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Executive Summary

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The first chapter outlines the general framework within which the E.A.T.S Project has been conducted, describing the aim and main stages leading to the overarching objective, which is establishing a common protocol from national, sectoral, and local industrial relations systems and aiming to create a collective heritage and an opportunity to strengthen the EU agri-food value chain. Ultimately, an in-depth study is centred around the way in which social dialogue has developed up to now, on a national, sectoral, and EU level. This in-depth study is the result of analysis and observations proposed by trade unions and employers' associations (beneficiaries and organisations associated with the Project) for its own national context.

The second chapter pulls together the best bargaining practices collected and presented in various workshops by the trade unions involved in the Project within the agri-food sector.

The third chapter clarifies recurring issues encountered over the course of various Project events, categorising them within 4 large macro-areas for action: participation, integration, aggregation, and social dialogue.





1. Chapter 1

Preliminary considerations and context

a. The E.A.T.S Project and its objectives

The E.A.T.S project pursues the objective of strengthening the EU agri-food value chain, social dialogue, and industrial relations in the agri-food sector; identifying, sharing, and promoting pre-existing best practices in partner countries. It is possible to confirm that the aforementioned objective has been achieved, primarily through the drafting of these common guidelines for bargaining and social dialogue to promote at European level, and in all member states and candidate countries, in such a way as to strengthen the EU agri-food value chain. The project also targets specific objectives:

- a. Heightening awareness among trade unions, European companies, employees, and consumers;
- b. Increasing awareness among stakeholders in the agri-food sector, in terms of their capacity to exert a positive influence on national agri-food industrial relations systems;
- c. Compiling, analysing, and disseminating best social dialogue practices;
- d. Drafting and disseminating guidelines;
- e. Promoting a diverse economic development model founded on a more even value distribution within the agri-food sector, and a sustainable, inclusive, regulated, and safe agri-food sector.

b. The project phases

- a. In collaboration with Fondazione ADAPT and Fondazione FAI Cisl Studi e ricerche, CNR has conducted documentary research, carried out while consulting scientific and grey literature, and also a knowledge corpus provided by the trade unions and employers' associations involved in the project;





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- b. Meanwhile, with the support of CNR and Fondazione FAI Cisl Studi e ricerche, Fondazione ADAPT has created an online questionnaire and distributed it to social partners in the agro-industrial sector, the results of which have been aggregated.
 - c. The results obtained from the documentary research and qualitative survey have been compiled in the Research report published at the beginning of October 2023.
 - d. Since May 2023, five national workshops have been organised to enable discussion between partners and the in-depth study of national realities, as well the Research report.
 - e. In the meantime, Fondazione FAI Cisl coordinated the implementation and drafting of guidelines, establishing the work plan and defining the various steps to take towards the overarching objective. To achieve this objective, Fondazione has made use of assistance from its scientific committee and other international experts.
 - f. At the request of Fondazione FAI Cisl and the Coordinator, the beneficiaries and affiliated entities have sent written responses to specific questions to Fondazione, in aid of compiling suggestions, insights, and examples of best practices for drafting the guidelines.
 - g. The guidelines were drafted and finalised, to then be presented at the project's final exhibition in Brussels. Their application as of July 2024 will ensure the Project's sustainability, even after its formal conclusion.

1. Social dialogue in the agri-food sector

Social dialogue is a multi-party means of consultation which makes reference to the exchanges between social partners and national and EU public authorities. These exchanges primarily take place within Tripartite Social Summits which cover the themes of macroeconomic dialogue, strategies to stimulate job creation, and improving social protection in terms of education and training. Among the most important locations where these exchanges occur at an EU





level, there is EESC, the European Economic and Social Committee, the place where the results of social dialogue are “metabolised”, rebuilding and exploring the relationship between “intermediate bodies” to discover the synthesis to propose to community institutions. Social dialogue is one of the main elements of the European project, a quality which has become universally recognised and appealing. From the very first steps of the single market and the Treaties of Rome, social dialogue has accompanied the progressive stages of the European project, bestowing a central role upon stakeholders: Employers’ associations and workers’ organisations. It is a European social model, built around centrality of People, and their relationships, thanks to the strong intuition of Europe’s founding fathers: De Gasperi, Schuman and Adenauer.

In particular, social dialogue in the agri-food sector constitutes a broad and comprehensive workspace for trade unions and employers’ associations, not only because of the prime importance that the result of agri-food work offers the economy, such as food, which is an essential element of company culture and life, but equally because, more than any other sector, the agri-food sector is the “trailblazer” for many huge trends of our time. The agri-food sector for one - and therefore the social organisations that represent it - have tackled the problem of migrant labour and its social and legal implications, the issue of inflation and its effects on the industry, the problem of sharing out productive resources, and the issue of representation. All of this is accompanied by the serious issue that is the climate crisis. It concerns issues which require the agri-food sector, in particular, to employ the detailed use of tools such as social dialogue, as a real opportunity for discussion and collective growth.

The prevalent social issues of our century - particularly in Mediterranean countries but also across Europe in general - greatly intertwine in an agricultural sense, making the role of social dialogue all the more necessary as an opportunity for collaboration and negotiation between different stakeholders within the sector. In Europe especially, social dialogue plays an important role in establishing agricultural policies and improving the working conditions and salaries of





agricultural workers, as well as promoting sustainable and competitive farming. Below, readers can enter into the merits of different systems regulating social dialogue, country by country, in both a national and community context, with particular reference made to the agri-food sector.

1.1. Social dialogue in Italy

The trade union density rate in Italy is among the highest in Europe, at 32.5%.

Italy's national legal system has intervened very little in the regulation of labour relations. The Workers' Statute, L. 300/1970 is the most important legislative source in employment law, which establishes its fundamental principles.

The *Protocollo Giugni*, however, institutionalised the Italian collective bargaining system, establishing National Collective Labour Agreements as the main instrument for adjusting the purchasing power of wages to inflation.

In Italy, the main platform for social dialogue within agriculture is the National Roundtable on Agricultural Policies, made up of representatives from the government, agricultural associations, and trade unions. This Roundtable acts as a forum for discussions and negotiations on important issues within the agricultural sector, such as market regulation, research, innovation, and rural development. National collective bargaining is a main point of reference in terms of employment law and industrial relations and, in fact, it has a coverage of around 80%.

