, “Microfinance,” Investopedia, July 31, 2024, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/microfinance.asp>.

69 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Identification, Delivery and Empowerment Application, 2024, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e89eb19b-b7be-4fd1-afa9-5758cbffa32c/content>.

70 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Identification, Delivery and Empowerment Application.

71 United Nations, “Sustainability,” United Nations Academic Impact, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability#:~:text=In%201987%2C%20the%20United%20Nations,development%20needs%2C%20but%20with%20the>.

72 United Nations Statistics Division. Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023. July 10, 2023. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/>.

environmental disasters caused by climate change.<sup>73</sup> As environmental problems from farming practices continue to repeat, it's crucial to use sustainable food systems for long-term success in industry. However, many people prioritize profit and efficiency over the future of farming globally. As the use of chemical fertilizers, harmful pesticides, and toxic monocultures increases, environmental protections are often ignored in agricultural production.<sup>74</sup> The push for industrial and commercial farming, along with using chemicals and harmful methods, risks the future of agriculture. When fixing farming practices, it is important to focus on protecting the environment and using sustainable methods. If the FAO does not make these a priority, it could cause more environmental problems and make things worse over time.<sup>75</sup>

To effectively put in place sustainable strategies, an understanding of the industry's largest issues is essential. The agricultural sector makes up 25-30 percent of greenhouse gas emissions through land usage, agricultural production, transport and waste.<sup>76</sup> Research on total emissions for livestock and crop production emissions emphasizes the need to reduce them. With the industrialization behind animal products consistently on the rise, greenhouse gas emissions of livestock alone make up around 6.2 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent emissions per year, and about 40 percent of total emissions from agrifood systems.<sup>77</sup>

In addition to the extreme malpractices and environmental destruction by the livestock industry, crop production also poses serious threats to climate change efforts, environmental protections, and animal rights. The current agricultural industry is destructive due to efforts for efficiency over

environmentally friendly practices. Traditional agrifood systems and localization are clear solutions to this issue. However, the drops in profit prevent the industry from implementing such solutions. Instead, monoculture cropping, a practice of farming a single crop in a field repeatedly, has become extremely popular.<sup>78</sup> However, while efficient, monoculture cropping is possibly one of the most disputed issues within the agricultural industry. Monoculture crops limit diversity. Once, more than seven thousand species fed humanity, now only 30 crops produce 90 percent of calories in the human diet.<sup>79</sup> In a biodiverse farming system, thousands of insects pollinate our crops and control pests through a natural pest-predator balance.<sup>80</sup> However, in a monoculture system, pesticides that can kill valuable insects, as well as pollute local water and soil are implemented. Monoculture farming has already led to drastic losses of plant varieties with reportedly 96 percent of apple varieties and 80 percent of corn varieties being lost in the last 100 years.<sup>81</sup> The erosion of biodiversity clearly represents a food system that treats food production as a business, rather than an ecosystem. Farming food, a once culturally significant and respected practice has become nothing more than a means of production, having permanent impacts on plant species and ecosystems. These practices promote increased water and pesticide inputs, which deplete already drained supplies of fertile soil and water.<sup>82</sup> The destruction of healthy soil cannot be remedied quickly and takes years, if not centuries to rebuild. Unhealthy soil can result in unsuccessful crop production and soil erosion. With monoculture leaving soil bare for much of the year, the soil loses organic matter and struggles to efficiently hold water, increasing the need for artificial fertilizers and more water

73 Union of Concerned Scientists. "Climate Change and Agriculture." March 20, 2019. <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/climate-change-and-agriculture>.

74 Shiva, Vandana. *Who Really Feeds the World? The Failures of Agribusiness and the Promise of Agroecology*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2016)

75 Muhammad, F., & Zhang, X. "Food Aid, Poverty, and Conflict: Evidence from African Countries." *Food Policy*. November 2023. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306919223001409>.

76 Ritchie, Hannah. "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Food Production." *Our World in Data*. March 18, 2021. <https://ourworldindata.org/greenhouse-gas-emissions-food>.

77 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. "New FAO Report Maps Pathways towards Lower Livestock Emissions." *FAO Newsroom*. August 12, 2023. <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/new-fao-report-maps-pathways-towards-lower-livestock-emissions/en>.

78 EOS Data Analytics, "Monoculture Farming: Definition, Benefits, and Issues," *EOS*. October 20, 2020, <https://eos.com/blog/monoculture-farming/>.

79 Shiva, Vandana. *Who Really Feeds the World?*

80 Shiva, Vandana. *Who Really Feeds the World?*

81 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. *The State of the World's Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture*. Rome: FAO, 2019. [https://ressources.semencespaysannes.org/docs/etat\\_biodiv\\_fao1.pdf](https://ressources.semencespaysannes.org/docs/etat_biodiv_fao1.pdf).

82 Shiva, Vandana. *Who Really Feeds the World?*



A woman holds up some of the vegetables she has grown in a small garden in Cape Town, South Africa

Credit: Kate Holt

which can be unsustainable financially for smaller farmers, and have grave impacts on local communities.<sup>83</sup> In addition to this, soil health protects land and crops from dust storms and flash flooding which often have dangerous impacts on farmers and rural prosperity.<sup>84</sup> Recovering from flooding can be incredibly difficult due to the loss of large quantities of inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides.

There have been many proposed solutions to combat the unsustainable and damaging habits of the agricultural sector. While some recommend resource conservation, others promote biodiversity enhancement and still others believe organic farming practices most effective. Simple approaches of resource conservation such as minimizing water usage and caring for soil are viable solutions to unsustainability in the industry. When implemented alone, they can damage crop yield and be labeled as ineffective.<sup>85</sup> To properly address issues, such as high-water usage and soil degradation, a combination of practices must be used to increase the likelihood of success.

Conservation Agriculture is a farming system that promotes the

83 Union of Concerned Scientists. "Climate Change and Agriculture."

84 FDC Enterprises. "How Soil Erosion and Farming Practices Lead to the Dust Bowl." March 19, 2020. <https://fdcenterprises.com/how-soil-erosion-and-farming-practices-lead-to-the-dust-bowl/>.

85 FDC Enterprises. "How Soil Erosion and Farming Practices Lead to the Dust Bowl."

86 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "What Is Conservation Agriculture?" FAO. 2024. <https://www.fao.org/conservation-agriculture/overview/what-is-conservation-agriculture/en/>.

87 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "What Is Conservation Agriculture?"

