



## Migrations & Rural Workers WG Newsletter n°3 - August 2023

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### MOBILISATION AGAINST THE EU AGRICULTURE MINISTERS' SUMMIT

#### Spain - Training and Activism Camp of the Food Sovereignty Movement

In the second half of 2023, the Spanish Government will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In this context, on 4 and 5 September, the heads of the ministries of agriculture across the European Union will meet in Cordoba.

From 31 August to 4 September, in Cordoba, we will participate as ECVC in a counter-summit with various groups involved in the transformation of the agri-food model to move towards food sovereignty. We will tell them that we have had enough of the EU's neoliberal policies, that the current food model based on agribusiness does not respect social and labour rights or planetary borders, and that we are tired that the right to food is not guaranteed for the entire population.

That is why we want to let EU agriculture ministers know that we need a radical change in public policies to support an agroecological production model, that we want more farmers in Europe, committed to family and sustainable models, and that healthy food environments that keep our villages and ecosystems alive must be promoted.

Since ECVC, our participation is important, this space being both a space of struggle, a space where we can make our demands to change agricultural and food policies, where we can think about the transition from an agro-industrial model in a territory to a peasant agro-ecological model and where we can forge alliances.

Join the camp by registering here: <https://nosplantamos.org/>



#### AGROECOLOGY OR BARBARISM NETWORK MANIFESTO

*We are publishing here the manifesto of the network which was set up in Santiago de Compostela in the summer of 2022 and which will be mobilising in Cordoba in September. We are taking part in this event precisely for the reasons described below. Those of us who have drawn up this manifesto believe it is necessary to affirm our firm commitment to a fairer and more caring society. In the current context of climate change and the global food crisis, it is essential to guarantee the rights of peasants and the food sovereignty of peoples.*

At the event "Agroecology or barbarism: how agribusiness mistreats us", organised in June 2022 by the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) working group on migration and rural work, we were able to analyse the terrible consequences of the agro-industrial model of food production, a business that continues to extend its power in an uncontrolled way, threatening any possibility of enjoying a dignified life in our territories.



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Agro-industry has multiple negative impacts that irreparably affect the health of people and ecosystems, relying on the complicit consent of our governments and the majority ignorance of society. Moreover, it prevents and destroys any possibility of developing a peasant economy in the rural environment, illegitimately appropriates our common goods and considers that all living things that are part of nature are commodities that can be disposed of at will. For all this,

### WE DENOUNCE THAT AGRO-INDUSTRY:

- is a form of **neo-feudalism** and accumulation of power whose strategy of expansion consists of land grabbing, which ceases to serve the common good in favour of the economic interests of a very limited number of enterprises.
- reproduces the roles of **patriarchy**, exerting direct violence against women, especially for those in situations of maximum vulnerability.
- is a **colonialist and racist model**, which benefits with impunity migrants and all those who find themselves in a situation of powerlessness because of all kinds of circumstances.
- significantly increases **inequality between the countries** of the North and South, generating conflict and violence and condemning the vast majority of the world's population to live in situations of misery, hunger and enormous suffering.
- impoverishes aquifers and is the main cause of deforestation, **mass extinction** of pollinator insects, forest fires, etc., destroying the balance and biodiversity of ecosystems.
- achieves an intensive consumption of energy producing a large amount of CO2 emissions, worsening the climate crisis and contributing to **global warming**.
- erodes soil fertility leaving them inert and making them more vulnerable to **desertification**. In addition, it generates many types of waste that invades incalculable habitats, collapses and transforms it into irrecoverable felling areas.
- expel peasantry from their territories, **destroying rural and agrarian communities**, their culture, knowledge and ability to produce nutritious and healthy food by taking care of the planet with adequate agroecosystem management.
- possesses most of the benefits generated in the value chain, dominates and controls food distribution markets, imposing abusive prices and conditions, generating dependence on their technologies and dangerously reducing the genetic variability of the plant and animal species we feed on.

• exerts a powerful influence on the organs and institutions that decide agri-food policies, violating the sovereignty of peoples and shamefully degrading the democratic quality of our governance systems.

