

United to end **child labour** in **agriculture**

CONFERENCE REPORT

Brussels, 12 June 2019

World Day against Child Labour



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



Poverty and unfair trade at root of persistence of child labour

SUMMARY

According to the International Labour Organization 152 million children are still engaged in child labour, 71% of them work in agriculture, a sector in which child labour actually rose to 108 million in 2016, from 98 million in 2012.

The consequences are grave. When children are forced to work long hours, they can often no longer attend school and develop skills, limiting their long-term prospects of productive employment, later in life. Moreover, hard labour can interfere with children's mental and physical development. Children become exposed to vulnerable situations and various forms of abuses.

A Brussels conference, "United to end child labour in agriculture", looked for ways to reach this goal. Organised by the European Commission, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on 12 June, the World Day against Child Labour, it also brought together representatives and stakeholders from the civil society, partner countries, and the private sector organisations.

Many of the products involving child labour, from the cocoa beans that go into chocolate to the cotton that makes

clothes, end up on the shelves of stores in Europe. To combat the problem, the European Union can promote fairer and more ethical trade and improve transparency. Multinational companies can also play a significant role to eradicate child labour from their supply chains.

"As we savour a piece of chocolate, how many consider that a child might have had to harvest the cocoa for our chocolate for long hours instead of going to school?" said **Neven Mimica**, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. *"It is a reality that robs children from getting an education. It is a reality that perpetuates the cycle of poverty."*

However, global value chains in agriculture are complex and difficult to trace. The root cause of child labour is often poverty, as families face the choice between sending children to school and working in fields where they generate income that helps the family to eat.

"Social protection programmes and school feeding initiatives that link with family farmers are proven to be good antidotes against child labour" said **José Graziano da Silva**, FAO Director-General.



Henriette Geiger, European Commission

Africa is particularly concerned, said **Lieve Verboven** Director of the ILO Office in Brussels, as much of the increase in child labour in agriculture is happening there. *“Africa is going in the wrong direction and we are not making progress fast enough,”* she said. *“For 2025, we have to step up efforts and accelerate and coordinate action.”*

Conference panellists and participants discussed progress, best practices and the challenges that remain. They also brainstormed in a workshop to formulate recommendations contributing to end child labour in agriculture. Among the recommendations agreed upon were: the need for better coordination between stakeholders, such as international manufacturers and producer-country governments; finding means to substitute income that child labour brings to families; and creating ways to persuade parents of the need and value of a child’s education.

Henriette Geiger, European Commission Director of “People and Peace”, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, proposed three necessary next steps.

- First, the various stakeholders should treat the fight to eradicate child labour as a shared responsibility and come together around common multi-sectoral goals. This would involve action related to food security, rural development and the environment, as well as improvements in education and livelihoods.
- Second, widely sharing knowledge gained from monitoring, evaluations and analytical studies.
- Third, new partners as part of value chains should be involved, including farmers, producers and consumers.

She proposed that the participants meet again in 2020 to assess the results of the conference. *“We cannot continue our work as usual,”* she said. *“A joint effort is necessary by all if we want to eradicate child labour by 2025 together.”*

FULL REPORT

According to the [estimates](#) of the International Labour Organization 152 million boys and girls are still engaged in child labour and because of their work, deprived of their right to live a normal childhood. Of these, 71% work in agriculture, a sector in which child labour actually rose to 108 million in 2016, from 98 million in 2012.

The consequences are dramatic. When children are forced to work long hours, they can often no longer attend school and develop skills, limiting their prospects of living a decent life. Moreover, hard labour can interfere with children’s mental and physical development.

Target 8.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals calls for “immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.” It demands an end to child labour in all its forms by 2025.

A conference, “United to end child labour in agriculture”, organised in Brussels on 12 June, the World Day against Child Labour, looked for ways to reach this goal. Organized by the European Commission, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), it also featured representatives and stakeholders from civil society, partner countries, farmers and workers’ unions, private sector and fair-trade organisations.