88 Foley, Jonathan A., and James G. K. Smith. "Global Food Security: Challenges and Opportunities." *Nature Food* 1, no. 3 (2020): 123-130. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-020-0119-5>.

maintenance of topsoil and minimal soil disturbance through land regeneration and plant diversification.<sup>86</sup> Essentially this method utilizes no-tillage and direct seeding strategies to prevent soil disturbance while keeping at least 30 percent of soil organically covered. This, paired with species diversification of at least three different crops, aids soil maintenance. In turn, this increases biodiversity, water retention, and provides protection from wind erosion and flooding. Along with this, conservation agriculture reduces pest populations and the need for pesticides, while increasing soil fertility and lessening fertilizer costs.<sup>87</sup> Due to this, and the increased crop yields per unit of fertilizer applied, conservation agriculture is also highly cost-effective in the long run. However, this solution is not immediately effective in improving poor crop productivity and does not efficiently solve food scarcity issues in developing countries. In addition to this, the equipment needed for tillage that minimizes soil disturbance can be costly and is inaccessible for many small farmers.<sup>88</sup> Crop rotation and agroforestry are also effective methods of aiding biodiversity and reaping its benefits. Crop rotation is the practice of planting crops

and plants about seasons. This is done to prevent soil from becoming exposed. Agroforestry, the practice of integrating trees and shrubs into fields, similarly seeks to aid in soil growth while also providing alternate streams of income to farmers.<sup>89</sup> Both of these methods can be extremely effective. However, they may add costs that are prohibitive to smaller farmers or those seeking to rehabilitate agricultural areas.

As seen in these examples, along with other solutions of natural fertilizers and pest management, cost is incredibly important to the possibility of implementing these solutions long-term. The socioeconomic impacts of war make the promotion of sustainability in rehabilitation difficult. Yet, long term, these initiatives will benefit local communities and agricultural workers. Agricultural rehabilitation in a post-conflict area allows for an opportunity to create long-term sustainability in the industry. For success to be assured, governments and organizations must identify specific needs and challenges that local farming communities face and provide their solutions to those communities. This must be done while also promoting engagement from local populations. When rebuilding infrastructure, such as storage facilities, factories and irrigation systems, sustainable and affordable designs are paramount to sustainable success. In addition to this, education on sustainable practices, such as conservation agriculture, is vital to the independence of local farmers. Finally, microfinancing and grants are extremely beneficial to implementing and maintaining these systems during the early stages of the rehabilitation process.

## Sustaining Peace Through the Agricultural Sector

With increased resource scarcity in the world, addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable practices in the agricultural sector is essential to creating peace in a conflict-

ridden world. By promoting economic development, and fostering social cohesion, organizations such as the FAO can lessen unemployment and financial instability, which can drive violence. Through agricultural rehabilitation and economic development, the agricultural sector can address the underlying causes of conflict by providing livelihoods and educating communities on resource conservation efforts. The agricultural sector supports peacebuilding efforts through various mechanisms, including food security, sustainable practices, and community engagement.<sup>90</sup>

Food insecurity can trigger internal and external conflict while conflict can perpetuate hunger. To break the cycle of hunger and conflict, the FAO and the UN have prioritized the implementation of prosperous agrifood systems and emergency food initiatives.<sup>91</sup> As a fundamental aspect of peacebuilding, access to calorie-sufficient, safe, and nutritious food is imperative for maintaining stability in society. According to the FAO, food security has a direct impact on peace and stability, as it can often alleviate the pressures that can lead to conflict and civil unrest.<sup>92</sup> The FAO's initiatives focus on improving food security by enhancing agricultural productivity and ensuring equitable access to resources. This helps to prevent conflicts driven by scarcity. The World Food Programme (WFP) highlights that food insecurity can exacerbate tensions and lead to unrest, noting, "food insecurity often contributes to social unrest and conflicts, particularly in regions with existing vulnerabilities."<sup>93</sup> Investment into research efforts, such as the Emergency Food Security Assessment, provide critical data that help design interventions aimed at stabilizing regions affected by conflict and preventing further escalation.<sup>94</sup>

Sustainable agricultural efforts aim to prevent farming practices from depleting natural resources and harming the environment, which in turn, can prevent conflicts over resource

<sup>89</sup> Soil Association. "Agroforestry: What Are the Benefits?" Soil Association. <https://www.soilassociation.org/causes-campaigns/agroforestry/agroforestry-what-are-the-benefits/>.

<sup>90</sup> Soil Association. "Agroforestry: What Are the Benefits?"

<sup>91</sup> United Nations. "Breaking the Vicious Circle of Hunger and Conflict." United Nations Food Systems Summit. 2024. <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/breaking-vicious-circle-hunger-and-conflict>.

<sup>92</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Agricultural Development and Peace, 2024, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/206ba167-a31b-40d7-831a-928886d3102f/content>.

<sup>93</sup> World Food Programme, "Food Security and Conflict," 2024, <https://www.wfp.org/publications/food-security-and-conflict>.

<sup>94</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Emergency Food Security Assessment," 2024, <https://www.fao.org/emergency/food-security-assessment/en/>.

scarcity.<sup>95</sup> The concept of sustainable agriculture includes techniques such as agroforestry, crop rotation, conservation agriculture, and integrated natural pest management. These practices not only enhance productivity and have financial benefits for farmers, but they also improve soil health and water management, which are crucial for maintaining stable agricultural systems. These efforts promote biodiversity and environmental awareness while also reducing the risks of conflict by protecting natural resources and increasing agriculture production in addition to creating employment opportunities.<sup>96</sup> FAO's support for sustainable agriculture includes projects that promote soil conservation, efficient water use, and biodiversity. For example, the FAO's "Save and Grow" initiative advocates for sustainable intensification methods that increase yields while preserving environmental health.<sup>97</sup> These initiatives are essential for creating stable agricultural environments that contribute to long-term peace.

Along with food security, economic development has a large role in modern conflicts with patterns of economic decline and worsening state services, which may lead to social issues or violence.<sup>98</sup> Economic stability reduces the likelihood of conflict by addressing underlying grievances and providing equal opportunities for all. In many developing nations, agricultural industries provide the primary source of livelihood for a large portion of the population and make up a significant portion of the country's GDP.<sup>99</sup> By investing in agricultural infrastructure, technological advancements, and agrifood education, governments can enhance productivity and create economic opportunities. For example, the African Development Bank's "Feed Africa" strategy focuses on promoting agricultural productivity and improving food security through technological advancements.<sup>100</sup> By strengthening and improving agricultural systems and supporting local farmers, the strategy aims to foster economic

95 International Fund for Agricultural Development, Sustainable Agriculture for Peace, <https://www.ifad.org/documents/10180/0/Soil+conservation+and+peace.pdf>.

96 Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture, "Climate-Smart Agriculture and Peace," October 2023, <https://www.fao.org/gacsa/en/>.

97 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Save and Grow: A Policymaker's Guide to Sustainable Intensification of Smallholder Crop Production," <https://www.fao.org/3/i3325e/i3325e.pdf>.