### WE DECLARE THAT:

- **Peasant agroecology** is the only one that can really feed us while taking care of people and the planet, allowing its conservation for future generations. Agro-industry dangerously threatens the possibility of achieving these goals. These are two definitively incompatible models, which cannot coexist.
- We demand a **radical transformation** of the agri-food system through public policies that cease to serve capital and act in favor of life, democracy and socio-environmental justice.
- We demand effective compliance with the articles adopted in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other Workers in Rural Areas (**UNDROP**).
- We demand the immediate **regularisation** of the migrant population living in our territory in an irregular situation and that the rights of all people working in the food chain be respected, guaranteeing decent working and living conditions, without excuses and without exceptions.
- We demand the immediate **end of all forms of patriarchal violence**. Gender equality must be a verifiable fact at all times and anywhere.
- We demand an end to the abuse of territory and ecosystems. Balance and biodiversity need to be actively and effectively addressed, ensuring their **sustainability**.
- We still have enough dignity and rebellion to raise our voice to defend the common good. We must **organise our struggle** to stop the expansion of agribusiness, because it is urgent, fair and necessary.



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### Reflections of the meeting of the ECVC Working Group on the Defence of Migrant Workers in Red Fruit Production in the Province of Huelva (Spain)

#### “Circular migration” and “contracts in origin”

On 23 and 26 April, La Via Campesina’s organisations met in Huelva with allies from several countries to discuss the defence of migrant workers hired to harvest red fruit under the new Spanish regulation of “circular migration” and “origin contracts”. At the center was the coordination between the SOC-SAT Union of Huelva and the FNSA of Morocco (National Federation of Agricultural Trade Unions) to help 15'000 Moroccan workers hired under the new law that sets the conditions for “seasonal contracted” workers.

#### The new Spanish rules

This new regulation perfectly corresponds to the interests of agro-industry and world trade to have cheap labour during the production season, minimising costs and ensuring good profits in a long chain of exploitation, taking advantage of the misery that exists especially in the rural areas of the different countries of origin. Moroccan workers (also from other countries like Colombia or Ecuador) work exactly when and where they are needed, after which they are sent back to the country of origin in an almost militarised process.

The process (called the GECCO project) is under the command of the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration with the collaboration of several state and private provincial and local bodies such as the so-called “majority” trade unions (labour commissions and UGT) which are becoming ever simpler tools of state policies. Mcha influences business organisations such as the Interfresa de Huelva which integrates the associations “Asaja-Huelva”, “Cooperativas Agro Alimentarias de Andalucía” and “Freshuelva”: This sector occupies 11.700 hectares of cultivation to produce 455.000 tonnes of strawberries, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries with a total export value of EUR 1'279 million in 2022.



#### Contracts in origin – slave trade?

As part of the contracts in origin, representatives of the Spanish State and business associations travel to Morocco to organise – together with the local authorities – the recruitment of women workers meeting the requirements of the sector: Exclusively married or widowed women with children with experience in agricultural work. Once recruited, the women receive a contract and order to meet at five in the morning in the port of Tangier. There, they are locked in closed premises guarded by the police, where they wait for long hours before receiving the visa, then the “chuckles” in the belly of the ferries that transfer them to Spain (they do not have access to the ferry bridge).

In the ports of arrival, women are “unloaded” in places closed to the public, where they are distributed in buses rented by Interfresa organisations. In the afternoon, buses take them to companies (cooperatives, SATs, etc.), which distribute them among the different farms. The next day, they spend their first day in the fields, where they work without pay during what is called the “training day”. During the first week, farms classify workers according to their productivity: “good” (green), intermed-



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iate (“orange”) and “bad” (red). Some of the “red” workers are dismissed and must return to Morocco (they are asked to sign a document certifying that they are voluntarily dismissing themselves).

### Then begins a hellish life for women:

The collection of fruit, followed by a “chip” system which records the collected kilos, the work falling into pieces with wages below the SMI, unpaid overtime, days not paid in case of cold and many conditions not corresponding to Spanish laws and the paragraphs of the collective agreements; Poor housing conditions, many women overcrowded in very narrow homes or premises, with poor sanitary facilities, windows that do not close or roofs that allow wind and rain to pass; Sexual harassment; Threats of dismissal when workers call for improvements; Lack of medical care in case of illness; Passport hijacking.

### The PRELSI: Interfresa Ethics, Work and Social Responsibility Plan

Today, it is customary for the worst practices to be covered by statements and standards of “sustainability”: Agro-industry, state authorities, world trade have mastered such washing operations. Of course, with the “contracts in origin” operation, the Spanish state and the red fruit sector also had to try to cover the exploitation of workers in Morocco and other countries with an ideal program to create the illusion that “everything is organised in such a way that everything is happy”: This is why Interfresa has promoted the PRELSI programme with the aim of “promoting good practices to promote the socio-professional well-being of all agents involved in the red fruit campaign (...) in the province of Huelva (see: <https://www.interfresa.com/prelsi/>).

