



EFFAT

**IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING PRIORITIES FOR OVERCOMING THE CRISIS
AND A SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT
STRATEGY 2020: A EUROPEAN INITIATIVE OF EFFAT**

GUIDELINES & RECOMMENDATIONS



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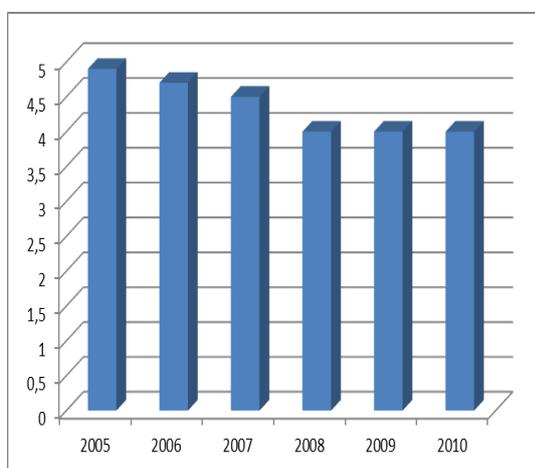
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I - INTRODUCTION

The project to which this brochure relates is being developed in the specific scenario in which the **EES 2020**¹ is a key moving force at a time when the volume and quality of agricultural employment are in upheaval.

Meanwhile, Europe's widely diverse agriculture faces countless challenges in terms of markets/products, the structure of agricultural holdings, and answering a widening range of demands (helping to meet the needs of a growing world population, an increase in renewable forms of energy, etc.), new technologies and know-how, the intervention of new stakeholders (service providers, investors, etc.) in 28 Member States who set their own strategies and priorities as best they see fit.



Agricultural employment is beset by these structural changes and on the whole is both contracting and offering working conditions in which 'full-time jobs' are becoming rarer while paid employment overall is increasing. And yet agriculture is an industry that depends to a greater extent on manual labour than other sectors of the economy, and has a growing female workforce.

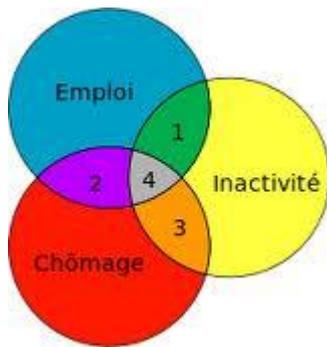
The sector is also characterised by a high proportion of **undeclared work** which further undermines its ability to meet the challenges it faces.

¹ EES: European Employment Strategy



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There are three dimensions to the agricultural context:

- ① **Growth** (*of paid employment*)
- ② **Change** (*in job functions*)
- ③ **Insecurity** (*of jobs*)

A clear view of changes in employment remains difficult to get, however:

- The European Commission has carried out an EU-level mapping exercise, the method and outcomes of which are not unanimously accepted.
- Not all Member States have the means of accurately assessing structural changes in agricultural employment and there is no uniformity between those Member States that do have them.
- By definition, illegal work is not recorded. Its scale is approximated by estimates.

However, the report presented as part of this project highlights a number of points common to the countries studied:

- What constitutes "**shortage**" apparently covers **different realities** in the countries studied. The report therefore proposes a definition to enable a similar analysis to be done for each country.
- Agriculture is an **employment-offering** sector that is less unattractive than it is traditionally made out to be.
- That said, while the sector is **relatively appealing**, especially to young people, lingering more negative aspects like pay rates still tell against it.
- Industry-specific issues aside, **appeal** is arguably a wider issue: the attractiveness of rural areas is a big consideration, and, through it, issues of living conditions in the broadest sense.
- It is a sector that is changing and demands **increasingly high educational levels**, not only because of regulations, but also to meet new challenges (greening, climate change, etc.).
- The professionalization of some occupations means that jobs must have a **long-term future**.

- **Seasonal employment** is common to European agriculture as a whole. The big issue is about the increase in it at the expense of stable employment, but also the aims of quality and food security that are central to the industry's recruitment problems. On this, a number of countries have developed tools to raise the profile of job opportunities in the industry.

The commonly encountered problems with labour recruitment cut across one another, illustrating the difficulties faced by all stakeholders operating in the sector:

<p>Farm businesses fail to fully identify their needs, or make high demands in terms of formal qualifications, skills or background.</p>	<p>The possible "inefficiency" of labour market of labour market intermediaries, increasing the influence of gangmaster agencies operating at the limits of or even outside the rules governing employment contracts.</p>	<p>The workers are sometimes seen as too low-skilled, which raises a real question about the content of vocational training to ensure a better employability of workers.</p>
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If you think education is expensive, try ignorance.

Abraham Lincoln

Training – central to one of the seven EES 2020 flagship initiatives – is viewed critically by the project participants.

In this regard, a **European approach to initial and continuing vocational training** is seen as a forward-looking solution ... if done as a joint approach by the social partners.

The issue of improving the December 2002 European agreement on vocational training in agriculture was raised again during the discussions, against very different backdrops for the old Member States (most of which have specific provisions developed over time) compared with those that have joined since 2004 (where there remains some uncertainty about the content of the agreement). This agreement, combined with careful consideration of a European approach to initial and continuing vocational training, will be a challenge for the short/medium term.

Agricultural, rural and forestry contractors take a different approach, due in particular to a greater presence of younger workers than in other agricultural sectors. Admittedly, the skill set required for contracting work is broader (working in different fields, involving farm work and nature-related work, as well as, possibly, earthworks and transport, specific technical knowledge, communication, etc.). This approach can usefully complement that of the agricultural sector.

Recruiting young people is a key issue for agriculture on which the social partners must put a special focus and come up with suitable answers. Here, numerous varyingly successful initiatives are running in a number of the countries studied. On this issue, there is probably greater scope for collating the range of experiences present across the EU and centralising the best practices.