98 Homer-Dixon, Thomas. 1999. "Environment, Scarcity, and Violence." *Scientific American* 276, no. 6: 38-45. February 2002. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1122271/#:~:text=With%20economic%20stagnation%20or%20decline,be%20expected%20to%20cause%20conflict.>

99 International Association of Agricultural Economists, June 2001, "Agriculture in Developing Countries: Which Way Forward?," [https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Agriculture\\_in\\_Developing\\_Countries\\_Which\\_Way\\_.htm#:~:text=In%20developing%20countries%2C%20agriculture%20continues,significant%20proportion%20of%20the%20population.](https://www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Agriculture_in_Developing_Countries_Which_Way_.htm#:~:text=In%20developing%20countries%2C%20agriculture%20continues,significant%20proportion%20of%20the%20population.)

100 International Association of Agricultural Economists, "Agriculture in Developing Countries: Which Way Forward?"

Individuals collaborate to learn effective farming techniques in Cape Town, South Africa

Credit: Kate Holt





stability and contribute to regional peace.<sup>101</sup> In addition to this, the agricultural sector is unique in its ability to bring communities together around common goals of economic success and environmental protection. By utilizing this, the agricultural sector can promote social cohesion and peace. Projects that involve community participation, such as cooperative farming practices and volunteer rural development programs, strengthen social ties within local communities and reduce tensions. By involving local populations in decision-making and resource management, farms can create peace within communities.<sup>102</sup>

Examining specific case studies illustrates the practical impact of agricultural initiatives on peacebuilding. For example, in post-conflict areas, such as Rwanda and Sierra Leone, FAO's projects have focused on rebuilding agricultural systems and supporting displaced communities. These efforts have not only restored food production, but also provided a foundation for economic recovery and social integration.<sup>103</sup> In alignment with the FAO's global Hand-In-Hand initiative, the Rwandan government has formed a USD 502 million agricultural investment plan which seeks to increase economic prosperity, sustainable initiative, and address food scarcity in the nation. This will be completed through the prioritization of potato, tea, and small livestock production.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, in Sierra Leone, FAO's agricultural recovery programs have supported farmers in rebuilding their livelihoods and fostering community resilience after years of conflict.<sup>105</sup>

In Colombia, where FAO's efforts have supported rural development programs, ongoing projects have primarily focused on peacebuilding. Rural development programs focus on providing agricultural support to communities affected by conflict, helping to stabilize regions by improving livelihoods

and promoting economic development.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the FAO's projects in Colombia help rural farmers adhere to the local governing body's guidelines and frameworks. Through educating those working in the agricultural industry, citizens can be more efficient and maximize their profits.

The agricultural sector is a powerful tool for sustaining peace by addressing food security, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering economic and social stability. It is essential to integrate comprehensive strategies that consider local contexts and involve community participation. Investments in agricultural research and technology are also crucial, as they can drive innovation and improve resilience to climate change and other environmental challenges. Furthermore, addressing systemic issues such as land rights and access to resources is vital for creating equitable and sustainable agricultural systems. By promoting fair policies and ensuring that marginalized communities have access to the tools and resources they need, we can build more inclusive and resilient agricultural sectors. Through initiatives that enhance agricultural productivity and support sustainable development, global collaboration will contribute significantly to peacebuilding efforts.

## Current Status

### Case Study: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Since 1996, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has faced conflict, with current violence occurring following the 2023 National Elections.<sup>107</sup> With over six million conflict-related deaths since 1998 and approximately seven million displaced persons, the ongoing conflicts in the DRC have caused harm

101 African Development Bank, *Feed Africa: Strategy for Agricultural Transformation*, [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/Brochure\\_Feed\\_Africa\\_-En.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/Brochure_Feed_Africa_-En.pdf).

102 International Peace Institute, "Community-Based Agricultural Projects and Social Cohesion," <https://www.ipinst.org/program/peace-and-sustainable-development>.

103 International Peace Institute, "Community-Based Agricultural Projects and Social Cohesion."

104 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Rwanda: FAO and Partners Launch New Initiative to Strengthen Food Systems and Support Resilience," 2023, <https://www.fao.org/rwanda/news/detail-events/en/c/1681307/>.

105 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Agricultural Recovery in Sierra Leone," 2019, <https://www.fao.org/sierra-leone/agricultural-recovery>.

106 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Rural Development and Peacebuilding in Colombia," 2024, <https://www.fao.org/colombia/rural-development>.

107 Council on Foreign Relations, "Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo," *Global Conflict Tracker*, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-democratic-republic-congo>.

to local communities.<sup>108</sup> With conflict in eastern Congo displacing another 500,000 civilians, the DRC now holds the highest number of internally displaced people in Africa.<sup>109</sup> The levels of displacement have caused severe food shortages and rampant hunger in the region, resulting in one of the largest humanitarian crises of our time. With 23.4 million people experiencing emergency levels of hunger and food insecurity and an estimated 4.5 million children severely malnourished, the FAO and World Food Programme have implemented several emergency food and cash assistance aid programs.<sup>110</sup> However, despite being the largest hunger crisis in the world, the DRC continues to be largely ignored on the international stage. Aid in the DRC only reaches one dollar USD per week per person in need,<sup>111</sup>. The ongoing conflict and crisis occurring in the DRC is one of the most neglected issues in modern politics and diplomacy. This is a clear example of extremely negatively impacts on the agricultural potential of a country.

The DRC is home to 80 million hectares of arable land and four million hectares of irrigated land along, as well as many rivers that aid in fishery operations.<sup>112</sup> These resources provide the country with opportunity for a strong agricultural industry. However, while agriculture makes up 19.7 percent of the GDP and employs over 60 percent of the population, it is not immune to the negative impacts of conflict.<sup>113</sup>

As civilians are displaced, farms lose their labor sources and become difficult to maintain. The FAO reports serious inequalities in land accessibility, which are exacerbated by

displacement and violence. In its 2023 DRC Impact of Conflict Report, the FAO clearly outlined the dangers of conflict on food security and agriculture in the Ituri province.<sup>114</sup> They found that land accessibility varies greatly between communities in active conflict zones compared to those in less violent areas. Additionally, displaced households have significantly lower access to land than returnee and host households.<sup>115</sup> 30 percent of displaced households report no access to land, compared to 15 percent of returnee households and 16 percent of host households. There are clear inequalities that can lead to hunger and malnutrition within Ituri households.<sup>116</sup> With the potential to grow your own food and farm your own livestock, land gives communities' food security and income. This makes land an important asset to Congolese citizens. Unfortunately, despite the abundance of land available, only ten percent of it is being used for agricultural practices.<sup>117</sup> This, paired with increases in plot price, has made purchasing difficult and in some cases, dangerous. Increased prices coupled with resource scarcity can foster desperation, triggering violence.<sup>118</sup> When land becomes one of the few ways individuals can provide themselves and their family with the money and food needed for survival, it can easily tear communities apart, as well as foster growing violence in the region. Despite the growing tensions surrounding land in smaller communities, the focus of the agricultural industry continues to be smallholder sustenance farming due to infrastructural damages sustained during the Congo Wars.<sup>119</sup> Due to the mismanagement of small-scale farming on a governmental level, agricultural production continues to fall short of the country's food needs.<sup>120</sup>

108 Genocide Watch, "Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Report: March 2024," <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/democratic-republic-of-the-congo-country-report-march-2024>.