In Italy, the main platform for social dialogue within agriculture is the National Roundtable on Agricultural Policies, made up of representatives from the government, agricultural associations, and trade unions. This Roundtable acts as a forum for discussions and negotiations on important issues within the agricultural sector, such as market regulation, research, innovation, and rural development. As for the sector in question, social dialogue plays an important role in agriculture, when it comes to establishing agricultural policies and improving the working conditions and salaries of agricultural workers, and also promoting sustainable and competitive farming. National collective bargaining can also be integrated

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into a second level of bargaining, sometimes negotiated at company level, and most often at local or provincial level too.

The main topics covered by social dialogue are:

- a. Seasonal work, fixed-term contracts, and temporary work;
- b. Measures linked to work-life balance;
- c. Measures to combat labour exploitation.

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The main trade unions within the Italian agricultural sector are: FAI Cisl, FLAI CGIL, and UILA UIL; Confederations representing executives, managers, and those working in agriculture. As for employers' associations there are: Confagricoltura, Coldiretti, and CIA- Agricoltori Italiani.

Negative aspects

Among the negative aspects are:

- a. The lack of *erga omnes* validity of collective agreements, given the absence of a regulation on representation, meaning that there is no comprehensive collective bargaining coverage for workers;
- b. Fragmentation of the sector;
- c. Severe forms of exploitation coercing migrant workers;
- d. Climate change.

1.2. Social dialogue in Bulgaria

In 2022, Bulgaria recorded a trade union density of 15%, and a collective bargaining coverage of 28%.

Social dialogue is governed by national legislation and the regulatory documents associated with it.

Social dialogue and collective bargaining are structured across different levels and involve different stakeholders:

- a. The National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, which the Government, trade unions, and employers' associations are involved in. This council discusses and expresses opinions and views on issues of national importance;





- b. The sectoral/Branch Council, which discusses and expresses views and opinions on issues specific to the sector/branch;
- c. Municipal councils for tripartite cooperation, which discuss and express views on matters of local importance;
- d. Commission for social partnership in businesses, which employers and trade unions are involved in.

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Social dialogue on agriculture takes place at sectoral level within the Council for Tripartite Cooperation at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry. In addition to tripartite cooperation, which is one of the main forms of social dialogue in Bulgaria, social dialogue is also carried out through collective bargaining, workforce participation in the business, and the voluntary settlement of collective labour disputes through direct negotiations and mediation and arbitration procedures.

Art. 2 of the Bulgarian Labour Code lists specific topics on which dialogue is held:

- a. income and employment, working conditions
- b. approval of the collective labour agreement
- c. increase in awareness of workers and employees
- d. motivation of workers and employees to actively participate in work processes
- e. development and strengthening of corporate social responsibility.

The trade unions within the agricultural sector in Bulgaria are FSNZ-KNSB and NFSGZ-KT “Podkrepa”, and as for employers’ associations, there is: the Association of Agricultural Producers in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives, and the Bulgarian Farmers’ Association.

Negative aspects

Among the negative aspects are:

- a. Low trade union density;
- b. Diversity of industries within the sector;





- c. Low level of employment and permanent workforce;
- d. Non-regulated work/shadow economy;
- e. Numerous small collective labour agreements - family farmers and agricultural holdings;
- f. High percentage of self-employed and family workers;
- g. Clear seasonality of agricultural work;
- h. Lack of a sole employers' association which covers all sectors, but equally numerous employers' associations which are not well-structured and hinder social dialogue being able to take place;
- i. Low level of trade union organisation.

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1.3. Social dialogue in France

In 2019, France recorded a trade union density of 8.9%, which was among the lowest in Europe; but on the other hand, collective bargaining coverage reached 97.7%.

Social partners operate across various levels, including national, regional, sectoral, and company, all of which with different dialogue and negotiation structures.

If negotiations are obligatory, the same cannot be said for reaching an agreement. If this does not happen, employers can implement unilateral decisions; there are however penalties for those who do not take part in negotiations.

Following the 2017 reform, company-level agreements now take precedence over sectoral agreements in many thematic areas, although there are some exceptions.

In order to ensure that the provisions of the agreements are binding for all the businesses which fall within the scope of the agreement (professional and local), two conditions must be met:

- a. the signatory parties must be structured as trade unions or employers' associations;





- b. the trade unions or employers' associations in question must be representative within the relevant sector.

Law 2008/789 introduced main criteria in terms on the basis of which a trade union can be considered representative:

- a. general criteria (respect for republican values, independence, financial transparency, seniority, influence, trade union membership and contributions);
- b. To be considered representative at company level, a trade union must win at least 10% of the votes in employee representative elections at company level, and 8% of the votes at sectoral and cross-industry level.

In France, social partners interact both formally and informally with international stakeholders, participating in tripartite organisations such as CNNC (National Collective Bargaining Commission), CNE (National Employment Council), and CNFPTLV (National Council for Lifelong Vocational Training). Tripartite bodies are extremely active at federal level, but their role is more so to "safeguard" and remedy in the event of conflict within strictly private sectors.

The main thematic areas for social dialogue in France are:

- a. Pay;
- b. Gender equality;
- c. Working conditions, human resources, and career development;
- d. Exposure to occupational risks;
- e. Workers with disabilities;
- f. Professional development;
- g. Job classification;
- h. Employee saving schemes;
- i. Arrangements for organising part-time work.

The trade unions within the agricultural sector in France are CGT AGRI, CFTD Agri Agro, CFTC-Agri, CFE-CGC Agro, FO-Agriculture, while on the employers' side there is: FNSEA, FNEDT, ETARD, FNB, UNEP.





Negative aspects

The negative aspects include:

- a. Legislative complexity;
- b. Low union density among workers and employers;
- c. Since 2016, the “reversal of the norm-hierarchy” principle has been in place, for which some bargaining no longer applies, and local bargaining prevails over that of its national counterpart.

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1.4. Social dialogue in Greece

Greece has a trade union density of 19%. As for collective bargaining coverage, it has fallen from 65% before the crisis, to 10% at present.

A modernised social dialogue model in Greece has been under development since the 1990s, when the government finally agreed to consult with social partners.