ROOT CAUSES

Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of child labour. Many families face the choice between sending children to school and working in fields where they generate income that helps the family to eat. *“Household poverty remains a common cause of child labour in agriculture,”* said **José Graziano da Silva**, FAO Director-General. *“Social protection programmes and school feeding initiatives that link with family farmers are proven to be good antidotes against child labour.”* That requires a consideration of broader causes of child labour. *“It is time we go beyond the exclusive focus on selected global supply chains and begin investing resources into tackling child labour in all situations. It is also essential to engage the agricultural workers and producer organisations.”*

Beate Andrees, ILO Chief of Fundamental principles and rights at work Branch reminded participants that the day marks the 20th anniversary of the adoption of [Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour](#), and that today it is the fastest ratified convention. Despite progress since 2000 when the ILO started measuring the incidence of child labour, today seven out of 10 children work in agriculture. In this sector we need to provide important responses and address decent work deficits. The international platform, [Alliance 8.7](#)



Lieve Verboven, ILO

has brought together partners to share knowledge and drive innovation to advance on SDG target 8.7. and calls on all stakeholders to reinforce action in order to meet this target by 2025.

Africa is of particular concern because much of the increase in child labour in agriculture is happening there, said **Lieve Verboven** of the ILO Office for the European Union and the Benelux countries in Brussels. *“Africa is going in the wrong direction and we are not making progress fast enough,”* she said. *“For 2025, we have to step up efforts and accelerate and coordinate action.”*

There has also been progress, both in worldwide awareness of the problem and in government action to combat it. So far, 186 of the ILO’s 187 member states have ratified its Convention 182 on the “Worst Forms of Child Labour”. *“There is almost universal consensus on child labour,”* she said. *“ILO members states have been introducing policies and laws against child labour. I go shopping with my kids and I ask: ‘Where was this made? How can we be sure that it was made without child labour?’ I feel a sense of urgency.”*

THE REAL PRICE OF CHOCOLATE

Many of the products involving child labour – from the cocoa beans that go into chocolate to the cotton that makes clothes – end up on the shelves of stores in Europe and around the world. To combat the problem, the European Union can promote fairer and more ethical trade and improve transparency and traceability. Multinational companies, in particular chocolate makers, have a major role to play in order to eradicate child labour from their supply chains.

“As we savour a piece of chocolate, how many consider that a child might have had to harvest the cocoa for our chocolate for long hours instead of going to school?” said **Neven Mimica**, European Commissioner for International

Cooperation and Development. *“Or, as we put a t-shirt on, how many of us consider that a child might have had to work in a cotton field for our t-shirt without any protection against hazardous chemicals? The truth is, we do not consider this reality often enough. And we should because it is a reality that robs children from getting an education. It is a reality that deprives children from growing up in a safe environment. It is a reality that perpetuates the cycle of poverty. It is a reality that we must all stand up to together.”*

However, Mr Mimica said, global value chains in agriculture are complex and difficult to trace. That makes it necessary to think about how to promote fairer and more ethical trade, and how to improve tools that can provide transparency and traceability. *“At the same time we have to continue our work to improve farmers’ livelihoods and create decent jobs and social security schemes,”* he said. *“And we have to support partners in their efforts to bolster regulatory frameworks to stop labour rights abuse and ensure child rights are protected and cherished.”*

One example is the EU-funded [CLEAR Cotton](#) project, which aims to eliminate child and forced labour from the cotton, textile and garment value chains by supporting law enforcement and working with companies and communities. The European Commission has also been working on social protection and skills training to ensure that children and their rights are respected. *“We need to engage across the sector if we are to achieve the SDG target of eradicating child labour,”* said **Camilla Hagström**, Deputy Head of Unit Migration, Employment at the International Cooperation and Development Directorate-General of the European Commission. *“We are aiming to share experiences between partners, as well as good and bad practices – and failures that we should not repeat.”*

Historically, children have worked almost everywhere, said **Badra Alawa**, ILO Project manager and Chief technical advisor, but there has been great variation across societies and through time. *“Here, child labour refers to work that is*



Camilla Hagström, European Commission

THE ROLE OF WORKERS ORGANISATIONS

Kirill Buketov, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), a former child labourer himself, who grew up in the Soviet Union, where children were organised to work on state farms. "When I was a child I didn't think about this as child labour," he said, "this was normal practice. It was organised by the state and millions of people were forced to do it. Though we still find such state programmes, child labour now is mostly not caused by the state, but because of poverty in rural areas – so children are forced to work by their own parents."