109 Human Rights Watch, "Democratic Republic of Congo." World Report, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/democratic-republic-congo>.

110 World Food Programme, "Democratic Republic of Congo," <https://www.wfp.org/countries/democratic-republic-congo#:~:text=A%20total%2023.4%20million%20people,are%20refugees%20in%20neighbouring%20countries>.

111 Al Jazeera, "Photos: DR Congo – The World's Most Neglected Displacement Crisis," June 1, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2022/6/1/photos-dr-congo-the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crisis>.

112 International Trade Administration. "Democratic Republic of the Congo - Agriculture." Country Commercial Guides. Accessed August 2, 2024. <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/democratic-republic-congo-agriculture>.

113 International Trade Administration, Democratic Republic of the Congo - Agriculture.

114 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Democratic Republic of the Congo | Agriculture Diagnostic for the National Agricultural Investment Plan, November 2023, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/3aa8e2be-1515-4610-9a2b-5b315cd22725/content>.

115 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Democratic Republic of the Congo

116 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Democratic Republic of the Congo

117 Embassy of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the United States, "Agriculture," <https://www.ambardcusa.org/invest-in-the-drc/industries/agriculture/>.

118 ReliefWeb, "DR Congo: My Struggle for Land," <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/dr-congo-my-struggle-land>.

119 LandLinks. "Democratic Republic of Congo." Country Profile. <https://www.land-links.org/country-profile/democratic-republic-congo/>.

120 LandLinks. "Democratic Republic of Congo."



Participants pictured following a training on healthier eating and nutrition from the NGO Action Against Hunger in Bandundu Province, DRC

Credit: UK Department for International Development

The United Nations World Food Programme and FAO have attempted to address the multiple crises occurring in the DRC through infrastructural rehabilitation planning, aid programs and research initiatives. The FAO 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan outlines the emergency agricultural intervention methods most effective in addressing agricultural and social rehabilitation.<sup>121</sup> The goals of the initiatives are to assist 3.6 million people including many displaced or malnourished due to the impacts of conflict.<sup>122</sup> The plan seeks to achieve this through the implementation of sustainable farming methods that provide communities with income and food security.<sup>123</sup> The response plan requires USD 233.9 million in order to address 6 priorities: supporting sustainable agricultural production, improving animal and livestock health, increasing fish production, conflict management and prevention, enhancing emergency livelihood response systems and ensuring FSC Coordination.<sup>124</sup> This will be completed through the implementation of emergency aid resources, such as crop seeds and tools for agricultural purposes. Animal feed and animal health protection also serve livestock support to revitalize the agricultural sector. Fisheries in areas experiencing

food insecurity will be training and technical resources, along with receiving equipment to provide communities with a sustainable food source. In addition to these highly agricultural focused methods, funding will also go to securing land rights, promoting community radio stations for early warnings of conflict, and conflict prevention training. Finally, USD 16 million will be put towards improving emergency livelihood funds that will provide agricultural inputs to prevent the negative impacts of conflict within the industry. Additionally, USD one million will be focused on coordination with stakeholders, drafting sector strategies, and enhancing partners technical abilities.<sup>125</sup> This plan has the potential to aid millions of Congolese citizens and communities with USD 160 providing 4.5 months of food for a family of 6, as well as \$0.80 enabling families to vaccinate their livestock resulting in a source of milk, meat and income. Seemingly small amounts can have large impacts on individuals in the agricultural sector. However, these efforts continue to lack international funding. Despite having one of the world's largest displacement issues, a quarter of the population is facing emergency levels of food

121 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Analysis of the Agricultural Sector," <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/ba0f2253-aa9d-4eaf-8314-677d5cff8491/content>

122 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Analysis of the Agricultural Sector."

123 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Analysis of the Agricultural Sector."

124 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Analysis of the Agricultural Sector."

125 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Democratic Republic of the Congo: Analysis of the Agricultural Sector."

insecurity, and an estimated 75 percent of the Congolese people are living off less than USD 2.15 a day.<sup>126</sup> However, the DRC continues to receive minimal assistance compared to other countries. With a need of USD 2.6 billion to meet the basic needs of vulnerable citizens in 2024, the DRC received USD 70 million from the EU, USD 486 million from the United States and USD 27 million from the UNHCR.<sup>127</sup> While seemingly large quantities, this aid does not match the urgency of the crisis and is a fraction of the assistance provided to other regions. In fact, the FAO estimates an USD 80 million shortage in aid necessary to implement their 2024 humanitarian response crisis plan,<sup>128</sup> Despite having one of the largest food insecurity crises in the world and being the top five poorest countries, the DRC does not reach the top ten foreign aid recipients amongst any of the top size foreign aid contributors around the world. This highlights the extreme need for a focus on international funding through FAO members and international aid organizations, to appropriately address the severity of the DRC's humanitarian crisis.

Despite the DRC's immense agricultural potential and urgent humanitarian needs, international support remains insufficient. The ongoing conflict has exacerbated food insecurity and hindered agricultural recovery, leaving millions in dire conditions. The FAO's 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan outlines crucial steps to address these issues, but without adequate funding, these efforts fall short. The global community must urgently increase financial support to effectively tackle the crisis, restore agricultural productivity, provide the necessary relief to stabilize the region, and support

long-term peace and development.

### Case Study: Ukraine

On February 24th, 2022, Russia launched a large-scale invasion on Ukraine, drawing international attention.<sup>129</sup> The initial attacks, including heavy shelling and missile attacks on densely populated areas, resulted in significant infrastructural damages and caused millions of Ukrainians to flee their homes. Prior to the 24th, Ukraine experienced eight years of ongoing conflict within the region that resulted in 2.9 million people in conflict affected regions in need of assistance.<sup>130</sup> The Russian invasion worsened this and by 2023, left an estimated 3.7 million people internally displaced, and an additional 6.3 million people seeking refugee status and asylum.<sup>131</sup> In addition to the social impacts of the war, the conflict resulted in the destruction of economic and social services leaving millions of Ukrainian citizens reliant on international humanitarian aid.<sup>132</sup> In the first year alone, Ukraine lost 30-35 percent of its annual GDP, resulting in the largest recession in Ukrainian history.<sup>133</sup> The conflict has also gravely impacted food security within the nation, with an 18.7 percent increase in poverty in 2022. Russia's invasion pushed 7.1 million people into poverty.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, Ukraine now has one of the highest levels of food insecurity in the world with a staggering 8.9 million people facing severe acute food insecurity as of 2023.<sup>135</sup> This is exacerbated through job losses due to infrastructural issues surrounding ports and manufacturing plants and deaths amongst household earners.<sup>136</sup>

126 World Bank, "Democratic Republic of Congo Overview," <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/drc/overview>.