While **seasonal labour** is a structural element of the sector (arising from the nature of the work), it is also subject to a number of developments: seasonal labour is used to alleviate difficulties in recruiting permanent workers, bearing in mind the above: *but it can only be a partial answer to the increasingly high standards of **professional competence** required by agricultural occupations, especially as this situation often involves the use of illegal labour.* It is also considered as a combined adjustment and flexibility variable that goes beyond the mere need for casual labour inherent to the sector. Against this backdrop, new players (specialised agencies) are becoming more professional and acting to address actual or argued needs: some practices require clarifications such as compliance with the law and the status of some workers such as bogus independent contractors, for example. Lastly, while the status of seasonal worker is often synonymous with staff turnover, the study carried out as part of this project highlights the actual or potential **loyalty** that develops among workers, emphasising the need to explore ways of making seasonal jobs into more permanent arrangements.

II - GUIDANCE

AREA 1:

The **modernization** and **professionalization** of agricultural jobs has increased skill needs, resulting in a mismatch between those needs and farm owners' ability to improve pay and attract qualified workers to fill the highest-skilled jobs. This, combined with the lack of practical experience among agricultural training college graduates and many applicants from other sectors, has also prompted employers to put personal accomplishments ahead of other criteria when hiring².

Agriculture is therefore an employment-offering sector requiring ever more highly-skilled labour. However, means for a clear understanding of this are not present in all the countries studied.

Sectoral structural changes – in particular the amount of regulation – may be a reason for employers' difficulties in explicitly formulating their labour requirements. These difficulties are materially reflected in increasing skills requirements and shortcomings in workers' employability.

This observation gives rise to two main guidelines:

<p>Conduct a survey to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Identify structural changes, recruitment intentions, criteria and methods in the partner countries that lack analytical tools.□ Identify difficulties encountered (recruitment, criteria, etc.).	<p>Create an education module in needs formulation (training in recruitment techniques or support with recruitment).</p>
<p>Employers' organisations and chambers of agriculture could instigate the approach, following discussions between the social partners.</p>	

² Findings of FNSEA's GP3 survey

AREA 2:

Initial and continuing **vocational training** is in most cases deemed inadequate. The consequences for the employability of permanent and seasonal workers alike are clear.

Subject to being a joint approach by the social partners, there should be a European approach to initial and (especially) vocational training.

There are two possible solutions to explore:

In keeping with the 2002 agreement on vocational training, the social partners should initiate discussions supported by a more detailed study on content, teaching methods and outcomes.	Refocusing on more practice-based content is arguably a key means of meeting the needs of farm businesses without calling into question the fundamentals enabling personal development and improved employability.
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AREA 3:

As the number of farms declines, so the average size of farm businesses is rising. That being said, there is an argument that so-called family farming is to be preferred on quality grounds to the development of an industry that is conducive to the expansion of large agricultural enterprises. The reasons for this lie in preserving and developing rural areas, including disadvantaged ones, the role that farmers can play in sustainable area management and reducing rural depopulation. The complexity of the job of farming offers new opportunities that make it more attractive. From this angle, the growth of salaried employment already underway naturally becomes a strong strategic focus.

This strategic area must address four issues:

Centralise the communication and awareness campaigns that have delivered results with vocational schools and colleges and both public and private employment agencies. The role of women is especially significant here because they account for almost half of jobs.	Set these campaigns within a European framework with a focus on occupational and geographical mobility, provided the latter is the product of a discussion aimed at reducing unequal treatment between permanent and seasonal workers, particularly those of foreign origin.
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Revitalise AGRIPASS, which remains a gold standard instrument.

Standardise agency services and develop the social responsibility of user businesses.

AREA 4:

While agriculture on the whole contributes a proportionally lower share of EU value added³, it employs proportionately more people than other sectors. In this big picture, a difference needs to be made between permanent workers and seasonal workers, subject to the basic given of equal treatment. Some broad changes can be identified that have acted to worsen seasonal workers' conditions:

- Working conditions require specific physical conditions to perform what are often repetitive tasks.
- They are a production factor adjustment variable essential to running the business, but also a cost adjustment variable if only because the wages paid are often below those of permanent workers, not to say unlawful in some cases.
- Nevertheless, they are a clear factor in keeping the sector competitive: seasonal work is a form of extreme flexibility possessed by only a few sectors which can often develop synergies.

Four areas of consideration can be explored:

Regardless, relevant schemes have been successfully developed to give seasonal workers long-term employment, thereby reducing both insecurity and poverty.

The study cites examples including pluriactivity contracts (implemented under certain conditions), employers' labour recruitment combines (which are still encountering some difficulties but can be adapted to farm business situations). Thought could be given to rolling out pluriactivity contracts across the EU, or even via a European Agreement.

³ Compared with other significant business sectors

This form of flexibility is generally acknowledged as going to the sector's competitive ability. Nevertheless, this "historical economic advantage" should not be abused but rather used strictly in keeping with the law.

The value of seasonal workers could be promoted via an awareness campaign to make (direct and/or indirect) user businesses understand that they are better off complying with laws and customs than running risks.

Recognising the specific hardships of seasonal work can be a basis for compensating them.

In terms of health, pension rights, for example.

All seasonal workers must be given more comprehensive information on employment rights, including pensions, for which a seasonal worker moving around Europe contributes in one or more countries.

This is because pension rights may be reduced in some cases, such as when the seasonal worker returns to his country of origin on retirement in receipt of a much reduced pension.

The various foregoing recommendations are not a catalogue of measures to be implemented in the wake of this report, but are intended as areas on which national and European social partners can work.