



Advanced Course

Strengthening socially sustainable agriculture: Towards decent employment and working conditions

Zaragoza (Spain) • 9-13 November 2026



Objectives

Agriculture remains one of the sectors most exposed to decent work deficits worldwide. Ensuring safe and fair working conditions across agri-food sector value chains continues to be a major challenge, particularly in labour-intensive activities such as crop production, horticulture, and livestock. Situations involving labour rights deficits, informality, and inadequate working conditions are still observed in both developed and developing countries. These challenges have significant social implications, especially for the most vulnerable groups, including migrant workers, women, youth and seasonal labourers. Limited access to social protection, insufficient training, exposure to occupational safety and health risks, and the prevalence of informal or unstable employment relationships are structural issues that persist in agriculture, often compounded by weak enforcement of labour legislation.

Various international frameworks and policy instruments, including the standards and guidance developed by the International Labour Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization, aim to promote decent work and protect labour rights in agriculture. However, their diversity and complexity, together with fragmented implementation and limited institutional capacity, make their effective application challenging for many stakeholders. Strengthening coherence between these instruments, improving enforcement mechanisms, and enhancing stakeholders' capacities are key to advancing socially sustainable agri-food systems.

This course aims to strengthen participants' understanding of the key dimensions of decent employment in agriculture, combining international labour standards with practical tools and policy approaches. Through a mix of expert lectures, case studies, and interactive group work, participants will explore occupational safety and health risks, labour market dynamics, and inclusive policy responses. The programme emphasises the development of concrete, country-specific strategies to promote fair working conditions, enhance labour protection systems, and support socially sustainable agricultural agri-food systems.



By the end of the course participants will:

- become familiar with the main international and European regulatory frameworks governing decent work in agriculture;
- understand the key vulnerabilities affecting agricultural workers, including informality, migration, gender inequality, and child and forced labour;
- identify occupational safety and health risks in agriculture and become familiar with practical risk assessment and prevention approaches;
- strengthen their capacity to develop context-specific interventions through group work exercises and peer exchange;
- analyse the main drivers shaping employment and working conditions in agriculture, including climate change, mechanisation and demographic trends;
- appreciate the role of social protection systems, labour inspection, and social dialogue in improving working conditions;
- be introduced to tools and approaches for monitoring progress and integrating decent work into agricultural policies and value chains.

Organisation

The course is organised by the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), through the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Zaragoza (CIHEAM Zaragoza) with the technical support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the collaboration and support of the Masar al'an programme of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), the Spanish National Institute for Safety and Health at Work (INSST), and the Horizon Europe project SafeHabitat.

The course will run for one week, in morning and afternoon sessions, and will be held at CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain, and online. It will be delivered by well qualified lecturers from international organisations, national administration, research centres and universities in different countries.

The course requires individual work and Interaction between participants and with lecturers. The international characteristics of the course favour the exchange of experiences and points of view. Lectures will be combined with group work sessions, case studies, and demonstration. During the practical work, participants will discuss how to implement the international framework at national level and will develop a plan of action and propose strategies to promote and implement decent working conditions.