127 European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, "Democratic Republic of Congo."

128 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Almost a Quarter of the Population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo Continue to Face Acute Food Insecurity as Humanitarian Needs Grow to Record Levels," <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/almost-a-quarter-of-the-population-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-continue-to-face-acute-food-insecurity-as-humanitarian-needs-grow-to-record-levels/en#:~:text=In%202023%2C%20FAO%20required%20USD,support%20to%20conflict%2Dstricken%20communities>.

129 UN Refugee Agency, "5 Things You Should Know About the War in Ukraine," August 3, 2024, <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/5-things-you-should-know-about-the-war-in-ukraine/>.

130 UN Refugee Agency, "5 Things You Should Know About the War in Ukraine."

131 UNHCR, "Ukraine Situation," December 31, 2023, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/ukraine-situation/#:~:text=By%20the%20end%20of%202023,million%20of%20them%20in%20Europe>.

132 UNHCR, "Ukraine Situation."

133 Economics Observatory, "Ukraine: What's the Global Economic Impact of Russia's Invasion?," August 2, 2024, <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/ukraine-whats-the-global-economic-impact-of-russias-invasion/#:~:text=Russia's%20attack%20on%20Ukraine%20placed,that%20far%20outpace%20wage%20growth>.

134 Economics Observatory, "Ukraine: What's the Global Economic Impact of Russia's Invasion?"

135 Food Security Information Network (FSIN). Global Report on Food Crises 2023. FSIN, 2023. <https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC2023-brief-EN.pdf>.

136 Economics Observatory, "Ukraine: What's the Global Economic Impact of Russia's Invasion?," August 2, 2024, <https://www.economicsobservatory.com/ukraine-whats-the-global-economic-impact-of-russias-invasion/#:~:text=Russia's%20attack%20on%20>

Ukraine's biggest industry and one its strongest assets is its agriculture industry. Around 55 percent of the country is made up of arable land, that's an estimated 32.7 million hectares of land viable for crop production.<sup>137</sup> Along with this, Ukraine also holds around a third of the world's most fertile land, Ukraine has excellent conditions for farming varying crops.<sup>138</sup> It grows primarily wheat, maize and sunflower crops and has become one of the world's largest producers of sunflower oil and wheat.<sup>139</sup> Producing 41 percent or USD 27.8 billion worth of the country's exports, the agricultural industry is vital to the nation's economy and provides millions with jobs.<sup>140</sup> Unfortunately, the conflict has greatly impacted the agricultural sector, causing a 29 percent decrease in Ukrainian grain production in the 2022-2023 fiscal year.<sup>141</sup> Infrastructural damage, loss of life, and Russian military blockade have all contributed to the delay of wheat exports. This is causing long term economic and negative social impacts around the world. With reduced grain exports, the cost of grain around the world increased with the cost of wheat increasing by 58 percent and grains increasing by 38 percent.<sup>142</sup> Much of this grain was used to feed livestock, resulting in severe economic losses within the industry in addition to food shortages around the world.<sup>143</sup> Further, the war on Ukraine has resulted in lost and damaged production facilities and has left many areas unplanted, having grave financial impacts in the agricultural sector.<sup>144</sup> With the estimated total damage to infrastructure being of USD 127 billion as of March 2023, repairing the agricultural industry

will be economically challenging.<sup>145</sup> Along with the total losses within the agricultural sector, which amount to approximately USD 18.5 billion for 2021 and 2022 crops, many have been driven to the brink of bankruptcy and poverty.<sup>146</sup>

The harm of this conflict has not been limited to Ukraine alone and has greatly hurt food security and agricultural stability around the world. In addition to the loss of grain exports from Ukraine, Russia's war has impacted its own exports. Russia is the world leading exporter of fertilizers, with the industry exporting around USD 18.7 Billion in 2022.<sup>147</sup> While western countries have not imposed outright sanctions or bans on Russian fertilizer imports, Moscow reports that its exports have been harmed due to the difficulties in processing that arose due to previous sanctions.<sup>148</sup> While Russian exports were not gravely impacted, in the months following the country's invasion, fertilizer prices rose to record highs around the world, having significant economic impacts.<sup>149</sup> The FAO Impacts of War on Agriculture report for Ukraine reported a global increase in production costs due to increased fertilizer, transport and grain costs. This has especially impacted developing regions such as Kiribati and Ethiopia.<sup>150</sup> An additional concern of this conflict is the impact on communities experiencing current crises such as natural disasters which can't grow their own food and hence, rely on imports from Ukraine. In recent years, Morocco has faced severe droughts, worsening an already serious food security

Ukraine%20placed,that%20far%20outpace%20wage%20growth.

137 World Bank, "Agricultural Land (% of Land Area) - Ukraine," <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/AG.LND.ARBL.ZS?locations=UA>.

138 European Parliament, The Impact of the War in Ukraine on the EU's Energy Security and Energy Market, (EPRS, 2024), [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760432/EPRS\\_BRI\(2024\)760432\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760432/EPRS_BRI(2024)760432_EN.pdf).

139 USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, Ukraine: Factsheet - April 2022. (USDA, April 2022), <https://fas.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-04/Ukraine-Factsheet-April2022.pdf>.

140 USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, Ukraine: Factsheet - April 2022.

141 Council of the European Union, "How the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Has Further Aggravated the Global Food Crisis," <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/infographics/how-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-has-further-aggravated-the-global-food-crisis/>.

142 Council of the European Union, "How the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Has Further Aggravated the Global Food Crisis."  
143 USDA Global Agricultural Information Network. Ukraine: Livestock and Products Semi-Annual Report, ReliefWeb, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/usda-global-agricultural-information-network-gain-ukraine-livestock-and-products-semi-annual#:~:text=Russia's%20unjustified%20invasion%20of%20Ukraine,expected%20to%20continue%20in%202023.>

144 Council of the European Union, "How the Russian Invasion of Ukraine Has Further Aggravated the Global Food Crisis."

145 Martyshev, Pavlo, Nivievskiy, Oleg, & Bogonos, Mariia, "Regional War, Global Consequences: Mounting Damages to Ukraine's Agriculture and Growing Challenges," International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), March 27, 2023, <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/regional-war-global-consequences-mounting-damages-ukraines-agriculture-and-growing-challenges/>.

146 Martyshev, "Regional War, Global Consequences: Mounting Damages to Ukraine's Agriculture and Growing Challenges."

147 OEC, "Fertilizers Exports by Country (Russia)," <https://oec.world/en/profile/bilateral-product/fertilizers/reporter/rus>.

148 Angel, Maytal, "Have Western Sanctions on Russia Impacted Its Fertiliser Exports?" Reuters, May 11, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/have-western-sanctions-russia-impacted-its-fertiliser-exports-2023-05-11/>.

