

Overcoming the pandemic on the **ORANGE** SUPPLY CHAIN

Contributions to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in the orange industry



PRESENTATION

This booklet is a summary of the study “Contributions to mitigating the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the orange juice supply chain.” It was produced by the Institute of Forest and Agricultural Management and Certification (IMAFLOA), the National Confederation of Wage Rural Workers (CONTAR), and the National Confederation of Rural Workers and Family Farmers (CONTAG).

The study was conducted from December 2021 to November 2022. It included fieldwork carried out by eight interviewers and mobilizers in Sergipe, Bahia, Paraná, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo and Minas Gerais - Brazil’s orange producing states.

Ninety-five farmers and 172 rural workers were interviewed in these states. After that, a workshop was held for participants to exchange information and some interviews were conducted to complement the data collected.

This study is based on the reality of wage workers and family farmers. It does not cover everyone involved in orange production in Brazil. The results are crucial for rural workers to learn what can be done to change their lives and what the social roles of governments, companies and labour unions are in guaranteeing dignity, safety and respect in rural Brazil.



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INTRODUCTION

For rural wage workers and family farmers in the orange supply chain, the data presented in this study underscore the fundamental roles of governments, labour unions and companies to guarantee basic rights in the face of a situation as unexpected as a pandemic that led to the deaths of almost 700,000 Brazilians.

After all, what social role should each actor take on in order to mitigate impacts created by a pandemic such as Covid-19? Could the situation have been better if basic rights had already been guaranteed? This publication seeks to answer these questions. It also serves as a basis for rural workers to be aware and demand their fair rights. On the other hand, all those involved have clear responsibilities and must fulfil their duties.

The results are also a significant illustration of how the pandemic affected people working on the front lines to ensure that orange juice reached consumers' tables in Brazil and around the world. We are speaking about an industry that has not stopped production but suffered serious damages with the closure of farmers' markets and the implementation of several protocols required by the struggle against Covid-19. Therefore, staying at home in isolation was not an option.

The data in the study suggest that the working class at the base of the supply chain should know the study's recommendations and make sure they leave the realm of ideas to materialize as possible realities.

Labour unions must be vigilant to defend the rights of their workers. Ensuring that these rights are fulfilled is also the role of governments. Companies, on the other hand, must honour their commitments and provide all working conditions to their employees. Producer associations and cooperatives also play a role, as they are part of the entire process.

Let us start! We will find out more about these recommendations and understand why they are crucial for damage control in times like the ones we've been through.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN FAMILY FARMING

The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the reality already experienced by many family farmers. Here we will outline immediate and structural recommendations based on the results of the study, which may serve - now and in the future - to mitigate several problems.



HAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD DO

In a public health crisis, agriculture cannot stop. Otherwise, how would people eat? Therefore, governments must prioritize protection of family farmers and rural workers - as well as health workers - to guarantee the country's food sovereignty.

Municipal, state and federal governments must also:

- Produce reports on the effects of the pandemic and disseminate them widely, in order to reach the entire population.
- Expand availability of health workers to provide information and care.
- Prevent the spread of fake news that make people confused.



- Provide supplementary income (aid, social benefits, unemployment insurance).
- Provide materials for hygiene and health care if farmers are unable to afford them – such as those required to avoid the spread of Covid-19.
- Create public programmes and policies to strengthen family farming after the pandemic.
- Promote family farming products, guaranteeing markets, minimum prices and technical assistance (as is already the case with biofuels).
- Increase budgets for programmes that foster family farming, such as the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) and the National Programme for School Meals (PNAE).
- Invest in the creation of agroindustries together with collective organizations such as producer associations and cooperatives.
- Invest in science and research with technologies that are suitable for family farming.
- Curb increases in prices of basic foodstuffs (inflation control measures).
- Be more agile in purchasing vaccines, whenever available, in situations such as the pandemic.
- Prioritize vaccination of family farmers and rural workers, since they will not stop producing even in times of pandemic, such as Covid-19.
- Coordinate actions to guarantee that every schoolchild has access to a computer and a wi-fi network, in addition to ensuring that they actually access the activities offered by schools and have the necessary support for their development and learning.
- Strengthen government procurement programmes such as PAA and PNAE, which include school meals and food donations, ensuring food and nutritional security.

WHAT SHOULD UNIONS DO?

