***“The role of agricultural stakeholders in ending child labour in the Mena region”***

**16 September 2021 11:00-12:30 GMT+2**

# INTRODUCTION

The International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour by the United Nations General Assembly was declared in 2021, in light of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7 that seeks to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025, specifically to take 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.

FAO has been communicating and collaborating with its 194 Member Nations, institutional members, and a rising number of partners all around the globe toward achieving SDG 8.7. FAO has been assisting nations in improving evidence for decision-making on food security, sustainable agriculture, and rural development through the “Closing the Agricultural Data Gap 50 x 2030 Initiative.” Furthermore, FAO and its partners are working to strengthen global institutions, capacities, and processes in 2019 to create international norms and regulations, promote international collaboration, and provide an enabling environment for collective action to achieve food security and nutrition[[1]](#footnote-1). FAO has a longstanding collaboration with the ILO at the country, regional and global levels to eradicate child labour in agriculture.

According to ILO, 160 million boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 17 are still trapped in child labour worldwide, and 70% or 112 million of them are working in agriculture – are to be found in farming, livestock, forestry, fishing or aquaculture[[2]](#footnote-2). This means there has been an increase of 4million in the past 4 years and this does not include the impact of the pandemic. The impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic on agri-food systems is exacerbating rural poverty and leading to an increase in child poverty, school dropout and food insecurity[[3]](#footnote-3). Children are being increasingly involved in working activities to compensate labour gaps and income losses in food and agricultural production. This situation is likely to reverse progress and undermine efforts to eradicate rural poverty (SDG 1), achieve zero hunger (SDG 2), and eliminate child labour (SDG 8.7).[[4]](#footnote-4)

Agriculture is among the most hazardous industries to work in at any age, but it is particularly hazardous for children. It is widely uncontrolled and many labourers are not represented by unions or producers' associations, making the domain especially susceptible to labour violations[[5]](#footnote-5). Child labour can result in severe physical and mental damage, as well as death.[[6]](#footnote-6)The ILO identifies the agricultural sector as one of the most treacherous industries, and it requires particular consideration because it is marked by a high rate of deaths, casualties, and occupational ailments, as well as a variety of physical, physiological, psychological, and ergonomic threats and liabilities.

Of the 160 million children engaged in child labour about 60 percent are boys. However it is not clear to what extend this gap exists in agriculture. Both boys and girls are heavily involved in agriculture activities especially as family labour. It is crucial to better understand the level of participation and challenges they face because of their gender.

Out of the 22 member countries form the Near East and North Africa (RNE) region, below is the focus on four countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan and Tunisia) which have been selected from the RNE region by the FAO as an example to accelerate efforts toward the elimination of child labour in agriculture. Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan and Tunisia have been identified as countries with high levels of child labour, including child labour in agriculture, and also where elimination of child labour is an expressed policy priority. In addition, and based on the work of FAO in these four countries, the food insecurity and increased poverty rates are two major problems, mainly poverty pockets located in rural areas where most of the people are undernourished and unable to meet their basic needs.

# Objective

The main objective of the regional event to build momentum towards more concerted action at local, national, and regional level to address child labour in agriculture and give agricultural stakeholders the opportunity to identify actions they or their organizations could take ***to increase action towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture*** and what recommendations they would provide to policy makers and other stakeholders in the region.

# Organizers

* Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention in Plant Production and Protection Division (FAO NSP)
* Child Labour in Agriculture Prevention team in the Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equity Division (FAO ESP); and
* FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa.

# Target audience

***Agricultural stakeholders*** ***from the 22 countries from Near East and North Africa (RNE) region,*** Ministries of Agriculture, Labour, Environment, Health, [Designated National Authorities (DNAs) of the Rotterdam Convention](http://www.pic.int/Procedures/DesignatedNationalAuthorities/tabid/1366/language/en-US/Default.aspx), rural women and rural producers’ organizations and agricultural services, departments of agriculture and extension, agricultural researchers, Ministries of Children, etc.

# Focus Region

Near East and North Africa

# When

16 September 2021 11:00-12:30 GMT+2

# Expected results

# Agenda

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| Time | Agenda Item | Speakers |
| 10min | Opening Remarks | Abdulhakim El Waer, Regional Representative, FAO Regional Office for the Near East and North Africa  RubaJaradat Regional Director ILO Regional Office for Arab States |
| 10min | Background paper on child labour in agriculture in the NENA region: How and why is child labour important beyond just legal and enforcement? | Gulnar Wakim, Child Labour Consultant |
| 15min | Panel discussion: Successful efforts to combat child labour in agriculture and what is needed to enhance action among regional actors | Tareq Hassan, Founder & Head, Arab Youth Sustainable Development Network (AYSDN)  Mustapha Tlili, the executive director of the Arab Trace Union Confederation  TBD, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon |
| 10min | Q&A  Discussion question: Can you share any examples of successful initiatives that can and should be replicated in the region? |  |
| 25min | Breakout discussions: what do you think are the most essential actions needed to combat child labour in agriculture at local, national, and regional levels?  Where does your work fit in, and how can you contribute to combating child labour in agriculture? | 3 groups by language |
| 20min | Reporting back and Q&A |  |
| 5min | Closing: synthesis and next steps | FAO |

1. FAO. (2020). Resources Partnership Impact. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca9351en/CA9351EN.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. UNICEF/ILO. (2021). Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward. https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-labour-2020-global-estimates-trends-and-the-road-forward/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UNSDG. (2020). Policy brief: the impact of COVID-19 on children. <https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/160420_Covid_Children_Policy_Brief.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. World Bank. (2021). Food security and COVID-19 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://www.ilo.org/infostories/en-GB/Stories/Child-Labour/Child-Labour-In-Agriculture#the-nature-of-child-labour> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour#:~:text=Child%20labour%20can%20result%20in,rights%20and%20threatening%20their%20futures](https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour" \l ":~:text=Child%20labour%20can%20result%20in,rights%20and%20threatening%20their%20futures) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)