149 Angel, "Have Western Sanctions on Russia Impacted Its Fertiliser Exports?"

150 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Heatmap for Least Developed Countries. UN DESA, 2024. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/Heatmap-LDCs-web.pdf>.

issue.<sup>151</sup> In order to combat this, the 2008 Green Morocco Plan was adopted to aid the agricultural sector. However, this investment does not mean that the country can produce adequate food for growing populations.<sup>152</sup> Morocco imported USD 6.5 billion in agricultural goods with Russia and Ukraine making up 50 percent of wheat imports.<sup>153</sup> Increases in food prices and production delays resulted in a spike in Morocco's food accessibility issue and greatly backtracked the country's movement toward food security.<sup>154</sup>

The FAO has taken many avenues to combat the harmful consequence of conflict on Ukraine's agricultural industry. Maximo Torero, FAO Chief Economist, outlines the FAO response in four steps. The first is an emergency food response to those in need in Ukraine. The second is to ensure the next planting season happens. Thirdly, aid countries are reliant on imports from Ukraine and Russia. Finally, to assist in agricultural rehabilitation.<sup>155</sup> Significant funding from the United States and European Union Member states allows for the effective implementation of such solutions. A recent example of one of these efforts is the 2023 Emergency Livelihood Support Project run by the FAO in partnership with Ireland. The project cost USD 907,307 and distributed poultry production kits to 1000 households. This disbursed USD 530,280 in cash assistance to those same households and supplied USD 17,500 in one-time cash transfers to 35 households to aid heating for winter.<sup>156</sup> This project aided in keeping these households fed and warm during winter months and provided families with livestock knowledge for

future farming efforts. This, coupled with the results of the 2023 Ukraine Response Programme in 2023, has not only aided in immediate community growth and support but also helped to lessen the impact of war in the agricultural industry while informing the FAO and partners of beneficial efforts for future.<sup>157</sup>

Since Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the conflict has caused severe humanitarian and economic crises, deeply affecting Ukraine's agricultural sector. The FAO has responded with critical interventions, such as emergency food assistance and agricultural rehabilitation projects, supported by significant funding from international partners. These efforts aim to mitigate the immediate impacts and restore agricultural stability, but the ongoing conflict underscores the urgent need for continued global support to address both Ukraine's crisis and its ripple effects on global food security.

## Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the United Nations Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.<sup>158</sup> The Agenda focuses on 17 Sustainable Development Goals and includes 169 targets.<sup>159</sup> The goals seek to address violent conflict, human rights abuses, climate change and environmental degradation through effective and efficient solutions.<sup>160</sup>

One of the core sustainable development goals is goal 2, Zero Hunger.<sup>161</sup> The primary objective of this goal is to end all forms

151 Karam, Souhail, "Impact of Climate Change on Morocco Farmers Bad Omen for Global Food Supplies," Bloomberg News, June 27, 2024, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-06-27/impact-of-climate-change-on-morocco-farmers-bad-omen-for-global-food-supplies>.

152 Assefa, Aklilu, Dawit Alemu, and Tadesse Kuma. "The Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Ethiopia: Implications for Agricultural Practices and Food Prices." *Agriculture & Food Security* 13, no. 1 (2024): 1-17. <https://agricultureandfoodsecurity.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40066-024-00467-3>.

153 Assefa, Aklilu, Dawit Alemu, and Tadesse Kuma, "The Impact of Climate Change on Food Security in Ethiopia: Implications for Agricultural Practices and Food Prices."

154 Ministry of Economy and Finance, Morocco, *Rapport sur la Compensation*, 2020, <https://www.finances.gov.ma/Publication/db/2020/rapport-compens-plf20-fr.pdf>.

155 Yuliya Yurchenko, "How the War in Ukraine is Transforming the Global Order" TEDxBrighton. YouTube video, 16:41. April 4, 2023. [https://youtu.be/EtiQ\\_wgTvz4](https://youtu.be/EtiQ_wgTvz4).

156 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of Food and Agriculture 2023: Leveraging Food Systems for Inclusive Rural Transformation*, 2023. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/675f0a8a-ae6e-470a-8dee-cc69fa80672d/content>.

157 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), *The State of Food and Agriculture 2023: Leveraging Food Systems for Inclusive Rural Transformation*.

158 United Nations, *The 17 Goals | Sustainable Development*, 2024, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>.

159 United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>.

160 United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Agenda*, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>.

161 United Nations, *Goal 2: Zero Hunger*. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal2>.

of hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030, ensuring that all people, especially children, have access to sources of sufficient and nutritious food. This goal also emphasizes the importance of sustainable agrifood systems coupled with resilient agricultural practices that are able to withstand weather changes triggered by climate change.<sup>162</sup> Another goal under the Zero Hunger SDG is to achieve the internationally agreed targets on stunting in children under 5 years of age through addressing inequalities in food accessibility.<sup>163</sup> This goal also seeks to increase investment in the agricultural sector, through enhanced international cooperation, research initiative and technological advancements in order to enhance agricultural productivity in less developed countries.<sup>164</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 15, Life on Land, is also integral to the FAO's mission. The goal seeks to protect, restore, and promote sustainability in terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss.<sup>165</sup> This goal prioritizes the need for conservation efforts to protect the planet's land and ecosystems, which are essential for human survival and well-being.<sup>166</sup>

FAO's mission is to prevent world hunger and promote agricultural sustainability. These goals are heavily reliant on international collaboration. The primary objective of SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, is to strengthen the methods of international collaboration. This supports the implementation and revitalization of global partnerships. These relationships share knowledge, technology, and financial resources to support the achievement of all SDGs, including those related to food security and agricultural sustainability.<sup>167</sup> Mobilizing financial resources is essential for agricultural development projects. International partnerships can help secure funding for infrastructure, research, and capacity-building in the agricultural sector. By mobilizing international partnerships

and resources, we can mitigate widespread hunger, economic collapse, and increased displacement. Addressing these challenges through collaborative efforts ensures a more stable and sustainable future through global food security.

## Bloc Analysis

### Points of Division

Due to varying climates, markets and funding, each nation manages its agricultural sector differently.<sup>168</sup> These differences greatly impact how countries establish policies in their agricultural sector and can greatly influence how countries discuss global issues surrounding food insecurity and agricultural rehabilitation. In addition to this, countries involved in conflict may have varying perspectives on the impacts of war which can cause divides amongst member states.<sup>169</sup> Along with this, each nation's economic and development status plays a serious role in their role in the FAO, with countries in need being heavily divided from countries with an abundance of fiscal resources. These differences are evident across three primary blocs: countries that can address agricultural rehabilitation internally, those that require international aid, and those capable of providing aid. Each bloc operates under distinct circumstances and policy frameworks, leading to varied approaches and priorities.

Countries with the resources to address agricultural rehabilitation internally have established systems and sufficient resources to manage their own agricultural needs. Their policies often focus on maintaining and enhancing domestic agricultural productivity, with agricultural rehabilitation being a lower priority compared to other national concerns.<sup>170</sup> Countries that require international

<sup>162</sup> United Nations, The Sustainable Development Agenda.

<sup>163</sup> United Nations, Goal 2: Zero Hunger.

<sup>164</sup> United Nations, Goal 2: Zero Hunger.

