

Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Addressing the Exploitation of Farming Communities by Domestic Regulations

Student Officer: George Alexander Bakalis

Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Esteemed Delegates,

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all into the 5th Pierce-The American College of Greece Model United Nations Conference. My name is George Alexander Bakalis and I have the honor to serve as the Deputy President of the Economic and Social Council. My passion for politics runs deep, especially when it comes to issues concerning human rights, the working class, and current affairs. I've been participating in Model United Nations conferences since 2018, during which time I've met some incredible people and grown as a person. I truly believe this is the true goal of Model United Nations, and therefore I consider it my duty to help you achieve the same experience and receive the same gifts as I have.

The purpose of this study guide is to accurately summarize the topic at hand and provide you with a solid foundation for your research during your preparation prior to the conference. However, it is not a source for you to plagiarize. I very strongly encourage you to use additional sources and come up with original points and arguments, as this would allow us to have a truly fruitful and progressive debate. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me via email at gbakalis17@gmail.com. I wish you all the best of luck with your research, and I am beyond excited to meet you all during the conference!

Kind Regards,

George Bakalis

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

From the dawn of mankind, farming has been an integral asset of our society. In fact, small farming communities are the seed that initiated the creation of human civilization, which is built on co-operation to overcome the natural challenges posed against us. To this day, farming communities play an essential role in society, providing food and ingredients, not only within their own circles, but to the surrounding areas and even worldwide as well.

Naturally, the production of such products brings substantial economic benefit. For many nations, the largest percentage in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) stems from agricultural practices. It's worth noting that in LEDCs (Less Economically Developed Countries), this percentage is higher when compared to MEDCs (More Economically Developed Countries). This means that the former is more dependent on farming than the latter.

Unfortunately, the economic benefit of these communities has historically led to them being exploited by their respective governments or foreign third parties. From the feudalistic Holy Roman Empire to the serfs serving under the tsars of 19th century Russia, farmers have continued to be robbed of fair wages and working conditions, despite them providing arguably one of the most important forms of labor.

While addressing this topic, the delegates must address the reasons why domestic regulations are favored against farming communities. Chief among which are the rapid commercialization of produce and the vulnerability of such communities, particularly in LEDCs.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Banana Republic

A derogatory term used to describe a politically unstable state and is economically dependent on the export of a single product.

Cash crops/Subsistence crops

Cash crops are plantations which were created for the sole purpose of exporting goods. Subsistence crops are the opposite, meaning they were created to provide goods to the farmer and their family.

Child labor

"The term "child labor" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to

attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”¹

Domestic regulation

A binding legislative act applied by a state’s government and only affects those within said state.

Farming/agricultural community

A community where farming is the main industry. The first farming communities date back to approximately 10 thousand years ago and served as the first form of modern human society.

Federal Minimum Wage (FMW)

The absolute lowest amount an employer is permitted to pay their employees per hour. This amount is determined by the state government.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

“Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period. As a broad measure of overall domestic production, it functions as a comprehensive scorecard of a given country’s economic health.”²

Migrant worker

“The term "migrant worker" refers to a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national.”³

Wage theft

Wage theft is the event in which an employer doesn’t pay their employees the minimum monetary amount, or allowances and entitlements that are outlined in the contract they signed. Wage theft can occur through means such as incorrect hourly rates, refusal of overtime pays, refusal of leave etc.

¹ What is child labour (IPEC), <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>

² “Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Definition.” *Investopedia*, 28 Jan. 2022, www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gdp.asp

³ OHCHR | International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CMW.aspx>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The importance of farming communities

Agriculture is the main building block of rural communities and, by extension, society as a whole. Despite the industrialization of the modern world, many countries around the world rely on agriculture as their main economic activity. The goods produced from these communities, most notably nutritional goods, are essential to providing sustenance to both members of the community and people outside of it. Demand for such products itself leads to the creation of more jobs and therefore brings growth to the communities and the state, which they are based in. Additionally, on a more local level, dynamic and competitive farming between communities is essential to the development of rural areas, not only in the agricultural sector, but in other forms of services as well (manufacturing, local industries, tourism). As for the members of these communities, a prosperous rural landscape provides various health benefits, ranging from a healthier, locally produced, diet to a cleaner environment to general “quality of life” benefits, such as less noise pollution and more space. Finally, on an environmental level, the biodiversity of agricultural communities provides a wider range of produce, as well as opportunities for tourism and leisure activities.