That's why income and wage levels are at the centre of policies aiming to eradicate child labour today. "There are a lot of positive and successful examples," Mr Buketov said. "The history of Europe is an example. In the 19th century, a lot of children were working in mines and textile mills. It changed because the workers in Europe decided that it had to be changed. Thanks to their struggle, forced labour and slavery were banned. Today when we talk about child labour, we don't talk about European countries. So there has been success in Europe."

European workers were able to fight for better labour conditions because they were empowered by the right to organise. "But in other places, there are lots of obstacles to people in rural areas creating their own organisations," he said. "We can at least eliminate state-controlled or state-orchestrated child labour. But it is not easy just to extend the rights people have in urban areas to rural areas."

For example, the members of some of the biggest unions, such as those in India, face a direct impact from child labour. Parents would not have to send their children out to work if they earned enough to support the families by themselves, Mr Buketov said. "But how do you get a decent wage if you do not have the right to collective bargaining?"

In many cases, children work simply because their families are desperate. "Most of the time it is do or die," said **Prudence Ayebare**, Programme Manager at the Uganda National Farmers Federation. "If a child has to work, they will die in the future because of the impact on their health and their lack of education. But if you don't do it, your family might not have food on the table."

Two forms of child labour are particularly striking, Ms Ayebare said. One is children who beg on streets. They are gathered by someone in villages, taken to a city and made to beg there. Then they have to give the money collected back to the person who has brought them there. Another is households with no father or mother, where the oldest child has to work to get enough to eat for all the children. In this case the children concerned do not think that this counts as child labour or that it is a bad thing. However, much child labour in agriculture goes unnoticed, as it is carried out on private farms, she said. "There are issues for which we really need to sensitize the farmers."



Rodrigo de Lapuerta, FAO

prohibited, either because the children are below the minimum age, which is 15, or because of the type of tasks they perform. The worst forms are slavery, trafficking, forced labour and prostitution – and forms of work that jeopardize mental or physical development."

In some circumstances, it may be beneficial for children to do a limited amount of work for family farms. "If we start from the objective of reducing rural poverty, we have to consider that if a child goes to school and also helps the family, it can be productive and helpful for him or her" said **Rodrigo de Lapuerta**, FAO Director of the Liaison Office in Brussels.

In these cases, it is crucial to ensure that the child is actually benefiting from such an arrangement. The work can only consist of safe tasks, and should be done for limited hours, out of school time. If the work takes up too much time, the child will fall behind at school, and possibly drop out at an early age. Hazardous tasks can damage the child's health. The result can be a diminished ability to work later as an adult, as well as chronic diseases and weak physical conditions.

To contribute to an environment in which families do not use child labour, the FAO encourages agriculture extension agents to support farmers in hard-to-reach places. They help to improve techniques and infrastructure for agricultural families and communities, and also address the causes of child labour. Because most child labourers work in family enterprises, the agents help to create an economic environment in which families do not feel it necessary to put a child to work and instead appreciate the long-term benefits of sending a child to school. They can also advise on activities that reduce the use of pesticides that are particularly harmful to children and create opportunities to give children better education. "We need large-scale agriculture investment programmes," Mr de Lapuerta said. "These have the potential to reduce child labour. We are talking about these programmes with the private sector, development banks and other partners. Child labour is linked to giving youth good employment opportunities."