There are different laws within the Greek legal system that regulate social dialogue and, particularly after the financial crisis in 2008, several laws were adopted and implemented to strictly regulate its different elements. Overall, contrary to the reality in most EU countries, Greek social dialogue is heavily regulated by the government.

One of the most evident examples of the radical change that the Greek industrial relations system has undergone was the shift from a collectively bargained minimum wage to a statutory minimum wage system - as a result of the Troika interventions.

In Greece social dialogue is conducted in the following ways:

1. National collective bargaining which involves private sector employee representatives (GSEE – General Confederation of Greek Workers) and representatives from employers' associations and national public authorities;
2. Negotiations between federations and sectoral trade unions;
3. Negotiations at company level.





The tripartite discussion between trade union and employer representatives often comes to an end due to vetoes. In Greece, there is a Public Mediation and Arbitration Service (OMED) which could be called upon in such cases to overcome deadlock situations.

With L. 4024/2011, the government stated that if there is no trade union within the company (20 is the minimum number of people required to form a trade union), an association (made up of at least 5 people) of individuals could conclude collective agreements. This provision had a negative impact on the very foundations of collective bargaining and social dialogue in Greece, inviting the possibility to bypass representative trade unions in order to bargain directly with employee representatives.

More recently, with the arrival of law 4808/2021, the Greek government has established the creation of a database with a general Employee Trade Union Registry managed by the Ministry of Labour. With this law, trade unions are required to register themselves with this database in order to obtain legal status.

The most popular topics covered are:

- a. wage levels and working conditions;
- b. the shortage of seasonal workers;
- c. the high cost of inputs in agricultural holdings;
- d. green transition;
- e. digital transition;

The National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (ETHEAS) is made up of representatives from agricultural cooperatives and sectoral organisations at national and EU level, and is a member of the Copa Cogeca (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations – General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives). Promoting the interests of the agricultural sector, negotiating, and concluding collective agreements for workers in agricultural cooperative organisations at all levels. ETHEAS has contributed to the revision of the Regulation on the financing, management, and monitoring of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Conducting studies, work, research, and agreements





for projects or services related to agricultural development in general, and particularly cooperative development, and disseminating scientific information to farmers, promoting the innovation and digitisation of farms and delivery networks for agricultural products, and acting a mouthpiece for farmers in Greece.

One of the main issues concerning social dialogue in Greece is the unsatisfactory National Collective Agreement in the private sector, which constitutes a low minimum wage, and a low daily minimum wage.

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Negative aspects

The negative aspects include:

- a. Trade union density rate;
- b. Uninsured and undeclared workers;
- c. Fragmentation of the agricultural sector;
- d. Small family-run agricultural holdings with members of the family as employers;
- e. Lack of chambers of agriculture acting as institutional bodies;
- f. Lack of professional development in agriculture - adaptation to new technologies;
- g. Lack of prevention of occupational risks;
- h. Exploitation of migrant workers;
- i. Absence of national agricultural policy;
- j. Lack of law enforcement regulating job contracts;
- k. L. 4808/2021 hinders the operation of trade unions themselves and their ability to exercise their rights;
- l. In 2022, a law was approved which allowed employers to prohibit the creation of trade unions within their own companies, requiring members to be entered into a database.





1.5. Social dialogue in North Macedonia

In 2019, North Macedonia recorded a trade union density of 16.7%; when it comes to collective bargaining coverage the figure changes in the private sector - where a coverage of 68.7% is recorded - or in the public sector - the rate is much lower, equal to 31.5%.

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Legislation establishes that only those trade unions and workers' organisations who meet the representation criteria, namely that constitute a certain share of workers that are members of unions (or employers' associations), have the right to enter into collective bargaining and to conclude collective agreements.

Since 2010, four types of representativeness based on different levels of social dialogue have been in force; on a national level, the minimum threshold for trade union representation is at least 10% of the total number of employees in North Macedonia who pay trade union membership fees, at least 5% for employers' associations.

The Law on labour relations governs the national regulatory framework for industrial relations and the functioning of social dialogue on a bipartite and tripartite level.

The SSM - Federation of Trade Unions of Macedonia affirms that, in order for there to be an effective tripartite consultation, employee and employer representatives, above all, should enjoy the right to freedom of association and equality to express their interests, and defend them with arguments and counterarguments. Tripartite social dialogue partners can include the civil society in which it is required, that is when a consensus needs to be reached on issues outside the sphere of labour (such as environmental protection or the needs of specific or vulnerable groups). Experts and the civil society sector can take part in interparty social dialogue at a national level, contributing to finding a compromise in cases where social partners cannot reach a consensus on certain issues.





As for bipartite social dialogue, at branch (sectoral) or employer level, the main objective is to encourage consensus building between the main actors in the working world.

Agro-Sindikata is the only representing trade union with a collective bargaining licence in the agri-food sector; in terms of employers, the only legitimate association to take part in bargaining is OEM - *The Organisation of Employers in Macedonia*.

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Negative aspects

Some of the negative aspects are

- a. Political interference;
- b. State intervention;
- c. Fewer employers' associations and trade unions;
- d. Collective agreements in obsolete sectors;
- e. Fragmentation and dispersion.

1.6. Social dialogue in Spain

Spain's trade union density is 12.4%; their collective bargaining coverage, however, reaches 91%.

The Spanish Constitution appears to recognise social dialogue as a pillar of the Spanish state. This aside, there are then several laws that regulate social dialogue.

The rights and obligations related to labour relations are regulated by collective agreements, and individual contracts which cannot, in any way, derogate from national laws and collective agreements.

Organic Law 11/1985²⁶ defines the concept of the “most representative” union, which in the Spanish context is particularly important since such unions are those entitled to sign binding agreements at national, local, and company level. The negotiating commission will be validly constituted when the unions, federations, or confederations and employers' associations referred to in the previous article





represent at least, respectively, the absolute majority of the members of the company committees and staff representatives, as applicable, and the employers who recruit the majority of the workers affected by the agreement. For economic, technical, organisational, or productivity reasons, employer and employee representatives can suspend the conditions of the collective agreement, whether at sectoral or company level, within a certain company, in relation to: a) the working day; b) the schedule and distribution of working time; c) the shift work regime; d) the remuneration system and salary; e) the work and performance system; f) the functions; and g) the voluntary improvements in the protective action of social security.