Challenges of farming communities

Unfortunately, the benefits of rural areas bring with them many social and economic challenges. The industrial revolution shifted the focus of production from agriculture to industry, which has caused the former to decline, despite it still holding an incredible importance in our society. It is due to this that farming communities face various social and economic challenges.

Internal social challenges

Within rural communities, the rate of social exclusion, defined as “a process whereby certain individuals are pushed to the edge of society and prevented from participating fully by virtue of their poverty, or lack of basic competencies and lifelong learning opportunities, or as a result of discrimination” by the European Commission⁴, is noticeably higher due to the increased poverty rates. In fact, marginalized groups such as women, migrants and people with disabilities are disproportionately more susceptible to such exclusion.

External social challenges

Agricultural practice, as mentioned above, is considered a lower form of work than industrial practice. Additionally, the increased cost of service delivery due to the low

⁴ Joint report by the Commission and the Council on social inclusion, https://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/final_joint_inclusion_report_2003_en.pdf#page=9

population density in rural areas, as well as the higher proportion of investment per capita, contributes to the exclusion of farming communities. The market often does not deliver some services in rural areas, as demand may be too small to ensure profitability and deployment costs are in some respects higher than in urban centers⁵. This all leads to farming communities being left behind (both socially and service-wise), lowering the quality of life, and slowing cultural development.

Poverty and other economic challenges

The phenomena mentioned above all culminate to a higher poverty rate in farming communities. Taking the European Union (EU) as an example, in 2015 the average farm income was only 38% of the general average income in the 28 member states of the Union. This is amplified by the steady decline of employment in rural regions. Many small farms are shutting down, leading to the expansion of larger farm properties, which in turn lowers the number of jobs and increases unemployment.

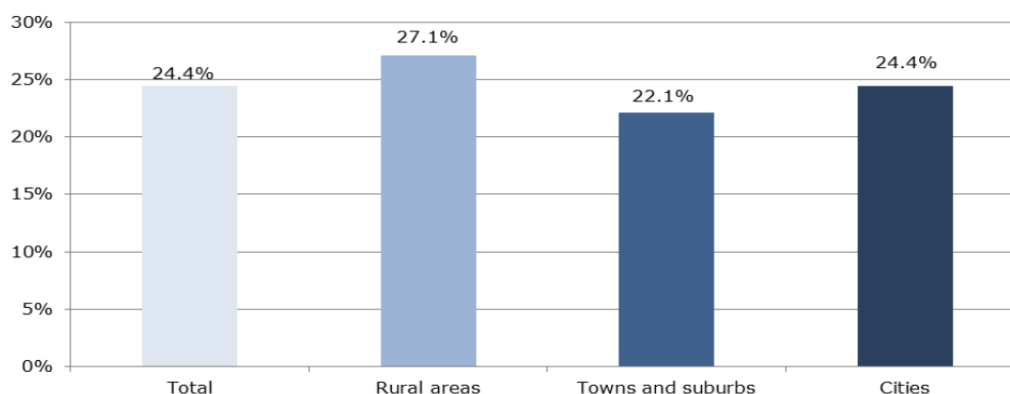


Figure 1: Graph depicting poverty rate by type of region in EU-28 in 2014⁶

Exploitation of farming communities

The marginalization and decline of farming communities has caused them to be vulnerable to exploitation. Unfortunately, the profit incentive caused by the demand and importance of produce results in the state governments themselves encouraging such exploitation through legislation.

⁵ Socio-Economic challenges facing EU agriculture and rural areas, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/soc_background_final_en.pdf

⁶ Food, Farming, Fisheries, https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/cap-indicators/context/2016/c9_en.pdf

Migrant workers

In countries such as the United States, employees on small farms are often denied the minimum wage and completely exempt from overtime payment. Additionally, the employment of undocumented migrant workers worsens the exploitation. On many occasions, these workers are subject to human trafficking, sexual abuse and wage theft. Migrant workers also face many safety issues, such as injuries, fatalities, and exposure to chemicals, due to their unregulated work environment. For example, the owner of the plantation may release chemical fertilizers or pesticides onto the fields without giving a word of warning to the workers, in order to cut on the time that it would take for them to evacuate. Finally, migrant workers commonly face racism and xenophobia, which leads to them being more prone to abuse both within and outside their workspace.