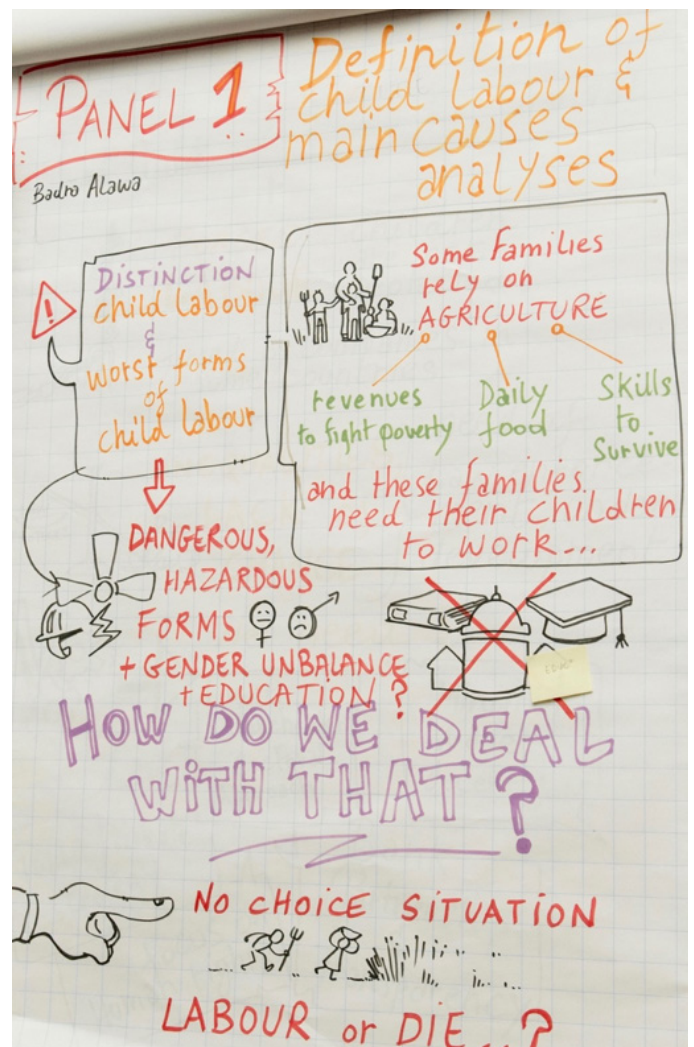
First panel discussion

One of her relatives is 50 and has a terminal nervous system disease. When he visited hospital, the doctor told him that the cause of his condition was because he had worked as a child: His father was a carpenter, and he had to carry logs and trees around for him. Amid a lack of supervision, girls working on farms have been raped, Ms Ayebare said. “We need to put on bigger lenses and look at bigger issues.”

Trade unions have the potential to help farmers, she said: “They would let them negotiate collectively and get better prices, and they would help them get different sources of labour, not child labour.” In one example, “spray men” – a type of farm labourer that sprays coffee plants – have been made into a special category of worker. This has helped to reduce the number of children spraying chemicals.

INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

It is hard to eliminate child labour overall if children who are stopped from working in agriculture are then sent to work elsewhere. “Children who can’t work in fields will look for other places to work,” said **Marco Dubbelt**, Senior Programme Manager, Global March Against Child Labour, Netherlands Office. “That is something we need to focus on. We need to make sure that we create the possibility for livelihoods. That can include setting up programmes that will boost welfare and local economics, ranging from microfinance to sanitation. Such programmes have a potential positive influence on child labour,” he said. “But child labour as a whole has been neglected.”



Cartoon of first panel

One clear measure that Europe can take is on trade. *“In the Netherlands we have a due diligence law on child labour,”* Mr Dubbelt said. *“I think it is important that no product of child labour should be able to enter the EU. We work with Rabobank to make sure it doesn’t finance any production involving child labour. I think we can push companies onto the right pathway, so we need now to look at companies that are not doing anything.”*

The European Commission is following a twin-track approach, by fighting child labour at the same time as supporting development projects. *“It is important to work in partnerships with civil society organisations,”* said **Françoise Millecam**, Head of Sector Employment and Social Inclusion at the European Commission International Cooperation and Development. *“It is important to make the child labour issue mainstreamed through agriculture and local development programmes.”*