PRELSI promises to review accommodations before and during the campaign, health mediation, social assistance, labour advice, assistance for arrival and return travel, incident resolution, management and resolution of aspects related to the relationship with administrations, and banking intermediation.

According to the Propaganda of Interfresa, PRELSI, hired “integration advisers” who include Arabic to offer basic information to workers upon arrival in the cooperatives and later, discussions more in-depth in companies.

“Advisors” are expected to make weekly visits to farms, conduct a home inspection and, if incidents are detected, ask the contractor to be remedied. In conflict situations, “advisors” would listen to the person who filed the complaint, inform them of available legal and administrative channels and provide support, including by seeking mediation and arbitration. In the event of illness or injury, the consultants would provide medical assistance and care. The PRELSI also aims to assist workers in the management of accounts and banking procedures.

### Discussion on PRELSI's performance in reality

In a discussion between Moroccan workers in Huelva and SOC-SAT and FNSA activists, it was noted that in reality, in case of problems or conflicts, the consultants arrive quickly, in the rule, to say that “it is not so serious”, asking workers who renounce their complaints or the employer to make improvements, to the rule without any control or follow-up. Similarly, if he is called the Labour Inspectorate, he usually says or writes in his reports that “he has not detected anything abnormal”.

### Conclusions

The conclusions of the discussions in Huelva were that it was necessary to amplify the systematic work to inform workers of their rights (as described in the regulations of the initial contracts and in many cases not applied) and to put in place support systems allowing workers to ask for their rights and obtain improvements. The SOC-SAT and FNSA trade unions will be used to work in this direction and for this they have the support of several local organisations as well as the possibility of putting pressure on mass distribution through La Via Campesina and several NGOs opposed to agro-industry. Among other things, there is an environmental movement against the exploitation of water and soil (with a huge deficit of Huelva's aquifers) and there is also a feminist movement sensitive to the misery of workers in the red fruit fields.

**No to greenwashing!**  
**Social responsibility in practice!**  
**Rights to workers!**

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### In Almeria (Spain), the situation is deteriorating. Certification systems are there to hide it

#### Almeria, a social and ecological catastrophe

For about forty years, Almeria has been constantly developing as a Mecca of intensive agriculture that accumulates both ecological disasters (climate impact, overexploitation and pollution of water reserves, loss of biodiversity, pollution by plastic waste, etc.) as well as the blatant exploitation of migrants – and also local workers! As for workers, the problems are endemic: wages below the minimum wage (in various proportions), day contracts with the possibility of dismissal, although the new labour law requires permanent contracts, unpaid overtime, a lack of worker representation and social dialogue.

In recent times, there have been conflicts in several companies. For example, Eurosol, supplier to Lidl (Germany), Albert Heijn (Netherlands) and Migros (Switzerland), who recently dismissed a new worker to eliminate the activity of the SOC-SAT trade union to defend the interests of workers (see separate article on this subject). The companies Bio Sabor and Haciendas Bio are still examples of precariousness, while the situation is a little better in Campojoyma, certified according to Demeter. Intensive production and trade are not able to correct the worsening social and environmental situation. Therefore, the efforts of industry (production and trade) aim to promote a broad system of counterfeit certifications in order to conceal the deterioration of the situation.

#### Some of the certifications that conceal the Almeria disaster

##### GlobalG.A.P.

This system of Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) represents the interests of the intensive agro-industrial system. Its members include Bayer-Monsanto and Syngenta, producers of pesticides such as glyphosate ('Roundup'), whose mechanisms have been discovered over the last 30 years, leading to the increasing use of GMOs, chlorthaloniil, chlorpyrifos and neonicotinoids, which are known to be harmful to bees.

The seed producers, Bayer-Monsanto and Syngenta, also monopolise the market and are working to establish the dominance of sterile hybrids which prevent farmers from producing their own seeds.



GlobalG.A.P. also brings together major international distribution companies, such as Tesco, Carrefour, Lidl, Aldi and their suppliers, to develop agricultural standards on an agro-industrial basis and to present it as "sustainable development": this agricultural production, based on the intensive use of energy and inputs (pesticides, fodder, concentrated feed, etc.), aims to maximise profitability and to reduce costs. This agricultural production, based on intensive use of energy and inputs (pesticides, fodder, concentrated feed, etc.), is aimed at maximising profitability rather than ensuring that the population is fed. GlobalG.A.P. is there to limit damage and prevent or repress scandals.