In Spain, an instance occurs in which the majority held by a government is larger, and there is a greater tendency for the government to implement legislation which has not been negotiated with social partners.

The January 2023 labour reform has simplified procedures, solidifying the advantage of both sectoral and company bargaining. Obligatory trade union participation in certain negotiations is also sanctioned (equality plans, training, etc.), but the economic resources to deem it enforceable are often lacking. There has been an almost 40% increase in the minimum interprofessional wage as a result of tripartite social dialogue in Spain.

The most popular topics covered are:

- a. Employment - unemployment;
- b. Wages;
- c. Precarious work;
- d. Health and safety;
- e. Sustainable development.

The trade unions within the Spanish agricultural sector are CCOO Industria, and UGT FICA.





1.7. Social dialogue in Europe

At European level, social dialogue is legally regulated by Articles 152, 154, and 155 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). These articles provide a reference framework and basic principles for its functioning, which have been further developed in a series of communications and decisions from the Commission.

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To be recognised as a social actor, an association must be organised at European level and must be able to participate in consultations and the negotiation of agreements. Furthermore, associations must be representative of the greatest number of EU Member states possible, while their national members must be recognised as social partners in the respective countries. The representation of associations is evaluated by Eurofound, the EU agency in charge of researching living and working conditions, via specific studies at regular intervals. EFFAT is the only representative trade union federation at European level for those employed in the agriculture, food, and drinks industry.

European social dialogue concerns discussions, consultations, negotiations, and joint actions which involve associations which represent the two sides of the industry (employers and employees). This takes on two main forms:

- a. a tripartite dialogue which involves public authorities;
- b. a bipartite dialogue between EU employers' associations and trade unions. This occurs at interprofessional level and in the context of sectoral social dialogue committees.

The bipartite form refers to autonomous dialogue between employers' and employees' associations. This occurs within inter-sectoral and sectoral social dialogue committees, established in accordance with the autonomy of social partners. Social partner organisations must submit a joint request to the European Commission in order to participate in social dialogue at European level.





Currently, there are 43 sectoral social dialogue committees, with 66 sectoral employers' associations, and 15 sectoral employees' associations. There are three sectoral social dialogue committees within the agri-food industry:

- a. in the agricultural sector, between EFFAT and GEOPA-COPA, founded in 1999 and currently focused on CAP, professional development, seasonal workers, and health and safety issues;
- b. in the food and drink industry, between EFFAT and FoodDrinkEurope, which currently focuses on CAP, competitiveness, and sustainable employment (employability and ageing of the work force), food taxes;
- c. in the sugar sector, between EFFAT and the European Association of Sugar Manufacturers, which is comparing the future of the conditions of the EU sugar sector, and the social implications, corporate social responsibility, evaluation of the Sugar Code of Conduct in consideration of ISO standard 26000, and new United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as the main external/internal challenges facing the EU sugar sector.

European tripartite social dialogue involves EU institutions (Commission and, if applicable, European Council) and social partners. This particularly takes place within the Tripartite Social Summit and facilitates discussions on various policy areas, such as macroeconomics, employment, social protection, education, and training.

The Tripartite Social Summit unites the President of the European Council, the Presidency of the Council, and the two following presidencies, the Commission and social partners. There are also ministers from the three presidencies and the Director-General in charge of employment and social affairs. The Summit takes place in the inter-sectoral dialogue context. Then, on the agenda, there are issues which concern all sectors of the economy and workers within the European Union.

Social dialogue at European level also takes place at company level. The main forums are the European Works Council (EWC) based on an EU directive





adopted in 1997 (and revised in 2009) with the main objective of providing workers with information and consultations on transnational issues. Over 60 transnational company agreements on EWCs have been signed on issues such as: restructuring; corporate social responsibility (CSR); equality; and health and safety. In recent years, EFFAT has founded European Works Councils within more than 100 transnational groups.





2. Chapter 2

Collective bargaining in the agri-food chain supported by social dialogue: examples of excellence

2.1. Best bargaining practices in Italy

a. The bilateralism system

Bilateral entities founded at local level (EBAT), and national level (EBAN) deal with different topics and provide health services which complement those offered by Italy's National Health Service to agricultural and floricultural workers. Insurance coverage applies in the event of illness, and also covers medical fees for injuries. Mutual legal assistance and income support are also compensated. In migration, bargaining tends to ease difficult situations with tools which facilitate integration, job security, and the knowledge of contractual rights through bilateralism. Also, the agricultural workers sector has been adapted through its inclusion in the latest national renewal in July 2021, within a specific article on bilateralism, and also through a variety of tasks such as, for example: activities on health and safety at work, promotional activities for employment opportunities, and gender politics for agricultural frameworks and workers, promotional activities for best practices against discrimination and the inclusion of the most disadvantaged; activities and/or services based on welfare and income support identified by specific agreements stipulated by institutional bodies, and additional agreements deemed suitable for improving trade union relations.

b. Two-tier bargaining

Disjointedness at provincial level better captures the particularities, needs, and obligations of businesses and workers in terms of salary, welfare, and contractual safeguarding. The decentralised territorial agreement takes a snapshot of the territory with its peculiarities.

c. Institute of "conventions"





The establishment of the Conventions set out in Article 28 of the National Collective Agreements in Work for agricultural and floricultural workers has the effect of finding new and more effective ways of retaining workers.

- d. Statement of agreement - Working hours during the summer months - Risk of Heat Stroke

An agreement between Confagricoltura Verona, Coldiretti Verona, the Italian Confederation of Farmers in Verona, Fai Cisl, Flai Cgil, and Uila Uil to prevent heatstroke was signed on 20 June 2023, in Rome. The agreement has brought national legislation forward by several months and has then been replicated within numerous other provincial realities.

- e. Accademia della Vigna

The Accademia della Vigna aims to bring together virtuous companies and migrant workers, supporting training and procuring a qualified workforce.

2.2. Best bargaining practices in Bulgaria

- a. Trilateral cooperation;
- b. Regular participation in meetings with the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture;
- c. Targeted bilateral negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture in specific cases;
- d. Annual involvement of trade unions in Budget Law procedure, during which their own declarations and requests are presented;
- e. Enhancement of digital communication, social media, and the media environment in general.