For example, the European Union has financed a [programme in Thailand](#) that aims at tackling child labour and forced labour in the Thai fisheries and fishing industry sector. The programme was combined with the threat of a ban on fisheries imports to the EU if Thailand did not tackle illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. After European Commission services and the European External Action Service worked with the Thai authorities to combat human trafficking and forced labour, Thailand in June 2018 became the first Asian country to ratify the [ILO Forced Labour 2014 Protocol](#). Six months later, the Commission delisted Thailand from the group of “warned countries” as recognition of its progress in tackling illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

“We used this threat and they were receptive to revise their migration framework,” said Ms Millecam. *“We worked at the institutional level to reinforce labour inspections, we*

provided technical assistance and capacity development, and we worked with the Thai fishing industry. Also we supported the victims of child labour and forced labour by taking them out of it and working with their families to improve their livelihoods.” Another dimension of activity is to raise consumer awareness, not just in Europe but also in the producer countries. *“When the EU points this out, consumers in developing countries become aware of this,”* she said. *“So parents do not keep their children in child labour; they know it is not morally acceptable.”*

ACTION ON THE GROUND

Rural institutions are an important tool of influence, as they have the ability to activate community systems, organise farmers and set up local governance structures that respond to local needs. *“Our communities must be empowered and organised to address the problem,”* said **Andrews Addo-quaye Tagoe**, Deputy General Secretary, General Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU) and African Regional Coordinator Global March Against Child Labour (GMACL) of Ghana. *“When the chief said, ‘My village is a child labour-free zone, everyone in the village started to work towards a system free of child labour.’”*

Some communities have long-held beliefs associated with working children, and in the past they often felt threatened by attempts to stop child labour Mr Tagoe said. Today, the surest way of stopping child labour is to empower communities. If school is offered as an alternative to work, parents can see this as an opportunity for the family. *“However, schools are often far away, which is the responsibility of the state,”* said Mr Tagoe.



Second panel

WORKING ON SUPPLY CHAINS AND BEYOND

It is of course important to fight child labour by working on global supply chains and through national legislation and eventually extending to EU-wide legislation, said **Bernd Seiffert**, FAO Decent Rural Employment Officer. “When you create public awareness it helps to create consumer pressure and you can bring this up in discussions with governments,” he said.

Producer countries, however, often lack the consumer pressure against child labour that comes further up global supply chains. Therefore, it is often more effective for them to address the problem from the angles of poverty, health and education. Fishing communities, in particular, are often isolated in rural areas with little access to information. Fisheries workers are prone to occupational hazards and the sector has a high prevalence of informal work arrangements, under-employment, seasonal and casual employment. Protection of labour rights is weak and even when regulations exist, enforcement is poor.

The FAO is promoting decent work in fisheries and aquaculture by working with governments, civil society, the private sector and other UN agencies. This could lead to more-effective fisheries management, while also improving livelihoods and food security. “There are many fishing communities that are very far away and hard to reach,” said Mr Seiffert. “You need a progressive approach and you need long-term investment to make the fisherman’s life more sustainable. We have to think beyond global supply chains and think in an integrated way.”