This standard is constantly developing modules that are supposed to promote biodiversity, good water use or similar issues. But it is clear that this rule will never propose an agriculture that actually contributes to the problems our era is accumulating, such as global warming, deforestation, biodiversity losses, overexploitation and pollution of water, air and soil (etc.). In Almeria, GlobalG.A.P. has a terrible responsibility to certify (and therefore legitimise) unscrupulous agricultural production whose negative environmental and social impact knows no bounds.



### GRASP

This is the "social" module of GlobalG.A.P., an essential tool for agro-industry to improve its image, legitimising, among other things, the large-scale exploitation of migrants expelled from their countries by the world economic order or by war. low wages and daily workers' contracts that can be dismissed at any time. In Almeria, this standard is in the hands of a certifier called "Agrocolor", directly linked to the interests of agro-industrial enterprises through personal links with the organisation of exporters Coexphal, in turn linked to the national organisation of Fepex fruit and vegetable exporters (both members of GlobalG.A.P., of course).

GRASP is widely spread by retail trade as a guarantee of decent working conditions. One of the characteristics of GRASP is also the absolute lack of transparency: no one - with the exception of audited companies - can know what audits are about companies' social practices. The example of Eurosol and others shows us that audits unscrupulously hide precarious conditions and even certify companies condemned by labour courts.



### Smeta / Sedex

Smeta is a system of "social audits" comparable to GRASP. In Almeria (and to a large extent in Spain), this "independent" standard is largely in the hands of Agrocolor, and therefore in the hands of the employers who operate the labour force in the fields and packing stations, so companies award themselves "independent certificates of good practice".

### Organic standards: Naturland, Demeter, Bio Suisse

It's true that organic farming is less harmful than conventional production. However, organic production tends to be aligned with conventional production and is simply an optimised variant of it. In addition to the basic practices of organic farming (formulated, among other things, in the EU regulation), organic farming associations promise all sorts of good environmental and social practices. Unfortunately, practical experience shows that these pious rules often only exist on paper and are not applied in practice. In Almeria, we note that Naturland (Germany) has been distancing itself from Bio Sabor for a number of years because of its poor social practices, while Biojoyma (a Demeter-certified company) is more open to social dialogue than industry heavyweights such as Bio Sabor and Haciendas Bio.

On the other hand, bio Suisse has never taken a stand against the precarious working conditions of these companies, and it is clear that it has no tools to monitor working conditions. There is no evidence that organic farming practices are really different from those of conventional farming, either in terms of working conditions or, for example, excessive use of water. On the contrary, in many cases it has been shown that organic businesses maintain a high level of precarious conditions.

### Conclusions: An unsustainable agricultural system and non-transparent certifications

In terms of ecological disasters and working conditions, agro-industrial production in Almeria is not changing its nature, and the consequences are getting worse. A sophisticated certification system serves to maintain standards, avoid scandals and hide the economic and social consequences of the agro-industrial economy. The different standards claim to bring improvements. As a whole, they mainly serve to consolidate and justify an unsustainable system.

La Via Campesina calls on consumers and citizens to challenge the retail trade and organic farming organisations to demand a change of course and an end to non-transparent certifications that hide the truth of the facts.

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## WORKING CONDITIONS AND UNIONS' STRUGGLES

### Sudaphi, Morocco: The struggle continues

*After several months of struggle, Sudaphi management is still reluctant to accept the demands of the workers, who continue to fight for their rights.*

Sudaphi is one of the 5 production sites of the French company PREMIUM FOODS SOLUTIONS, of the NORAC group. Located in the commune of Ouled Dahou in the province of Inezgane a Meloul, Sudaphi occupies an area of 3 hectares and employs about 300 workers, 145 of whom are permanent (55 % women) and 152 temporary (80 % women). Created in 2012, after 10 years of activity, the company has decided to introduce employment contracts whose aim is to allow employers to impose their conditions on employees and to get rid of former employees and their social benefits. It was this measure of being able to impose a contract that triggered the anger of the workers.

### Creation of a trade union office

Sudaphi employees contacted our union (FNSA), which explained to them the legal aspect of the unilateral measures taken by the company. Following the mobilisation of workers, Sudaphi amended the contract to offer a supplement to the verbal contract initially concluded with the workers, in accordance with the Moroccan Labour Code.