<sup>165</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, Goal 15: Life on Land., <https://www.unep.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter/goal-15>.

<sup>166</sup> United Nations Statistics Division, Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/>.

<sup>167</sup> Global Goals, Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals, <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/17-partnerships-for-the-goals/>.

<sup>168</sup> European Parliament, The Future of Agriculture: Smart Farming and Digital Technologies, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629183/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)629183\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/629183/IPOL_STU(2018)629183_EN.pdf).

<sup>169</sup> Lederer, Edith M, "UN Peacekeeping Faces Global Divisions, Challenges," Associated Press, May 30, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/un-peacekeeping-global-divisions-multilateralism-conflict-crises-c47164f1ce8b45375a0d34b3cb3e49f7>.

<sup>170</sup> Buch, Claudia M., and Mattias G. B. Weidmann, "The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Developing Countries: Evidence from a Panel Data Analysis," *Economic Systems* 39, no. 1 (2015): 109-126. <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/139722/1/v16-i01->

aid for agricultural rehabilitation face significant challenges that prevent them from managing agricultural rehabilitation independently. These challenges include political instability, conflict, economic hardships, and infrastructural damage.<sup>171</sup> The policies of these nations often reflect a dependency on external support, as their internal resources are insufficient to address agricultural challenges effectively.<sup>172</sup> Countries that can provide aid for agricultural rehabilitation possess strong economies, advanced agricultural sectors, and the political will to support international agricultural rehabilitation efforts. Their policies are characterized by a commitment to providing substantial international aid, including financial support, technical assistance, and humanitarian aid.<sup>173</sup>

The key differences among these blocs are rooted in their economic capacities, policy priorities, and the extent of their ability or need to provide or receive aid. Countries requiring aid depend heavily on international support. Countries capable of providing aid use their resources and policies to support global agricultural rehabilitation, reflecting their commitment to international development and cooperation.

### **Countries that Have the Resources to Address Agricultural Rehabilitation Internally**

These countries have established systems and sufficient resources to manage their agricultural needs independently. While their systems are not perfect, agricultural rehabilitation is not a high priority compared to other national concerns. New Zealand has a highly advanced agricultural sector renowned

for its livestock industry, producing dairy and meat products. Along with fruit and vegetable products such as kiwis and grapes, used in wine production.<sup>174</sup> The country leverages its technological innovations and sustainable farming practices to maintain its agricultural productivity<sup>175</sup>. New Zealand's ability to provide the aid necessary for agricultural rehabilitation is limited due to internal issues such as concerning high cost of living for citizens and the housing crisis.<sup>176</sup> While attempting to meet the UN's call for advanced economies to contribute 0.7 percent of their GDP to Official Development Assistance (ODA), the country continues to fall short partially due to its smaller economy.<sup>177</sup> Additionally, its geopolitical influence and geographic isolation pose logistical challenges for coordinating and delivering aid effectively.<sup>178</sup> Consequently, while New Zealand contributes to global development, its capacity for large-scale agricultural aid is limited.

### **Countries that Require International Aid for Agricultural Rehabilitation**

These countries face significant challenges in their agricultural sectors and lack the resources to address these issues independently, relying heavily on international aid to support agricultural rehabilitation and ensure food security. Some examples of this include developing countries in Africa such as the DRC, Sudan and Zimbabwe. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) struggles with political instability, conflict, and inadequate infrastructure.<sup>179</sup> This severely impacts its agricultural sector and makes international aid crucial for rebuilding agricultural systems and improving food security.<sup>180</sup>

a07-BF02924727.pdf.

171 Food and Agriculture Organization, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Agriculture," *Impact of Disasters on Agriculture and Food Security*, 2023, <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/cc9b1623-99e2-4476-854a-ac24d58154b1/content/impact-of-disasters-on-agriculture-and-food-2023/the-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-agriculture.html>.

172 Buch, Claudia M., and Mattias G. B. Weidmann, "The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Developing Countries: Evidence from a Panel Data Analysis," *Economic Systems* 39, no. 1 (2015): 109-126. <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/139722/1/v16-i01-a07-BF02924727.pdf>.

173 Buch, "The Political Economy of Agricultural Policy in Developing Countries: Evidence from a Panel Data Analysis."

174 Statista, "Agriculture Industry in New Zealand," <https://www.statista.com/topics/5311/agriculture-industry-in-new-zealand/#statisticChapter>.

175 U.S. Department of Commerce, "New Zealand - Agriculture Equipment," <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/new-zealand-agriculture-equipment>.

176 Ipsos, "23rd Ipsos NZ Issues Monitor," February 2024, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-nz/23rd-ipsos-nz-issues-monitor-feb-2024#:~:text=Despite%20slowly%20trending%20downwards%2C%20the,second%20equal%20issues%20at%2033%25>.

177 Gibson, Troy, "Beyond the Soap Box: Where NZ Doesn't Pull Its Weight on the World Stage," *Newsroom*, May 16, 2023, <https://newsroom.co.nz/2023/05/16/beyond-the-soap-box-where-nz-doesnt-pull-its-weight-on-the-world-stage/>.

178 Rikard, Glen, "Doing Well Out of Our Doing Good: A Geography of New Zealand Aid," *ResearchGate*, May 1995, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328712814\\_'Doing\\_Well\\_Out\\_of\\_Our\\_Doing\\_Good'\\_A\\_Geography\\_of\\_New\\_Zealand\\_Aid](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328712814_'Doing_Well_Out_of_Our_Doing_Good'_A_Geography_of_New_Zealand_Aid).

179 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Democratic Republic of the Congo," 2024, <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/where-we-work/COD/en>.

180 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo."



Zimbabwe's economic instability, political challenges, and adverse climate conditions hinder agricultural development, making aid essential for rehabilitating the agricultural sector and supporting smallholder farmers.<sup>181</sup> Sudan faces conflict, economic hardships, and environmental degradation exasperated by climate change, affecting its agricultural capabilities, with international aid supporting efforts to stabilize the agricultural sector and promote sustainable practices.<sup>182</sup> In addition to these nations, those involved in large scale conflicts such as Ukraine and Palestine would also fall under this bloc. The ongoing war on Ukraine has disrupted agricultural production, trade, and infrastructure, necessitating international assistance to restore agricultural productivity and ensure food supply chains.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, the current conflict in Palestine has resulted in severe malnutrition and agricultural damage.<sup>184</sup> This paired with Israel's obstruction of resources and emergency aid to Gaza, has resulted in civilian casualties and deaths.<sup>185</sup> Hence, requiring critical aid for developing agricultural infrastructure and ensuring food security.