This element provides new opportunities to concentrate on issues among agricultural workers;

- f. National Council on Labour Migration and Labour Mobility

This is a tripartite organisation built on labour market policies;

- g. FNSZ is an active partner in various projects alongside the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies and the General Labour Inspectorate, and is actively





involved in the development of policies, programmes, discussions, and training workshops on seasonal workers' rights. This is also a system used to make contact with private agricultural holdings and the workers employed by them;

h. Transnational networks and international cooperation

For over 20 years, a cross-border cooperation has existed between Bulgaria and other European countries, with a focus on migrant workers from south-east Europe and Bulgaria. This cooperation has led to the discovery of effective solutions in aid of greater protection, information, and assistance for workers who partake in labour migration. Various bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed, numerous information and consultation projects have been implemented, action on the ground to meet migrant workers has been organised, and printed manuals and videos on the rights of migrant workers have been prepared.

i. Social partners within the brewery industry have adopted regulations to improve workers' skills, including employees' digital skills, by means of various collective agreements in the sector. Sectoral training within the brewing industry has been organised by specialist training organisations but also in collaboration with academic institutions.

2.3. Best bargaining practices in France

- a. Special procedures to facilitate the conclusion of company agreements within businesses with less than 50 employees, where there are no trade union representatives;
- b. The government has the power to apply sectoral agreements to all employers within the sector or to extend them to other industries or similar regions;
- c. Industrial tribunals to resolve individual disputes between employers and employees;
- d. Social and Economic Committee (ESC)





The ESC plays a part in and has important prerogatives regarding working conditions (besides safety, which is already an obligation for the employer to fulfil pursuant to employment law). Employee representatives within the ESC can then address the issue of quality of life at work, and trade unions can negotiate agreements on this topic (at all levels). When there is a number of employees equal to or greater than 300, the ESC must establish a Committee for health, safety, and working conditions, which meets regularly to deal with any problems related to the issues raised by employee representatives or highlighted by employees. In terms of important projects which could impact working conditions, the employer is required to inform and consult the ESC before implementing such projects;

e. Property benefits which are also for employers with less than 50 employees. A similar initiative is also planned for socio-cultural activities;

f. Certificates of Professional Qualification (CPQ)

A CPQ is a qualification created and awarded by social partners within the sector and certifies the professional qualification attached to a job; Every employee that has obtained a CPQ and who holds the corresponding position is then ranked at a skill level recognised by the collective agreement.

g. Regenerative agriculture.

2.4. Best bargaining practices in Greece

a. Agricultural cooperatives

Agricultural cooperatives are members of agricultural cooperatives at local or branch level, which in turn are members of the National Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (ETHEAS).

To compensate for the weak bargaining power and large number of small agricultural holdings, farmers give their crops to agricultural cooperatives who then negotiate prices and have facilities to store and preserve crops, packing houses, and processing facilities, etc.





- b. ETHEAS is a member of Copa Cogena (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations – General Confederation of Agricultural Cooperatives) and it disseminates scientific information to farmers, promotes the innovation and digitisation of farms and delivery networks for agricultural products, and acts as a mouthpiece for farmers in Greece.
- c. Institute of Agricultural Sciences (IAS)

The IAS supports agricultural development, providing courses which cover different areas of the agro-industry, tailored to in-person situations and virtual platforms which worked particularly well during the pandemic.

2.5. Best bargaining practices in North Macedonia

- a. Tripartite cooperation

It is a modern model for the prevention and resolution of social conflicts to prevent disputes before they get worse, contributing to social stability.

- b. *Enhancing land consolidation in North Macedonia*

The project aims to address the issue of agricultural land fragmentation and increase the competitiveness of agricultural output within the country.

- c. *MAINLAND- Mainstreaming of the National Land Consolidation Programme*

MAINLAND is a project co-financed by the European Union and the FAO - Food and Agriculture Organisation, introduced to improve competitiveness within the agricultural sector in the Republic of North Macedonia, in line with the European Union accession criteria.

- d. Land consolidation

This is a land management tool which allows farmers to cultivate a smaller number of larger, better structured plots, in aid of more efficient management.

- e. Restructuring of territory

Important in terms of environmental efforts and achieving the sustainable use of the territory.





2.6. Best bargaining practices in Spain

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- a. Creation of a reserve fund to ensure the future of pensions, the increase in minimum wage, and the strategy for health and safety at work;
- b. Introduction of the *dignity* concept within the pensions reform. No pension can be below the poverty threshold;
- c. Creation of the Coca-Cola permanent dialogue table for Spain and Portugal;
- d. The collective agreement cannot cease to apply if the parties do not meet to discuss it;
- e. V Agreement for Employment and Collective Bargaining, V AENC)
Agreement for employment and collective bargaining which states that there can be no loss in the purchase value;
- f. Inspection campaign
UGT has filed complaints to shed light on infringements, and unlawful practices which are finally emerging;
- g. Article 64 of the Workers' Statute
This article entails employee representatives' right to information and consultation;
- h. Agreement between the General State Administration, Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Immigration, and the most representative associations and trade unions within the agricultural sector.
The objective of the agreement is to facilitate a collaboration between the signatory entities to ensure the effective management of migration flows of the internal and external workforce within the agricultural sector, in such a way that required workers are available any time and anywhere, to ensure that labour and immigration law, and working and living conditions are respected, where necessary, and to provide sufficient information and advice on social and workers' rights and obligations. The Central Commission for migration flows during seasonal campaigns and the provincial Commissions within which representatives from the





organisations signing the agreement are involved, were founded on the basis of this agreement;

i. Joint sectoral committees for training

These are part of the governance structure of the Employment training system and are institutional participation bodies within employers' associations and trade unions within the training sector. They are also founded via collective and specific agreements and are composed of the most representative employers and trade unions, and trade unions in collective bargaining at national level;

j. Prevention of occupational risks

A group of agricultural workers has been formed within the National Institute for Safety and Health at Work, which is composed of agricultural organisations, trade unions, and public authorities, both at a national and Autonomous Community level. The objective of this work group is to study and monitor the enforcement of preventative regulations within the agricultural sector, and it focuses on studying the most common causes of work-related injuries and illnesses within the agricultural sector, as well as the drafting of proposals in aid of developing the effective prevention of occupational risks within the agricultural sector;

k. Food Chain Observatory

This is a collegial body, linked to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Food. The Observatory creates a price setting training knowledge framework along the whole agri-food chain, publishing objective data and conducting studies and reports which allow the price of agricultural produce to be systematically monitored. In this sense, it aims to promote the transparency and efficiency of the distribution process, pinpointing potential situations where there are product price imbalances along the whole supply chain;

l. National Rural Network (NRN)