On April 24, employees created their union office at the UMT-affiliated FNSA. Our union received the document from the local authorities on April 26, in accordance with Moroccan legislation, requesting the submission of the trade union file. On April 27, the company manager refused to accept the union's request and informed the management amicably. It should be noted that submission of the dossier to the company is not a regulatory legal requirement. On 5 May, a letter was sent by e-mail to the site manager and the general manager of Sudaphi, informing the company of the establishment of the trade union office and calling for dialogue on the outstanding social issues in Sudaphi. Unfortunately, the answer was negative.

### Complicity of the labour inspector

Since December 2021, after imposing the new contract on its

employees, intimidating behaviour has been reported by employees who refused to sign the contract drafted and unilaterally imposed by the company. Some people took their case to Ait Melloul's labour inspector. The inspector sided with the company instead of intervening in favour of the employees, in accordance with the Moroccan Labour Code.

### Sitting in front of the company

After failing all attempts to solve social problems, and after the company took disciplinary action against workers' representatives, including the dismissal of one of them, Fayssal, a FNSA demonstration was organised to pressure Sudaphi to establish a dialogue with our union. We did not receive any response from the company.



In response to this situation, the Sudaphi employee union office and the Inezgane section of the FNSA decided to organise a permanent sit-in, led by Fayssal and supported by his colleagues, ahead of Sudaphi from 2 June 2022.

### Intervention by the authorities

Faced with the great success of the sit-in and the demonstrations against Sudaphi organised by the FNSA, the Moroccan authorities tried to ban sit-in by all means, including the use of force twice, on 14 and 17 June. Despite these interventions, the activists resisted these acts of violence and were able to successfully hold the sit-in. The FNSA strongly condemns these attacks and acts of violence against peaceful trade unionists who defend their legitimate rights under the law.

### Attempt to weaken the union

The company's management has repeatedly tried to encourage workers to leave the union permanently, promising to reinstate the dismissed union delegate and improve



working conditions. It also undertook to organise the temporary Manpower workers made available to Sudaphi to make propaganda in its favour. But all these manipulations were countered by the unity and solidarity of the permanent workers of Sudaphi, supported by the FNSA sections of Sous Massa.

A meeting was also held with the French and Moroccan officials of Sudaphi and a delegation of our Federation on July 6, 2022. But it was more of an exchange of views meeting than a dialogue. At that meeting, Sudaphi's general manager stayed on his positions and considered everything they were doing to be legal. We insisted on the arbitrary nature of the decisions taken.

Following the failure of all attempts at conciliation and the insistence of employees on their legitimate right to join the union, the company's management intensified pressure on trade unionists by organising meetings to hear evidence of misconduct committed by several employees within the company in recent months, imposing warning sanctions on these employees.

However, these actions have contributed to the solidarity and strengthening of our union within Sudaphi, and we hope for a historic victory in the months to come.

### FNSA's demands:

The FNSA is calling for the following demands, raised by Sudaphi employees, to be met:

- Respect for trade union rights
- Reinstatement of the dismissed staff representative
- The cancellation of disciplinary sanctions against trade unionists and shop stewards
- An end to all discrimination between employees, including pay rises for employees who have signed a contract imposed by management.
- Provision of transport for employees.
- The opening of a dialogue with the FNSA-affiliated trade union centre to resolve employees' social demands.

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### Eurosol Almeria: the true face of the agro-industrial system

#### Systematic non-compliance with collective agreements

In 2021, the Almeria-based company Eurosol, supplier to several European supermarkets such as Lidl in Germany, Albert Heijn in the Netherlands, Delhaize in Belgium and Migros in Switzerland, was confronted at one of its farms, the Matias de Nijar, with the election of a combative Works Council, made up of members of the SOC Trade-Union and active in the defence of working conditions corresponding to the Collective Agreement for Agriculture in Almeria. In particular, the Committee had challenged a number of provisions, such as the non-payment of breaks and insufficient holiday pay. It won the case, with a ruling by the Labour Court recognising the right to holiday for casual and permanent-discontinuous workers, as requested by Soc-SAT.

#### Unscrupulous manoeuvres

Faced with the decision of the Labour Court, the company chose a system that was as radical as it was unusual: swapping staff, taking on dozens of new non-union workers to break up the committee and the union struggle, gradually dismissing the workers who had voted in favour of the works council. Once the new workers had been hired, the company organised a meeting with them to demand the cancellation of the works council. At the same time, it began to carry out progressive dismissals: one after the other, every few days or weeks, workers with many years' seniority on the farm were dismissed for alleged "indiscipline", such as not having "wanted to bring in protective masks" - in the COVID crisis: in





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reality, the workers had brought in better quality masks (FFP) instead of those distributed on the farm. Most of the dismissed workers challenged the dismissals before the Labour Court.