WAYS TO FIX THE COCOA PROBLEM

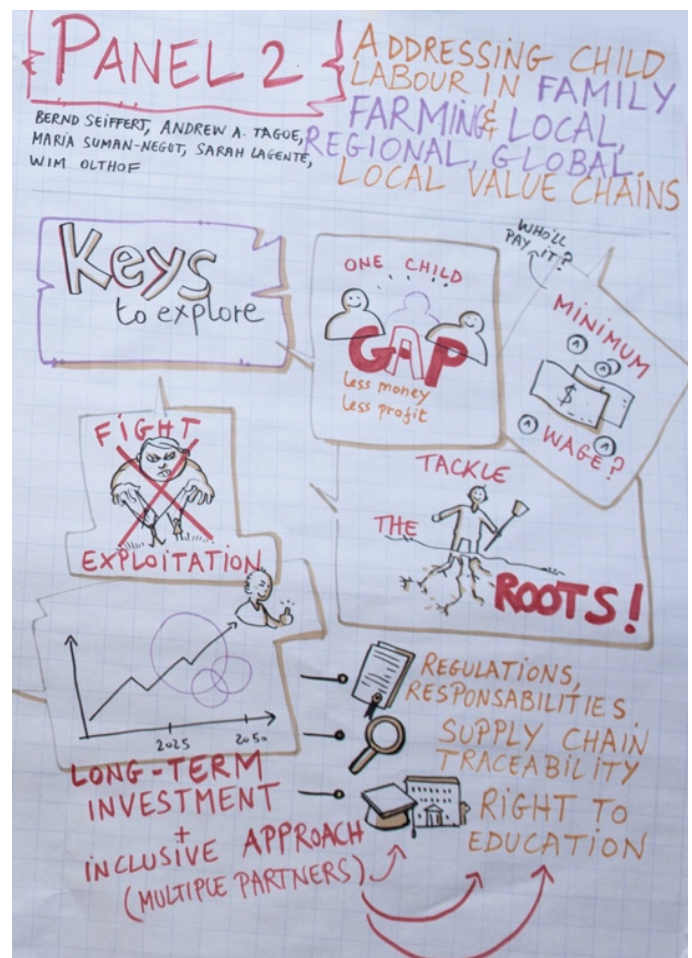
Cocoa has one of the highest prevalence of child labour among agricultural commodities. More than 2 million children are estimated to work in cocoa supply chains, with two-thirds of world production coming from just two countries, Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana. While action against child labour can be taken in the supply chains, local challenges need dealing with too. In particular, while one objective of reducing child labour is to let more children get an education, it is not always easy for them to go to school.

“There is a lack of schools, and the average distance from a cocoa farm to a school is 2.5 kilometres,” said **Maria Suman-Negut**, Trade and Sustainability Manager at the European Cocoa Association. “So this is 5 kilometres a day, and the roads are bad. Moreover, children in many countries cannot go to school without a birth certificate. Therefore, we are working with governments to deliver birth certificates. Progress is happening but it is slow and it is not just about industry. You need road infrastructure, schools and alternatives incomes.”

The European cocoa industry has an interest in paying a decent price to cocoa suppliers and in ensuring that farmers respect human rights, she said. Free trade agreements with the EU include human and labour rights conditions: if rights are not respected, sanctions can be applied. Adequate prices are needed for cocoa farmers to continue in business, if the price is too low this is not sustainable.

The low price of cocoa is a serious problem, said Sarah Lagente, Head of Unit Producers Relation, Programs, Standards and Impact, Max Havelaar, Fairtrade France. Fairtrade/Max Havelaar forbids child labour and potential sanctions include a suspension of the producers’ organisation concerned from the Fairtrade labelling system. At the same time, it supports producers to strengthen measures to detect and prevent child labour.

However, if farmers cannot earn enough from their crops, then they cannot afford to pay workers and instead rely on their children. “We are raising awareness of the need to stop child labour, but this is really challenging,” she said. “Our farmers dream of being able to send their children to school, but they often lack the means because the price of cocoa is so low. They do not have short-term solutions for their children. Just saying that farmers should make more effort on child labour without giving them a better price is not going to solve the problem. We will not be able to tackle child labour just by raising the price at farmer level, but this is a start.”



Cartoon of second panel



Cartoon

RURAL DEVELOPMENT FOR RURAL YOUTH

“One key to fixing many of the problems is rural development,” said **Wim Olthof**, Deputy Head of Unit Rural Development, Food Security, Nutrition at the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development. “While an end to child labour comes under SDG 8 – decent work and economic growth – it is also important to focus on Goal 2: zero hunger and Goal 4: quality education” he said. “Poverty is related to opportunities, and the absence of opportunities is also at the root of the problem. 20% of rural youth worldwide never went to school. Their aspirations for training and jobs are sky-high, but there is a huge gap with the reality to fulfil this need. Therefore, my plea is to go back to rural development as rural areas probably do not receive enough attention from governments, development agencies or NGOs.”