The NRN is a platform composed of authorities (state, regional, and local), social and economic agents, and civil society representatives and





research bodies linked to rural areas. Its main objective is to promote rural development. There are six thematic lines along which the NRN work: depopulation, the environmental and climate change, dynamism and entrepreneurship, young people and generational change, innovation, and women in rural areas. A group of nine individuals, known as “Regional Antennas” work on site with Autonomous Communities to learn about their different needs, and ensure a greater presence of the NRN within the territory.

2.7. Best bargaining practices in Europe

a. EU Social Dialogue Liaison Forum

The Forum unites social partners at intersectoral and sectoral level to provide information and discuss cross-cutting issues with the goal of enhancing synergies between the sectors. The Forum also provides a platform to present joint initiatives with social partners and share best practices, or discuss common challenges;

b. Article 154 of the TFEU requires the European Commission to consult social partners regarding any EU initiative related to social affairs via a two-stage formal procedure, before presenting legislative proposals;

c. Article 154 provides for a compulsory two-stage consultation procedure: in the first stage the Commission consults the social partners on the possible direction of an initiative, whilst in the second stage, the focus is on the content of an initiative. This process allows EU social partners to directly influence the drafting of social proposals. Furthermore, during this phase, social partners can suspend the Commission's initiative and decide to begin negotiations. If neither of the two consultation phases lead to a decision from the social partners to begin bipartite negotiations, while the Commission continues to consider community action to be preferable, they will undertake preparations towards a legislative proposal. The consultations are limited to organisations representing the social partners, pursuant to Article 154;





- d. EU social partners are consulted by Commission services on development at European Union level in all sectors which have social implications (such as business, the single market, education, industrial policies, or transport);
- e. EU social partners are consulted to provide detailed evidence and expertise for the sector, including data and other technical aspects, contributing to the quality of the impact assessment and the decision-making process;
- f. The social partners are autonomous in their work and dialogue, which can be facilitated by the Commission;
- g. Every Directorate General within the European Commission has a nominated Social Dialogue Coordinator within their department, who acts as a point of entry and contact for social partners on the issues which fall within the expertise of the corresponding Directorate General. All the social dialogue coordinators make up a network which is led and managed by the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs in charge of social dialogue.
- h. During the Val Duchesse Social Partners' Summit on 31 January 2024, the European Commission, the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and the EU social partners signed a "Tripartite declaration for a thriving European social dialogue". In order to promote and strengthen the role of social dialogue at EU and national level, the European Commission will establish a dedicated delegate for European social dialogue. The Declaration also initiates a process towards the establishment of a Treaty for European social dialogue. A series of tripartite and bipartite meetings will be held with EU social partners to highlight new proposals in order to strengthen European social dialogue. The objective is to conclude the Treaty by early 2025.





3. Chapter 3

New industrial relations in a new Europe: common guidelines of the EATS project

3.1. Promote workforce participation

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The need for the European Union to invigorate itself and become more powerful is there for all to see, regaining a starring role on the world stage. The conflict in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict require Europe to reclaim a powerful role in asserting its own values and principles both externally and internally. To do this however, Europe must reinvent itself, its way of being. It needs a new pro-European beginning in other words.

Within its history, the European integration project has pinpointed the moment to relaunch itself, when faced with the toughest crises and at the most challenging times, when the same project seemed to have hit a stumbling block. It is right at the heart of the main challenges that we need to bear in mind, if we hope for the Europe of Schuman, De Gasperi, and Adenauer to rediscover itself at last, and know how to relaunch once again, having innovated itself. This is the case for the answer that the European Union knew to give to the world as the Covid-19 pandemic was spreading. At that time, EU institutions and national governments knew to work as a team, rediscovering a renewed sense of sharing with others and solidarity, unanimously adopting the best measures to safeguard the entire EU community and not just their own share of it. The response that the European Union knew to give in that instance led us to believe in an awareness in the spirit of sharing with others. An ideal principle which in the years immediately before seemed to have been clouded by rigid obsession in terms of budgetary accounts, so defensive as to risk restoring the EU economy during the shallows of the recession. The progress that Europe made during the pandemic emergency must not be conceived as a simple pause, but a necessary step towards a new constituent phase.





Visualising and constructing a regenerated “New Europe” after the crises it has experienced, means returning to its roots and placing Human dignity at the centre once again. Both the Covid-19 pandemic and the strong measures to restrict the individual liberty that Europe and the nation states are capable of implementing without excessively constricting constitutional rights, however fundamental, have demonstrated that the old Continent still has the capacity within it to place Human dignity at the forefront of its own actions. In order to move along this ideal trajectory, it is necessary to proceed along the outlined path and equally broaden this dimension to other areas of our country's economic life, outside the emergency context. Establishing the centrality of Human dignity within the work or business context actually means promoting the leading role of workers within the labour organisation; for this to happen, it is necessary to experiment with the company's participatory organisational models as well as with the forms of labour representation. In fact, only through dialogue is it possible to draw on necessary resources, in aid of managing a transition as complex as the one awaiting us.

The decision to entrust the economic development of EU economies mainly to the action of free private enterprise at the end of the Second World War includes within it, as a direct consequence, the need to construct a set of regulations aimed at ensuring that businesses themselves are contributing to the overall development of society. Such regulations are built upon a vision of a society in which each individual contributes to collective development and individual emancipation through their own work. Work is then not only a tool used to earn enough to survive, but instead the means through which you can achieve the growth of individuals as people. A vision of “active” citizenship which seamlessly integrates with the values of the European Union.