### Migros exposed

When informed, the Swiss farmers' organisation Uniterre confronted the Migros supermarket with this fact, asking it to look into the defence of workers' rights in its supply chain. After attempting to justify the dismissals, Migros finally sent a document on 19 April 2021 in which it undertook, among other things, to draw up a neutral conflict resolution document with SOC-SAT: Eurosol was supposed to inform Migros before proceeding with any dismissals of employees from the "Matias de Nijar" farm and in the event of any indications of new conflict actions. Migros also claimed that it wanted to ensure that working conditions at Eurosol, and in particular at the "Matias de Nijar" plant, were "beyond reproach" - which is still not the case today!

And yet, a few weeks later, Eurosol dismissed three members of the works council, Reynaldo U., chairman of the works council, Egidija X, Volodimir N, as well as other comrades affiliated to SOC-SAT Almeria - some of whom are still awaiting trial! It is not known whether Eurosol has consulted or informed Migros on this matter, but Migros has in no way contacted Uniterre on the subject: it prefers to remain silent!

### The tactics used by the retailers to save their reputations

Naturally, SOC SAT contested the dismissals. As a result, Eurosol reached a redundancy agreement with Reynaldo, while Volodimir and Egidija are still awaiting trial, as are other dismissed workers. The trials and settlements demonstrate the facts denounced and the injustice suffered by the workers of the Soc-SAT union at Eurosol. The results are symbolic: while the companies are arbitrarily dismissing workers, the trials before the Spanish courts are taking years. In this way, the companies gain time and the workers are forced to look for other work until the compensation arrives. In many cases, companies also prefer to compensate workers retrospectively: they spend a lot of money on compensation and lawyers' fees, but it's still cheaper than applying the conditions of the CCCA, and they don't risk their reputation by being condemned by a court!

### Supermarkets interested in precarious working conditions

Despite all their talk of sustainability, the supermarkets are not taking any action. Neither Migros, Ahold-Delhaize nor Lidl has lifted a finger to help the workers made redundant at Eurosol: they are all interested in low prices and cheap labour is an essential part of their policy.

The bottom line is that despite all the fraudulent GRASP-type certifications, despite all the "workshops on good social practice" (organised by various organisations, all linked directly or indirectly to the Agro-industry), working conditions remain just as precarious today as they were 20 or 30 years ago. What's more, they are associated with other disasters such as CO2 emissions, water wastage, plastic contamination and the loss of biodiversity: These are all indictments of the unsustainable agro-industrial system!

### The struggle continues

We can also see that entrepreneurs in Almeria are prepared to do anything to prevent workers' representation that defends their interests. The election of a Workers' Committee at the Eurosol "Matias de Nijar" farm was a success which led to Eurosol being condemned by the Labour Court. However, in the precarious conditions that prevail in Almeria, the case of Eurosol shows that in the agro-industrial system a victory can never be taken for granted. However, the workers' struggle is permanent, leading sometimes to partial victories, sometimes to defeats, but it goes on as an integral part of the struggle for ecological transformation to which La Via Campesina is committed without any compromises!!

### The Interbrigadas film on the struggle of the Eurosol workers is now available!



The German organisation "Interbrigadas" has produced a film entitled "Fruits of resistance" about the struggle at Eurosol. This film is available for anyone who wants to show it at meetings. Please contact Laurent Vonwiller (agraroekologie@uniterre.ch)



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### Debt, migration and exploitation: conditions for migrant workers in the UK

The Agricultural Workers Alliance in the UK has produced a new report that uncovers the structural factors of exploitation in the supply chain and the migration system of workers in the agro-industrial system. Our investigation has revealed that the visa for seasonal workers, which currently covers the migration of 57.000 agricultural workers, is creating an indebted and tied workforce to their employer, with limited time in the UK to work enough to pay for the costs of migration.

We demonstrated how visa failures resulted in poor working conditions using testimonies from former farm workers. With a former farm worker from Nepal we explored how workers were trapped in bondage by debts to third-party intermediaries. The worker ended up paying £3,353 to intermediaries while he was hired to work in the UK, and could not earn enough to pay off his debts.