### Countries that Can Provide Aid for Agricultural Rehabilitation

These are countries with large economies, well-advanced agriculture, and the political will to undertake international agricultural rehabilitation through financial, technical, and humanitarian assistance. The United States has a very sophisticated agricultural sector, huge financial resources, and tremendous technological expertise that can be harnessed in

significant international aid, mainly in the areas of agriculture, food aid, and development programs.<sup>186</sup> The United States is also one of the largest contributors to the FAO and has contributed around \$4 billion to fighting food insecurity internationally.<sup>187</sup> Similarly, the UK also has a well-developed agricultural sector and a strong economy backing its huge international aid effort oriented to agriculture, food security, and sustainability.<sup>188</sup> In 2023, the country pledged 66.7 million Euros to the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the UN in order to aid in agricultural rehabilitation and mitigate world hunger.<sup>189</sup> In addition, Germany is a key contributor to FAO efforts as one of the world's greatest donors to international aid for agriculture projects, sustainable development, and food security, having a strong agricultural sector with very well-developed technologies.<sup>190</sup>

### Committee Mission

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was founded with a mission to raise levels of nutrition and standards of living.<sup>191</sup> FAO's goal is to provide consistent and healthy food security for all.<sup>192</sup> The committee's mandate includes providing technical assistance to those in need of securing safe food and farming access. It also includes advising on agricultural policy, global farming, and coordinating international aid efforts. These efforts are especially needed in areas such as conflict zones where agricultural infrastructure

181 World Food Programme (WFP), "Zimbabwe." 2024, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/zimbabwe>.

182 ReliefWeb, "5 Things You Should Know About How the Conflict in Sudan is Devastating Agriculture and People's Food Security," April 15, 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/5-things-you-should-know-about-how-conflict-sudan-devastating-agriculture-and-peoples-food-security#:~:text=Widespread%20looting%20destroyed%20markets%20and,the%20perfect%20storm%20of%20obstacles>.

183 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Ukraine," <https://www.fao.org/emergencies/where-we-work/UKR/en>.

184 Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), "Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/israeli-palestinian-conflict>.

185 United Nations News., "Record Global Food Insecurity Amid Conflicts and Climate Change, Warns UN." April 25, 2024, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148141>.

186 Economic Research Service (ERS), "Agriculture and Food Sectors and the Economy," April 19, 2024, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/ag-and-food-sectors-and-the-economy/?topicId=b7a1aba0-7059-4feb-a84c-b2fd1f0db6a3#:~:text=Agriculture%2C%20food%2C%20and%20related%20industries%20contributed%20roughly%20%241.530%20trillion%20to,0.7%20percent%20of%20U.S.%20GDP>.

187 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), "International Food Assistance," 2024, <https://www.gao.gov/international-food-assistance>.

188 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Donor Contributions," 2024, <https://www.fao.org/forest-farm-facility/about/donors/en/#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20is%20one,the%20food%20and%20agriculture%20sector>.

189 UK Government, "New Funding for Farmers Feeding the World," 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-funding-for-farmers-feeding-the-world#:~:text=To%20protect%20these%20livelihoods%20and,food%20has%20increased%20by%2034%25>.

190 Donor Tracker, "Germany - Agriculture," 2004, [https://donortracker.org/donor\\_profiles/germany/agriculture](https://donortracker.org/donor_profiles/germany/agriculture).

191 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)," <https://www.fao.org/home/en/>.

192 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)."

is most damaged.<sup>193</sup> It is important to note that the broader political dimensions of conflict resolution do not fall within the scope of the FAO's mission. However, the organization is still predisposed to peacebuilding through agricultural rehabilitation and food security efforts. The committee can advance agricultural rehabilitation through the implementation of innovative solutions. These solutions include research, international aid and social collaboration.<sup>194</sup> Efforts will focus on strengthening local institutions and infrastructure, improving access to agricultural inputs, and fostering inclusive development. This mandate is critical because sustainable agriculture underpins rebuilding economies.

Conflict tends to exacerbate food insecurity and increase the need for agricultural rehabilitation. Due to instability and often violence, agriculture is often disrupted and the food accessibility decreases. Additionally, local agricultural systems worsen as populations may be displaced, farmlands may be disturbed, and food distribution systems become damaged. Food insecurity is the most common byproduct of conflict.<sup>195</sup>

Delegates are encouraged to engage with these challenges, understanding the complex issues that accompany rehabilitation efforts in conflict regions, and propose innovative solutions. Strong solutions address peacebuilding, rehabilitation and food security in conflict regions and promote global collaboration. They also include collaboration across UN agencies to fully address agricultural rehabilitation. A keen awareness of financial and technological feasibility is important to ensure that proposed solutions are both practical and scaled within the constraints of available resources. The goal of this session is to engage all states and promote international collaboration to address food security and world hunger through rehabilitation efforts.

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193 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), "Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO.)"

194 United Nations, "Breaking the Vicious Circle of Hunger and Conflict," United Nations Food Systems Summit, <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit/news/breaking-vicious-circle-hunger-and-conflict>.

195 United Nations, "Breaking the Vicious Circle of Hunger and Conflict." United Nations Food Systems Summit.

## Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

### Topic A

1. Consider the current international laws and agreements in place addressing labor exploitation, human trafficking, and the protection of agricultural workers. How effective have these been domestically and globally? If your country has not implemented these types of regulations, evaluate the reason. Can new regulations be created, what issues should they address?
2. How many people are employed in the agricultural sector, and how do these sectors differ across various regions? What are the current working conditions, and how do they align with international standards?
3. How prevalent is child labor in agriculture, and which factors contribute to this issue? Investigate the long-term impacts, and how your country addresses them, as well as measures put in place to protect them. What regional and/or cultural practices facilitate child labor?
4. How does sexual exploitation manifest in the agricultural sector, particularly regarding women and migrant workers? What measures have been taken to prevent and address sexual exploitation in agriculture?
5. What main challenges do migrant workers face, and why are they considered vulnerable members of society? How can the effects of their vulnerability be diminished? How does the country protect them and are they being paid fairly?
6. Consider how cases like those of wage theft, debt bondage, and deceptive payment practices are being addressed internationally and domestically. Are there policies put into place to protect those who suffer from these problems?

### Topic B

1. How does your country protect the rights of women and children in agricultural sectors of conflict zones, and what measures are in place to prevent exploitation and abuse?
2. What are the current levels of food insecurity in your country, and how do they aid other countries in food insecurity conflict zones, and how do they compare to global averages?
3. How does your country address the issue of food aid distribution in conflict zones, and what measures are in place to ensure it reaches those in need?
4. What policies and regulations do your country have to support agricultural rehabilitation in post-conflict areas, particularly regarding smallholder farmers and vulnerable groups?
5. How does conflict exacerbate existing food insecurity issues in affected regions? What are the primary ways in which conflict disrupts agricultural production and food supply chains? How does conflict impact the livelihoods of farmers and agricultural workers?

## Important Documents

### Topic A

- Childress, Chase, et al. “Disrupting Labor Trafficking in the Agricultural Sector: Looking at Opportunities beyond law enforcement interventions.” Routledge Taylor and Francis Group 18, no. 3 (2023): 473-511 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/15564886.2022.2133036?needAccess=true>.
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