For this reason, participative organisational models are essential in order to experiment within companies, and also in the form of labour representation. In fact, only through dialogue is it possible to draw on necessary resources, in aid of managing a transition as complex as the one awaiting us. Employee





participation in company life presents noteworthy potential applications. The participation can in fact be “managerial”, which foresees types of joint management on supervisory and administrative boards. A means which would be made possible through the inclusion of at least one employee representative from the company on the Board. The participation can also be “financial”, and therefore dedicated to governing the distribution of profits to workers through regulating employees’ contractual access to share plans released together with the possibility, on behalf of shareholders-employees, of entrusting voting rights to specific trusts, for collective management of their own rights arising from financial participation. The participation can then be “organisational” which means involving workers in innovative projects which improve the efficiency of the productive processes in which they are involved. The participation can finally be “consultative” and then develop itself according to the right to trade union representation, to be consulted in a preventative and obligatory way.

Workforce participation in company life constitutes a key element to reconcile work and capital, solidarity and competitiveness, and company and territory. Through innovative and collaborative industrial relations, it is possible to create an environment in which employees and employers actively collaborate with one another in aid of mutual benefit and the company’s progression in the broader context of the local community.

Workforce participation not only contributes to improving organisational climate and internal cohesion, but can also lead to an improvement in business performance and market competitiveness. Workers who feel involved and valued tend to be more motivated, committed, and productive, which can have a positive impact on the company’s financial results and reputation.

Moreover, workforce participation can help to foster a greater sense of belonging and responsibility within the company and the local community. When workers are involved in company decision-making and daily activities,





they consider themselves an integral part of the decision-making process and are more likely to work towards the long-term success of the company.

Industrial relations surrounding workforce participation must be founded on the principles of freedom, fairness, and reciprocity. They must be able to drive value for both parties involved, fostering a climate of trust and collaboration which favours innovation, growth, and sustainable development.

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Workforce participation in company life is essential in order to create a synergistic relationship between work and capital, solidarity and competitiveness. Through innovative and generative industrial relations, we can build a future in which companies prosper together with their employees and the community in which they operate.

In order to achieve this goal, major investments will be made in staff training along the company's whole supply chain. Workers must be given the necessary tools to study, understand, and even manage changes which occur along the company's whole supply chain. The "era change" that we are undergoing requires renewed, direct involvement of workers who are entering a new season of participation and centrality at work. Besides simple advice, the aforementioned participation must become a well-established means of labour organisation, in order to jointly manage both challenges and opportunities. Only through the dissemination of participative organisational models, harboured by targeted training programmes, can we successfully manage the complex transition facing the agri-food sector in order to contribute to finally increasing wages.

3.2. Encourage the integration of foreign workers

The European integration project finds itself at the forefront off one of the greatest challenges in the present day: the immense migration flow that our continent has witnessed the increase of in recent years. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people, both those of working age and minors, cross the European Union's southern and eastern borders illegally, seeking employment





opportunities which offer decent conditions. This entails a “silent army” of workers driven by the economic crises in their host countries, the serious consequences of climate change, such as drought or famine, or the ongoing military conflicts.

The management of this migration process requires a careful and balanced approach from the European Union, that takes into account both the moral obligation to provide help and hospitality, and the chance to offer tangible integration opportunities and a reasonable amount of work. It is essential to lead the integration of foreign workers wisely, ensuring better living conditions than those they left behind in their home country.

A strategy could be the implementation of an incentive scheme for employment in the agri-food sector, which fosters integration and accommodates the need for a seasonal workforce in a constantly struggling sector, with the objective of ensuring unrestricted and dignified employment for all employed workers. A secure and fair job alone can be a vehicle for emancipation and a means of integration, contributing towards breaking down linguistic and ethnic barriers.

National and European trade unions play a key role in managing this process of change within the labour market. On the one hand, they must renew their efforts in combating illicit brokering within the workforce and prosecuting the exploitation of foreign workers. On the other hand, they must bravely invest in integration processes, promoting encounter, listening, and dialogue between workers and developing suitable tools in order to prevent the creation of inner cities, both formally and informally, within national bargaining.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the importance of international cooperation and solidarity between the European Union’s member states, when managing this common challenge. The sharing of responsibilities and resources can contribute towards ensuring an effective and humanitarian response to the migration phenomenon, promoting cohesion and integration within the Union at the same time.





It is imperative that the European Union adopts inclusive policies based on human rights principles to tackle the migration phenomenon. It is crucial to recognise the positive contribution that migrants can make to our society and economy, not only in terms of cultural diversity and social enrichment, but also with regard to labour market contribution and economic growth.

Only through an integrated and sympathetic approach can we hope to overcome the challenges posed by migration. This requires a joint effort on both EU and international level, to deal with the underlying causes of migration, among which are poverty, conflicts, climate change, and violations of human rights in host countries.

At the same time, it is essential to safeguard the protection and integration of migrants who arrive on European soil, ensuring their access to essential services, fundamental rights, and opportunities to actively participate in the social and economic life of the host communities.

A Europe which embraces diversity and promotes the social and economic inclusion of all its citizens, including migrants, is a stronger, more cohesive Europe. Through policies which respect human rights and promote solidarity, we can build a fairer, more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

In the long term, it is also essential to invest in cooperation and development in the migrants' host countries, thus creating job opportunities and sustainable development on the ground, reducing the migration pressure, and contributing to overall stability. The promotion of peace, human rights, and economic and social development must remain at the centre of the European Union and its member states' political agenda, as part of an overall commitment to build a world which is fairer and more inclusive for all.

3.3. Support the aggregation of companies and their organisation within the sector

21st century industrial relations are at the heart of a titanic struggle, which reflects the profound transformations in labour organisation and corporate





dynamics. This century has witnessed a significant, radical, and global breakthrough, the roots of which already date back to the middle of the previous century. Only now, however, is it seen to great effect, uncovering the intricate details and the profound implications of this seismic shift.

This alternation does not only concern material production, but above all its orchestration on a global scale. It is an evolution which goes beyond the individual dimension of work, to touch the heart of collective relations and the dynamics of representation. The traditional industrial relations categories and divisions are called to question, while collective representation takes on a new transnational and multinational dimension.

The “Global value chains” emerge as a main form of business coordination across an increasingly interconnected landscape. This model not only influences the practical organisation of production, but also the nature of the collective representation of workers itself.