The testimonies of other workers speak of extremely long working hours on farms, unpaid punitive time off if the targets of collection are not met, abuses by supervisors, systematic theft of wages, but also, and this is crucial, resistance on the part of workers in the form of strike attempts and strikes. This report aims to demonstrate that workers are not mere passive victims or inputs of the agro-industrial system, but people with their own interests, organisations and desires to change things.

Our research then showed how this exploitation translated into monetary benefits for companies along the supply chain. We found that, of the final sale price of the products of an agricultural holding in Kent, 54 % went to supermarkets, 26 % to the farm and 14 % (gross) to workers. After the costs of travel and migration, food, subsistence, rent and Social Security, the workers had only 7.6 % left to send home. We have developed this graph to prove it.

This is further reduced if commissions are paid to intermediaries. If workers pay 1,700 pounds, they only retain 2.2 %, and if they pay £5,000, they lose money when they come to the UK, as they retain -5.5 %. The figures suggest that workers' incomes are below the absolute poverty thresholds in the UK.

We also analysed alternative approaches promoted by tomato workers represented by the Immokalee Workers' Coalition in Florida. CIW joined consumers in forcing 14 large supermarkets and fast food companies to sign deals with them. These agreements require supermarkets to pay an extra amount to finance

wage increases and not to stock up on farms that fail to comply with these agreements until they are back in order. This system has resulted in wage increases of 25-50 % for workers and has significantly reduced cases of forced labour, sexual violence, wage theft and brokering commissions.

Based on our research, we demand that supermarkets pay more to fund wage increases and compensation to defrauded workers, that the government move away from temporary migration plans and work with current and former farm workers to develop new approaches to seasonal labor migration, and that a farm worker organisation be established to provide immediate support to workers taking action and campaigning to improve conditions.



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### MIGRATION

#### Destruction of migrant housing in Nijar, Spain

Nijar, near Almeria, is a city in southern Spain where winter vegetable production is flourishing and trucked throughout Europe. The impact on the environment is well known: over-exploitation of soil and water, large-scale plastic pollution, loss of biodiversity, etc. In Nijar, intensive agriculture has reached a peak of negative impacts that has been matched only in some other parts of the world.

Local authorities and export companies (represented by the leading association of COEXPHAL exporters) are desperately, but certainly not successfully, trying to hide the truth about the environmental and social outcomes of the agricultural system: for example, that most vegetables are produced by migrants from Morocco, sub-Saharan countries or Eastern countries (Ukraine, Romania, etc.), whose working conditions are based on precariousness, wages below the legal minimum, lack of representation of workers, or no contract at all, so that agro-industry can hire workers on a daily basis or not at all. ), whose working conditions are based on precariousness, wages below the legal minimum, lack of representation of workers, daily contracts or no contract at all, so that agro-industry can hire and dismiss workers as it pleases.



It is very difficult for migrants to find affordable housing. Poor working conditions and the lack of cheap and affordable housing for workers are leading to the proliferation of so-called slums, made of pallets, cartons and plastic tarpaulins. It would not be difficult, given the huge income generated by vegetable exports, to build cheap apartments for migrant workers, but this is not the case, and the lack of cheap and

affordable housing for workers leads to the proliferation of “chabolas”, slums, made of pallets, cartons and plastic tarpaulins.

It would not be difficult, given the considerable income generated by vegetable exports, to build cheap apartments for migrant workers, but that does not happen, and if so, that is the exception. That doesn't happen, and if that's the case, it's an exception. While in general the slums are small and well hidden, in Nijar, this slum has reached a size of about 500 inhabitants. He owned a mosque, several shops, cafes, bakeries, clothing stores, taxi service... but this camp bothered not only local authorities and the organisation of exporters, but also tourist organisations: indeed, you can see the slums from the street when driving by car, such as, for example, tourists visiting Cabo de Gata National Park, located not far from Nijar! In addition, the neo-fascist VOX party enjoys growing support in the region, and the Social Democratic Party PSOE is trying to attract the sympathies of voters likely to go to VOX.

Thus, the mafia trio of local authorities, exporters' associations and tourist organisations decided to destroy the slums of Nijar. In front of them, NGOs, religious organisations and the SOC-SAT union, gathered within the association “Derecho a Techo” (Right to a Roof). Officially, the authorities claimed to offer compensation by building cheap apartments to relocate the 500 inhabitants of the slums of Nijar, but in reality these apartments are not finished and are far from enough to relocate all the inhabitants of these slums: once again, it was a lie!