The Commission set up a [Task Force for Rural Africa](#), which in March 2019 recommended the development of a partnership operating at three levels: people to people, business to business, and government to government. Some of the

first projects include twinning and exchange programmes between African and European agricultural bodies, an agri-business platform between the EU and the African Union and innovation hubs to support “agripreneurs” and the African agri-food sector. “We sign about two project contracts per day, and in all these projects we can do quite a lot” Mr Olthof said. “Problems cannot be solved through a commodity-specific approach,” he said, but “you can put certain things higher on the agenda than others.”

IDEAS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

Conference participants discussed challenges, progress and best practices. They brainstormed in a workshop format to formulate recommendations for a short- and long-term action plan contributing to end child labour in agriculture. Several working groups – with changing members to encourage participation – exchanged ideas throughout the afternoon. They came up with numerous ideas, which fell into three categories.

- First, one or more **networks** should be set up to exchange ideas and coordinate actions against child labour. Some networks already exist, but their members are inactive. Therefore there is a need to include a variety of stakeholders with defined roles and responsibilities.

Such networks could include academics as well as people with expertise in various areas, all of whom might have their own networks in related sectors. They could be a means to create a shared knowledge base, and they could include social media facilities and disseminate web-based resources. They could also feature sections for feedback and comments to encourage others to make contact.

- Second, it is essential to involve **people on the ground**. Partnerships could be formed with civil society organisations and commodity authorities. By inviting affected people to participate in conferences – such as children, parents and farmers – it will be possible to know their needs and build capacity for further activities. Local communities can be encouraged to provide suggestions about specific challenges.

Activities can include the strengthening of local child protection systems, training for national authorities, help for farmers to self-organise and raise awareness. Local people can be involved in income generating activities such as environmental protection projects and conservation – related, for example, to animal welfare, water resources and food varieties. One example of how to widen involvement is [Mukti Caravan](#) in India, a travelling campaign that visits villages to raise awareness of child trafficking, child labour and child sexual abuse.

WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

- Third, governments and families have to be convinced of the **value of education** for children over that of labour. One aspect is to raise awareness of how child labour perpetuates the cycle of poverty, by taking children out of education and diminishing their prospects. This can involve home visits by local community leaders and teachers, who can explain that the short-term financial gains from a working child are more than outweighed by the longer-term impact of education. One concrete measure is the Bolsa Escola – school bursary – system in Brazil, which offers financial aid to poor families on condition that their children attend school regularly.

At the same time, it is important to make education relevant to children and may include additional school services, such as school meals. They can be informed of the benefits for their future job prospects and shown the kind of improved living conditions that could result. Communications tools can include movies, street theatre, radio drama, social media and role models, featuring people who escaped child labour and became successful through education.

Andrews Addoquaye Tagoe said that when children from a village make a success of themselves through education, they can return to their village and create pressure on other children to do the same. *“This is worth more in social value than the value of the money itself,”* he said.

Mr Tagoe mentioned the example of a boy who used to work for his mother smoking fish. But after she sent him to school, he became an IT technician. He is now seen as a model for other children in the village. *“Instead of insisting that children become lawyers or doctors, you can educate them and let them make their own choices”* Mr Tagoe said. *“But it took a long time to convince this mother to send her son to school and to relieve him of fish-smoking duties.”*

Henriette Geiger, Director of “People and Peace” at the European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, proposed three next steps.

- First, the various stakeholders should treat the fight to eradicate child labour as a **shared responsibility with common goals**. This would involve action related to food security, rural development and the environment, as well as improvements in education and livelihoods.
- Second, **sharing knowledge** that is gained from monitoring, evaluations and analytical studies as far as possible.
- Third, new **value chain partners** at crucial links should be involved, including farmers, producers and consumers.