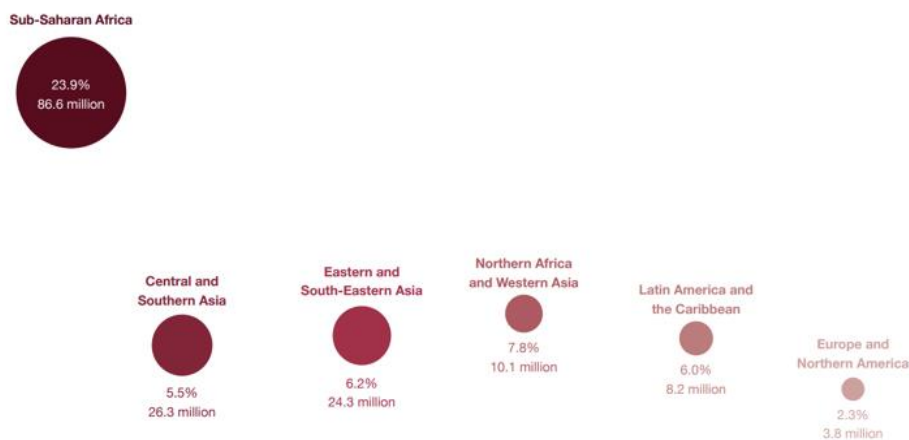
Child labor

The shortage of farm employees and the desire for cheap work often leads to the use of child labor. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labor, or 1 in 10 children worldwide. Seventy-nine million children – nearly half of all those in child labor – were in hazardous work directly endangering their health, safety, and moral development.⁷

⁷ Child Labor: global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, ILO, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_797515.pdf

Sub-Saharan Africa stands out as the region with the highest prevalence and largest number of children in child labour

Fig 2. Percentage and number of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by region



Notes: The size of the bubbles is proportionate to the absolute number of children in child labour. The figure shows regional groupings used for SDG reporting. The region of Oceania is omitted because of low data coverage. For this reason, region-specific numbers do not add up to the global total.

Figure 2: Comparison of various regions with highest number of children in child labor⁸

Banana Republics

State economies are oftentimes completely dependent on the export of a single product, something which has historically led to government corruption and neglect of the working class. This concept is best described by looking at the history of banana companies such as Chiquita Brands International during the 20th century. This company, then going by United Fruit Company and headed by Samuel Zemurray, held substantial amounts of land in central American counties and therefore had a monopoly on the export of bananas worldwide. Naturally, this meant that United had insurmountable power, even going as far as staging military coups against governments who opposed them. While the higher ups in the company were thriving, farmers in the plantations they had purchased to support their exports were forced to work under horrible conditions for very low wages, contributing to the stagnation of their national development.

Areas vulnerable to exploitation

The demand of a product is what leads governments and corporations to exploit a farming community. An example would be states with tropical climates, such as ones in South America, which produce commonly sought-after products such as bananas, coffee, and cotton. Another factor that contributes to the threat of exploitation is the state's political and

⁸ Child Labor: global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, ILO, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_797515.pdf

economic stability. Unstable countries in need of support are more commonly put in the crosshairs of local and multinational firms.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

United States of America

The United States is one of the most common examples of farmer exploitation. As mentioned above, farm workers are exempt from overtime payment, with some specific groups being exempt from minimum wage as well. Many multinational corporations based in the U.S. also indulge in farmer exploitation outside the country. There is strong evidence that there are tragically high levels of exploitation in terms of violation of basic human rights, and women are especially vulnerable.⁹

European Union

In 2016, the E.U. housed 10.5 million farms, with the vast majority of these (95.2 %) classified as family farms. The Union enforces many farmer protection policies (e.g., the Common Agricultural Policy, which aims to provide financial support to farmers in member states). However, farmers continue to face many problems such as social exclusion and lack of access to services.

India

India is a mostly agricultural economy, with 60% of the Indian population made up of farmers. Recent bills passed by the Indian government have deregulated and liberalized the sector, leaving farmers vulnerable to exploitation of corporations. These laws sparked the 2020-2021 Indian farmers' protests, which eventually led to the repeal of such bills.

International Labor Organization

Established in 1919 as part of the treaty of Versailles, the ILO's goal is to set labor standards, develop policies and devise programs promoting decent work.¹⁰ Throughout their history, they have developed various programs and treaties to improve agricultural work standards around the world, such as The Action Program on Decent Work in Agriculture.