# Migrations & Rural Workers WG

## Newsletter n°3 - August 2023

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Thus, on Monday morning, a huge army of different police forces surrounded the slums and began to destroy all the houses and facilities, setting fire to some of them (see photos). What happened to the inhabitants is unclear and it is certain that many of them were unable to find housing.

What happened in the Nijar camp is a shame for Spain, a shame for Andalusia, a shame for an agrarian system based on the exploitation of migrants and accumulating unbearable negative social and environmental impacts around the world.



### What happened after the eviction and demolition of the African workers' colony in Walili camp? — update in summer 2023

In the end, the forecasts that provoke the complaints and mobilisations of the inhabitants of the camp colony, the Soc-Sat and the Right to the Roof Platform were realised, since the plan of the former PSOE municipal council (currently in the hands of the PP and VOX) with other entities of “colonisation eradication” was a total failure.

Since the approximately 500 neighbors, only a minority took the chartered buses to unknown places and from them, only a few dozen were reassigned, and their number was reduced since their location was far from their workplace (some denounced the loss of employment), the lack of transportation (including the breach given the promise of the former mayor to provide it to the affected and the politicians of the left mediatised, such as the promise to provide a job by “business friends”).

Being relocated to “emergency” schemes of NGOs since that day have been completed the 62 houses of the Grillos with which the previous municipality and other entities have said to temporarily relocate the inhabitants of Walili, leaving aside the

rest of the inhabitants, their demands and their needs.

Separating from the beginning and for a few months the relocated according to their origin, Moroccans (in a room of an industrial warehouse with beds without privacy and where they also reported a cold), sub-Saharan (in the houses of Cepaim used during the isolation of the pandemic), as for sex (4 Moroccan women who were housed in the Omega Hotel about 2 months, while others were missing that were not relocated, until the current transfer to the Cepaim device that they were told they could be up to 11 months and that they were difficult to move to the Crillos).

In CEPAIM's DIA, they carry out certain activities with the relocated, in addition to maintaining them and enforcing the rules (which were also some critical reasons for relocation). The municipal council and the collaborating entities have not been transparent about what is happening there and do not give official figures, although, from one NGO, the figure was recognised in February and there were some 30 relocations (27 Moroccans).

As there were 3 people from the facility who needed hospitalisation, and there is no institutional follow-up. Being particularly serious the case of a Moroccan neighbor of Walili who had cancer and did not receive the necessary help from the public institutions and the responsible NGOs, having to enter seriously after the eviction to the hospital, then with the rest of the neighbors moved to the hotel and as her condition worsened, she was admitted to the hospital to receive chemotherapy, to finish in palliative care until her death.

A large part of Walili's residents were relocated to their informal support circle houses or moved to other settlements such as those in Atochaes or Barranquete (which are closer to their jobs), although police prevented them from building new slums there as in other small slums, whether without court order, or without realignment, or media attention, some evictions from which they suffered. Or they went to other parts of the province.

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# Migrations & Rural Workers WG Newsletter n°3 - August 2023

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## A new migration deal between France and Morocco

Despite the apathy of Franco-Moroccan diplomatic relations, the National Federation of Farmers' Trade Unions (FNSEA), the French Immigration Office and the Moroccan Employment Agency (ANAPEC) signed an agreement to “facilitate the employment of Moroccan seasonal agricultural workers” on French farms, the French union announced Friday.

“This agreement is part of a desire to meet the needs of farmers who are currently suffering from a shortage of job seekers, especially for seasonal work, for fear of losing some crops,” the FNSEA said in a statement.

The agreement was signed with the French Office for Migration and Integration and ANAPEC. For the FNSEA, it is a question of laying “the basis for a useful and responsible mechanism with a clear objective, that of offering farmers collective and secure routes of employment that guarantee their entry, integration and return to their country in an orderly and respectful context”.

Foreign seasonal workers, who have returned in large numbers since the lifting of the Covid restrictions, play a key role in the French agricultural sector. The need for this workforce on French farms has become so urgent that farmers have asked the French authorities to set up, at the height of the health crisis, exceptional air bridges to transport workers at a time when air traffic was suspended.

In response, the French Immigration and Integration Office brought in 900 Moroccan workers in October 2020 to “save harvests” of different fruits, and 300 workers in December of the same year to work on vegetable and floral crops.

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**Do you have a question? If you would like to get in touch with the ECVC working group, please write to [migrations@eurovia.org](mailto:migrations@eurovia.org).**