The global value chains outline a new economic geography, in which competition and cooperation interact with one another on a global scale. However, this new production frontier is not without its challenges. Its dissemination has created inequalities and imbalances within the sector, with significant impacts on the agri-food sector in particular. The often unfavourable competition and reduced freedom to conduct a business in certain contexts, sheds light on the need for coordinated and strategic action.

In this context, trade unions must reinvent themselves. They must adopt innovative approaches which move within and along the Global value chains with ease. It is fundamental to operate across several fronts at the same time: on the one hand, intervening on a local level to counteract the fragmentation and heterogeneity of the agricultural sector; while on the other hand maintaining a global perspective and coordination to deal with the complex and interconnected challenges of economic globalisation.





The main objective is ensuring the effective representation of workers, equally in contexts characterised by long and complex supply chains. This implies the need for synergistic action between the trade unions, greater consumer awareness, and robust support from EU and national institutions.

Trade unions must actively collaborate in order to develop strategies and tools which allow for the significant representation of workers along the whole value chain. This may include the creation of transnational trade union networks and the promotion of sectoral agreements which establish minimum working standards and dignified conditions along global supply chains.

At the same time, consumers play an important role in promoting greater social responsibility on behalf of companies. Consumer awareness concerning ethical and sustainable production practices can influence purchase decisions and steer companies in the direction more responsible behaviour towards workers along the supply chain.

EU and national institutions must play an active part in supporting and promoting these initiatives. The investments laid out in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan constitute a unique opportunity to strengthen supply chains and foster greater equity and sustainability in the agri-food sector and in other key sectors of the economy.

By means of a synergistic collaboration between trade unions, consumers, and institutions, it is possible to create a fairer, more sustainable working environment along the global supply chain. This not only benefits workers, but also contributes towards the promotion of economic prosperity and social well-being on a global scale.

Ultimately, 21st century industrial relations must address this new global reality with seriousness and determination. It is essential to be resilient, creative, and change-oriented, to ensure that workers are represented and safeguarded effectively, in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.





Adaptability is fundamental in facing up to emerging challenges and the constantly evolving dynamics of the industrial landscape. This calls for a pragmatic approach and a desire to explore new strategies and ways of managing relationships between employees, employers, and institutions.

Resilience is indispensable when it comes to resisting external pressures in order to find creative and innovative solutions to problems that present themselves. Industrial relations must be able to face challenges with determination and decisiveness, protecting workers' rights and interests at all times.

Creativity is a key element for developing new solutions and approaches which can respond to the ever-changing demands of the world of work. This can include developing new forms of trade union representation, promoting innovative agreements between employees and employers, and adopting cutting-edge work management strategies.

All in all, a willingness to change is crucial for anticipating and adapting to changing realities in the global industrial panorama. Industrial relations must be proactive in seeking opportunities to improve and constantly innovate, to ensure that workers are adequately protected and represented.

Facing the challenges of 21st century industrial relations requires commitment, dedication, and a serious and responsible vision. Only through a serious and determined approach can we ensure a fair and sustainable future for workers in an ever-changing world of work.

The priority is counteracting fragmentation and heterogeneity within the agricultural sector. This is an absolute necessity if we wish to reduce production costs and lower price increases which have put strain on the salaries of those working in agri-food in recent years.

Above all, it is about facilitating our trade unions' capacity to effectively represent the workers of today who are scattered along the fragmented and disorganised value chain. Consumer awareness and strong EU investments in





industries (such as NRP) are important and decisive tools in achieving this objective.

3.4. Requesting greater social dialogue on behalf of institutions

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Every social organisation has to invest resources and significant efforts into actively promoting social dialogue as a key means of communication, collaboration, and negotiation between different social and institutional stakeholders. It is essential to understand that social dialogue is not simply an opportunity to foster European integration, but also a powerful tool for constructive coordination with the world of production and work.

Social dialogue draws its strength from active participation and competent representation of intermediate bodies, which are required to interact with one another and with institutions in order to promote the common good and face forthcoming challenges. It is particularly imperative that social dialogue concentrates on important ecological and social issues, for which public sector engagement and support are crucial, both for establishing effective regulations and acting as a primary stakeholder in decision-making.

These vitally important issues include ecological transition, environmental sustainability, food sovereignty focused on land conservation, biodiversity, and rural areas, as well as health and security in response to the climate crisis and territorial changes. Facing these challenges requires a joint and coordinated effort from all individuals involved in social dialogue.

Moreover, it is fundamental that social dialogue is based on the careful evaluation of the interests and needs of all concerned parties, seeking balanced and sustainable solutions which can effectively face up to current and future challenges. Only through constructive cooperation and shared commitment can we hope to achieve meaningful results in the management of the complex environmental and social issues that we are facing.





Social dialogue must be characterised by a profound sensitivity towards the interests and needs of all concerned parties. It is fundamental to foster an inclusive and fair approach which allows every voice to be heard and considered in the decision-making process. This requires continual effort to find solutions which can balance out various perspectives and guarantee fair and sustainable results.

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Building effective social dialogue also calls for investment in the creation of spaces and mechanisms which foster active participation and transparency. It is important to ensure that information is accessible to all stakeholders, and that there is a real opportunity to make a significant contribution to the decision-making process. Only by creating an inclusive and open environment can we engender trust and collaboration between the different stakeholders.

Finally, the success of social dialogue also depends on our capacity to adapt and evolve in the face of changing circumstances and new challenges that emerge over time. It is important to be flexible and ready to explore new means of collaboration and negotiation that can effectively respond to the demands and aspirations of our ever-changing society.

Currently, social dialogue must be geared towards important ecological and social issues where public partner contribution is essential in terms of not only regulations but also direct participation in decision-making. These issues are:

- a. Ecological transition;
- b. Environmental sustainability;
- c. Food sovereignty focused on land conservation, biodiversity, rural areas;
- d. Climate, health, and security crises;
- e. Change to territory and climate change.





In conclusion, social dialogue is a precious tool when it comes to facing the complex challenges of our time. Through constructive and collaborative commitment, we can work together to source innovative and sustainable solutions which promote collective well-being and contribute towards building a better future for all.