Fairtrade International

Founded in 1997, the goal of Fairtrade international is to establish standards for agricultural commodity production worldwide. It is comprised of 22 member organizations, three

⁹ Do multinational corporations exploit foreign workers? Q&A with David Levine, <https://newsroom.haas.berkeley.edu/do-multinational-corporations-exploit-foreign-workers/>

¹⁰ About the ILO, <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>

producer networks and 19 national Fairtrade organizations. Their Economic, Environmental and Social criteria ensure that small scale farmers are protected against exploitation and are able to achieve economic stability. Using the Fairtrade mark, they certify which goods have been sourced and produced according to these standards.



Figure 3: the logo of Fairtrade International

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
1919	The ILO is established
25 th March 1957	Formation of the European Economic Community (EEC)
1962	The EEC adopts the first version of the Common Agricultural Policy
13 th June 1976	Signing of the Agreement establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development
18 th December 1990	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families
1992	First large-scale reform to the CAP, shifting the policy from market support to direct income support from farmers
1 st November 1993	EEC becomes the European Union
2020	Indian government passes the Farm Bills (The Farmers Produce Trade and

	Commerce bill, Farmers Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, Essential Commodities Act, 1955), sparking the Indian Farmers' Protests
2021	Indian government votes to repeal the Farm Bills, ending the protests

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

[Agreement establishing the International Fund for Agricultural Development](#)

This treaty served to establish the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and was signed during the 1974 World Food Conference in order to provide financing primarily for projects and programs specifically designed to introduce, expand, or improve food production systems and to strengthen related policies and institutions.¹¹

[International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families](#)

This treaty was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1990 and aimed to assist the elimination of exploitation and human rights violations against migrant workers during their migration process.

[ILO Convention No.138, Minimum age convention, 1973](#)

This is one of the ILO's two conventions on child labor. The aim of this particular treaty is to abolish child labor by requiring member states to create a minimum age for work and to establish internal policies to combat it.

[ILO Convention No.182, Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention, 1999](#)

The second of the ILO's conventions on child labor, Convention No.182 helped to focus the international spotlight on the urgency of action to eliminate as a priority, the worst forms of child labor without losing the long-term goal of the effective elimination of all child labor. This convention requires countries to take immediate, effective, and time-bound measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labor as a matter of urgency.¹²

¹¹ History, <https://www.ifad.org/en/history>

¹² "ILO Conventions on Child Labour (IPEC)." *International Labour Organization*, www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang--en/index.htm

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No.8¹³

SDG No.8: Decent work and Economic growth, which is also the theme of this year's conference, aims to promote, among others, decent work for all. In the case of farming communities, targets such as achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all people (target 8.5) and the protection of labor rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers (target 8.8) are essential to minimizing and eventually eradicating exploitation.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

As mentioned above, the IFAD was established to combat structural problems relating to poverty, which is what lead to food insecurity in rural areas. IFAD is focused on and dedicated to transforming agriculture, rural economies, and food systems. Their main targets include helping rural people to increase their productivity and access markets, create and access jobs and rural economic growth, increase their income, move out of poverty, improve their food and nutrition security, build their resilience in the face of a changing climate, manage the natural resource base sustainably, improve their coping mechanisms in fragile and conflict environments and strengthen their voice, capacities, and organizations¹⁴

Fairtrade

Fairtrade is a system of certification that aims to ensure that a set of standards is met in the production and supply of a product or ingredient.¹⁵ Based on a partnership between producers and traders, businesses and consumers, the international Fairtrade system which is made up of Fairtrade International and its member organizations, represents the world's largest and most recognized fair-trade system.¹⁶

¹³ Goal 8 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal8>

¹⁴ Vision, <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/guest/vision>

¹⁵ The Fairtrade Foundation. "What Is Fairtrade?" *Fairtrade Foundation*, 18 June 2021, www.fairtrade.org.uk/what-is-fairtrade.

¹⁶ "Fairtrade International | ODS." *Organisation Development Support*, www.odsupport.eu/clients/fairtrade-international

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The issue of the exploitation of farming communities is naturally a very broad and complicated issue, as it spans multiple different nations, legal systems, and values. This, in turn, has led to it being a difficult issue to combat entirely. However, there are measures that could be taken that minimize the scope of this phenomenon and can uplift farming communities.