Programme

1. Opening (1 h)
2. Setting the Scene: Conceptual Foundations of Decent Work in Agriculture (5 h)
 - 2.1. Decent Work: definitions, ILO pillars
 - 2.2. International regulatory framework: ILO conventions, codes of practice and OSH surveillance systems, ILO policy guidelines
 - 2.3. Global and Mediterranean overview: scale of the agricultural workforce, gender and age dimensions, recent trends
 - 2.4. EU social acquis working conditions in agriculture
 - 2.5. Group work I - Setting scenarios: mapping the decent work challenges in participants' national contexts
3. Decent Work Deficits: Vulnerabilities, Labour Standards and Key Worker Populations (7 h)
 - 3.1. Work organisation: types of farms, gender and age, status of employment
 - 3.2. Informality, employment stability and conditions of service: contracts, working hours, accommodation
 - 3.3. Child labour and forced labour in Mediterranean and MENA agriculture: patterns and responses
 - 3.4. Migrant workers in agriculture
 - 3.5. Gender equality and equity in agricultural work: roles of women and youth - reconciling household and farm responsibilities
 - 3.6. Group work II - Action planning: identifying priority decent work deficits and designing first-response interventions
4. Health, Safety and Well-Being (7 h)
 - 4.1. Overview of occupational accidents and diseases in agriculture: data and trends
 - 4.2. OSH management and risk assessment system tools (Vision Zero approach)
 - 4.3. Safety risks: transport, tractors, machinery blind spots, falls from height, greenhouse and livestock installations
 - 4.4. Chemical, physical and biological risks
 - 4.4.1. Pesticide exposure
 - 4.4.2. Other chemical and biological risks
 - 4.4.3. UV, heat stress (climate change)
 - 4.5. Health and wellbeing: noise, vibration, ergonomics and psychosocial conditions linked to risk management
 - 4.6. Practical demonstration with tractor and agriculture machinery
5. Policy and Systemic Responses: Frameworks, Transitions and Value Chains (8 h)
 - 5.1. Understanding the structural factors shaping employment and working conditions in a changing agriculture (climate change, agro-ecology, digital transition, social change and mechanisation)
 - 5.2. Public policy responses: ageing farmers, youth attraction and retention in agriculture
 - 5.3. Social protection in agriculture: coverage gaps and models for MENA region
 - 5.4. Social sustainability and ethical agri-food supply chains: CAP social conditionality and EU Directive 2024/1760
 - 5.5. Integrating decent work into national policies and partnerships: strategies and monitoring progress
 - 5.6. Labour inspection in agri-food sectors
 - 5.7. Group work III - Designing national strategies: participants draft a 3-year roadmap for improving decent work conditions
6. Towards Action: Synthesis, Roadmap Presentations (4 h)
 - 6.1. Social dialogue and participation: trade unions, farmers' organisations and collective bargaining in Mediterranean agriculture
 - 6.2. Monitoring decent work progress - challenges and opportunities: indicators, data systems and evidence-based policy-lessons
 - 6.3. Results from Practical workshops/Group work. Country group presentations: national roadmaps for decent work - peer review and open discussion
7. Final Debate, Synthesis, Key Takeaway Messages (1 h)

In collaboration with:



With the technical support of

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



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Lecturers

Benali, Marwan - FAO, Rome, Italy
Benammour, Omar - FAO, Rome, Italy
Beytullayev, El'vis - ILO, Geneva, Switzerland (TBC)
Boincean, Svetlana - IUF, Geneva, Switzerland
Demeranville, Jacqueline - FAO, Rome, Italy
Ercoreca de la Cruz, Ana - FEDECA, Zaragoza, Spain
Genthon, Ariane - FAO, Rome, Italy
Hostiou, Nathalie - INRAE, Clermont-Ferrand, France
Jakob, Martina - ATB, Postdam, Germany
Jones, Alun - CIHEAM Zaragoza, Spain
McNamara, John - Teagasc, Piltown, Ireland
Meredith, David - Teagasc, Dublin, Ireland
Mira, Gema - INSST, Sevilla, Spain
Abril Muñoz, Isaac - INSST, Sevilla, Spain
Sraïri, Mohamed Taher - IAV Hassan II, Rabat, Morocco

Admission

The course is designed for professionals holding a university degree. It is primarily aimed at decision-makers, managers, and technical staff from agricultural, rural, labour, and social administrations or related institutions with responsibilities in working conditions, decent work, labour policies, occupational safety and health and at representatives of farmers' organisations, agricultural trade unions and civil society. The course is also intended for agricultural and labour inspectors, technical advisors, and other specialists involved in labour, social, and employment issues within the agricultural sector.

- 20-25 places will be available for face-to-face participation (34 hours of lectures and practical work)
- 25-30 places will be available for online participation (25 hours of lectures)

Knowledge of English will be valued in the selection of candidates.

Registration

Candidates may apply online at the following address:
<https://admission.iamz.ciheam.org/en/>

Applications must include a curriculum vitae and copy of the supporting documents most related to the subject of the course. The deadline for the submission of applications is 19 July 2026. The deadline may be extended, if places are available, for candidates who do not require visa and are not applying for a scholarship.

Registration fees for the course amount to 500 euro for face-to-face participation and 350 euro for online participation. This sum covers tuition fees only.

Scholarships

Candidates from CIHEAM member countries (Albania, Algeria, Egypt, France, Greece, Italy, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia and Türkiye) and Arab countries belonging to the AECID Masar al'an programme (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Mauritania, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia) may request CIHEAM Zaragoza scholarships covering registration fees, and for scholarships covering the cost of travel and full board accommodation in Zaragoza. Priority will be given to candidates from low and middle-income countries.

The Horizon Europe project SafeHabitus will also provide financial support to participants from countries associated to Horizon Europe.

If you wish to apply for financial support, please complete the scholarship section in the application form.

Insurance

It is compulsory for participants to have medical insurance valid for Spain. Proof of insurance cover must be given at the beginning of the course. Those who so wish may participate in a collective insurance policy taken out by the Organisation, upon payment of the stipulated sum.