She proposed that the participants meet again in 2020 to assess progress on the results of the conference. *“We cannot continue our work as usual,”* she said. *“A joint effort is necessary by all if we want to eradicate child labour by 2025 together.”*

- Need to do better and more to tackle child labour, in particular in agriculture, a sector with additional 10 million labourer children since 2012. Among the 108 million children working in agriculture, 73 million are in the age range of 6-8 years.
- In addition to local and global value chains interventions, support to subsistence agriculture should target communities and family farmers to increase livelihoods in rural areas to create child labour free zones and not only focusing in a commodity sector, with support to decent wages, social protection, education and infrastructure.
- To invest in quality education as poor education will not convince parents to send their children to school, and children need to be provided with opportunities after school.
- For rural youth empowerment it is crucial to create and reform accessible Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems that match labour market needs in the areas where children and youth are victims and at risk of child labour.
- To empower small farmers and workers, in particular in the informal economy to get organised, skilled into new agriculture practices and price negotiations.
- To build awareness to families, employers, producers, policy and law makers on harmful effects of child labour in any sector and in particular the hazardous work in agriculture, the importance of birth registrations, investing in quality education, by using effective emotional communications tools such as personal stories, celebrities and child labour champions.
- To invest more in gender equality and mainstream child labour in women empowerment programmes.
- To include the participation of families, communities, teachers, trade unions to understand the root causes and find sound solutions, together with children and youth who must have the possibility to choose.
- The EU should support farmers and worker unions
- Sharing knowledge and data, setting up networks, using new technologies; supporting disaggregated data collection for improved child labour statistics by sector/country in cooperation with national and international statistics offices.
- To promote an EU mandatory due diligence legislation and get inspired from the recently adopted laws in The Netherlands and France.

CONCLUSIONS

There is no silver bullet with which to abolish child labour. Instead a multitude of actions need to be taken to tackle the root causes of child labour and reduce the number of children obliged to work in particular in agriculture, otherwise we risk falling short of the international commitment to eradicate this harmful practice.

In countries where child labour is prevalent, poverty is both a cause and a consequence. Many families face the choice between sending children to school and working in fields where they generate income that helps the family. That means poverty reduction will in turn reduce child labour and families can afford to send children to school. However, it is crucial to remove the barriers impeding children to benefit accessible and free quality education; for example, lack of birth registrations, long distance from home, insecurity and school fees.

One clear role is trade policy and the integration of the sustainable development chapter in trade agreements, making sure that no product or service tainted of child labour enters the EU. European industries such as cocoa have an interest in paying a decent price to suppliers, as this will help farmers to continue in business; and adequate prices and wages will also mean that farmers are less tempted to resort to cheap or free child labour.

Rural institutions and leaders are an important tool of influence, as they can activate community systems and organise farmers. When a village head declares a child-labour-free zone, the population then works towards this goal. Trade unions also have the potential to help farmers, by letting them negotiate collectively to get better prices thus avoiding their children performing full-time work.

International organisations, governments, donors and the private sector all can play important roles on the ground contributing to end child labour in all sectors and in particular in agriculture.

All stakeholders should effectively address the multiple root causes of child labour and connected deficits, by adopting due diligence conduct, supporting partner countries, and mainstreaming child labour issues into key policies. Successful experiences should be shared and replicated, failures must be examined, while exploring ways for improvements to accelerate the achievement of SDG 8.7 target.

The socio-economic challenges in demographic trends with increased youth populations, ageing farmers and rural-urban mobility, require a strategic approach to integrate child labour into wider policy clusters such as education and training, decent jobs for youth, social benefits, food security, nutrition and ethical trade.



Credit: FAO/Franco Mattioli

Girl carrying goods in Nepal

To end all forms of child labour in agriculture there is still a long way ahead to urgently reverse the alarming trend of a growing number of girls and boys being trapped in child labour. Child labourers in agriculture are too many but invisible, working in dire conditions in remote areas: it is urgent to take immediate action to end together this unacceptable scourge.

This will require the substantial upscaling of efforts and improving the effectiveness of actions. It will involve reaching those harder to reach, the children in child labour situations in agriculture that have received little or no attention.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS AND MATERIALS

[Video: What did you dream of becoming when you were a child?](#)

[Programme](#)

[EC Commissioner video message](#) and [speech](#)

Camilla Hagström, European Commission, [opening remarks](#) and Henriette Geiger, Director B People and Peace, European Commission, [closing remarks](#)

[FAO Director-General video message](#)

[ILO video message from Chief, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch](#)

[EU web article](#)

[Photos from the event](#)