Establishment of international rules and regulations to define and protect agriculture

The main way governments use regulations to exploit farming communities is not by legislation that permits it, but rather by lacking legislation, that prevents it. These gaps in regulation leave these communities at the behest of their employers, who capitalize on their vulnerability. Therefore, it is profoundly important for the United Nations to establish stricter legislation, which will prevent governments from turning a blind eye to unfair wages and dangerous work environments and conditions that cause farmers to be vulnerable to exploitation. Additionally, international laws preventing multinational corporations from intruding in and exploiting foreign economies is crucial. This legislation should be accompanied by strong penalties, in order to ensure member states abide by it.

Further treaties on the protection of disadvantaged workers

As written above, farming communities made up of disadvantaged workers are more likely to fall victim to exploitation. Protecting these communities (migrant workers, women, children, racial and ethnic minorities) should be one of the top priorities in attempting to bring a solution to this issue. Not only would it contribute to such parties being free from exploitation, but it would also help them in achieving equality in the market and, by proxy, society. Organizations such as Fairtrade are an example of forces that protect and support farmers worldwide.

Funding such communities/investing in their independence

Another important step in preventing the exploitation of farming communities is contributing to their economic growth, so that they won't need to resort to becoming dependent out of need. This can either be achieved by funding the communities directly or contributing to their economic and technological growth through means such as research, which will contribute to their independence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “Agriculture (SECTOR).” *International Labour Organization*,
www.ilo.org/sector/activities/action-programmes/agriculture/lang--en/index.htm
- “Agriculture’s Contribution to Rural Development.” *Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy*,
www.iatp.org/sites/default/files/Agricultures_Contribution_to_Rural_Development.htm
- “Farm Laws 2020: Who Are They Meant to Serve?” *Dow to Earth*,
www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/agriculture/farm-laws-2020-who-are-they-meant-to-serve--74540
- “Farming Community Definition and Meaning | Collins English Dictionary.” *Collins Dictionaries*, 12 Feb. 2022, www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/farming-community
- National Geographic Society. “Agricultural Communities.” (C) *National Geographic Society*,
www.nationalgeographic.org/topics/resource-library-agricultural-communities/?q=&page=1&per_page=25
- “OHCHR | International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers.” *Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*,
www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CMW.aspx
- “‘A Lot of Abuse for Little Pay’: How US Farming Profits from Exploitation and Brutality.” *The Guardian*, 27 Dec. 2021, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/25/us-farms-made-200m-human-smuggling-labor-trafficking-operation
- “StackPath.” *Institute for Government*,
www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/common-agricultural-policy
- Staff, FindLaw. “Farm Labor Laws.” *Findlaw*, 28 Dec. 2021,
www.findlaw.com/employment/wages-and-benefits/farm-workers-and-h2b-workers-rights.html
- “Timeline - History of the CAP.” *European Council*, 28 June 2021,
www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/cap-introduction/timeline-history
- “Types of Legislation.” *European Union*, https://european-union.europa.eu/institutions-law-budget/law/types-legislation_en
- “What Is a Minimum Wage?” *Investopedia*, 25 Jan. 2022,
www.investopedia.com/terms/m/minimum_wage.asp

“What Prompted the Farm Protests in India?” *The New York Times*, 2021,
www.nytimes.com/2021/01/27/world/asia/india-farmer-protest.html

“Socio-Economic challenges facing EU agriculture and rural areas” *European Commission*, 11 Dec. 2017 https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/food-farming-fisheries/key_policies/documents/soc_background_final_en.pdf

“International Labour Office and United Nations Children’s Fund, Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward” *ILO and UNICEF*, 2021
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_797515.pdf

“Cliché and Caricature: Why January 6 Was Not Like a Banana Republic.” *American Historians Association*, www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2021/clich%C3%A9-and-caricature-why-january-6-was-not-like-a-banana-republic

“Definition of Banana Republic.” *Www.Dictionary.Com*,
www.dictionary.com/browse/banana-republic

“Glossary:Cash Crops - Statistics Explained.” *Eurostat*,
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Glossary:Cash_crops#:~:text=Cash%20crops%20are%20agricultural%20crops,or%20food%20for%20the%20family

“Fairtrade International” *Fairtrade*, <https://www.fairtrade.net>