



**JOINT DECLARATION OF THE
EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS OF AGRICULTURE
– GEOPA-COPA and EFFAT –
on the
DEPLOYMENT OF SEASONAL WORKERS
FROM EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE EU**

ENASP CONFERENCE IN BERLIN, SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

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WHO ARE THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS IN AGRICULTURE?

- GEOPA-COPA is the European umbrella organisation of the employers' in European Agriculture, representing around 1 Million agricultural enterprises who employ dependend workers
- EFFAT is the European umbrella organisation of the trade unions of Agriculture of 37 European countries, representing around 10 Million agricultural, forestry and horticultural workers
- The European social partners are the only representative organisations on European level and controlled by representative studies every 5 years

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN AGRICULTURE

- Founded in 1962 as an instrument of the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)
- Based on decisions of the European Institutions
- Responsibilities are described in the European treaty
- Annual plenary meetings and working group meetings are organised by the European Commission

CORONA IN EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE

The agricultural sector is one of these essential sectors for the economy. Farmers and farm workers are now more important than ever, as they are obliged to produce and deliver across vast areas to ensure that the European food chain functions correctly for the benefit of consumers.

However, the risks of being infected by the virus directly affect the availability of workers, notably seasonal workers. Agricultural production is subject to natural cycles. As such, its production rhythms are characterised by peaks in the workload during the harvesting period. These rhythms lead to an inherent need for a highly flexible labour force.

AIM OF THE DECLARATION

Geopa-Copa and EFFAT, who represent the interests of agricultural sector employers and employees, agree that seasonal workers from the EU must be able to cross borders to attend their workplaces in the EU's agricultural sectors.

ACTION PROPOSAL

Seasonal workers should have the possibility to come to work in other Members States, in which they do not reside, if the following prerequisites are met:

- There is a good exchange of **information** on the need for temporary labour, recognising that work in agricultural sectors should be regarded as an essential activity and that **work-related transport** to the Member State should be in place.
- Employers in agriculture and horticulture will contact the potential labour force by telephone or by email. An employee's certificate (COVID-19 – crucial sector) will be sent to workers in their home country by e-mail as well as a document from the employer stating that they will employ the persons in question. Upon submitting these documents, these workers will be guaranteed free access to the host country in accordance with the Communication of the European Commission (doc.2020/C 1021/02 – Official Journal of the European Union, deadline: 30th March 2020). This will also be communicated to the border authorities.

ACTION PROPOSAL

- Employers must guarantee that social distancing and health and safety measures determined by national authorities are applied both in the working environment and in relation to accommodation.
- When transportation from the accommodation to the workplace is provided by the employer, it is necessary to ensure that before boarding the means of transportation, the body temperature of all workers is taken and masks, gloves and other hygiene equipment are provided.
- Employers must inform the workers in a language that they understand of the existing protection provisions using material provided by the competent authorities.
- Employers must provide workers, free of charge, with protective equipment (masks, gloves, etc.) and hygiene products (water, soap, detergent and disinfectant) in accordance with existing rules.

ACTION PROPOSAL

- Where employers are responsible for housing seasonal workers, they must guarantee that social distancing and all other health and hygiene rules are applied in accordance with the national standards.
- Employers must guarantee that seasonal workers' wages are in line with applicable collective agreements or national legislation.
- Employers must guarantee that seasonal workers are registered and insured in accordance with local social protection legislation and collective agreements.
- If any employees are thought to be presenting symptoms of COVID-19, the competent medical authorities shall be contacted immediately.

RESULTS OF THE DECLARATION

- On 19 June 2020, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the protection of seasonal workers, which directly referred to the social partners' agreement and called for further action by the European Commission
- On 16 July 2020, the European Commission published the "Guidelines for seasonal workers in the EU in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak", which set out the basic lines of the agreement
- On 1 September 2020, the European published a "Factsheet on practical examples and good practice", which refers to the activities of the social partners.
- Work is currently continuing in Brussels on the collection of best practices.
- The German Presidency has made the protection of seasonal workers a priority of the Presidency and is currently preparing concrete measures.

MORE INFORMATION

If you need any more information, please contact:

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