Labour unions represent worker categories. These organizations have to be on the alert to demand and ensure workers' rights, in addition to organizing their categories regarding important issues. Recommendations for unions include:



- Organize to disseminate real-time information in situations of crisis.
- Carry out information campaigns by producing effective communication materials and ensuring that facts reach workers in real time, without distortions.
- Promote unionization campaigns, with visits to communities, in order to lead rural workers and farmers to join the union movement so that the unions become their reference.
- Create opportunities for women to participate in union life with the same rights as men, starting by parity representation.
- Guide, inform and demand accountability from - federal, state and municipal - governments, emphasizing the importance of incentive programmes for family farming, minimum prices, development of agroindustry and value-added products.
- Create proposals for trading family farming products as a way to provide food for poor families.
- Promote agroindustry's value-added products - mainly juice in the case of oranges - rather than just raw materials.

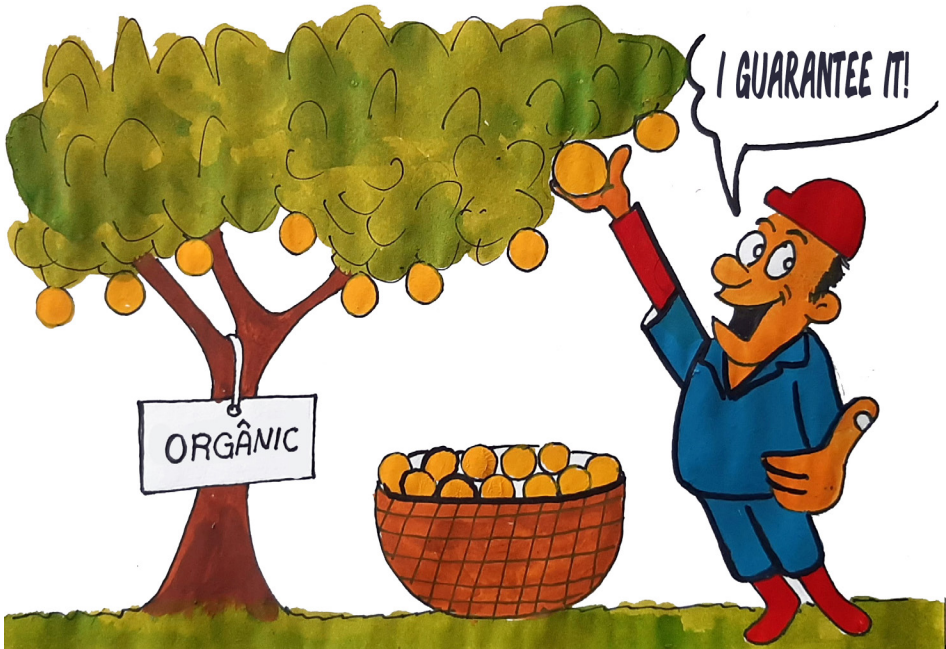
WHAT SHOULD COMPANIES DO?

Companies have to provide conditions for workers to perform their duties in decent conditions and free from exploitation. They must also comply with contracts, especially in times of crisis. Our recommendations are:

- Guarantee compliance with contracts signed with orange producers.
- Guarantee minimum price on contracts throughout the harvest season (regardless of external and internal factors such as market, weather and others)

WHAT CAN PRODUCER ASSOCIATIONS AND COOPERATIVES DO?

Producer associations and cooperatives are essential for promoting a sense of collectiveness and establishing joint commitments. The study makes the following recommendations:



- Encourage and invest in the establishment and improvement of collective organization - including farmers' administrative and financial management as well as production and trade.
- Encourage cultivation of organic oranges by members.
- Search for markets to export fresh and processed fruit and ensure that production of more family farmers is traded.
- Promote farmers' organization in associations and cooperatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN RURAL WAGE WORKERS

The segment of wage workers coexists with a scenario of setbacks and assertion in their rights. The study clearly exposes this panorama in orange farming. We also outlined immediate and structural recommendations for the category.



WHAT SHOULD GOVERNMENTS DO?

At a time of many difficulties and lack of public policies, governments at the three levels should take action to guarantee better conditions for rural wage earners. Our assessment points out measures to be implemented:

- Provide emergency aid at the onset of a crisis, such as the pandemic.
- Provide subsidies to companies for actions involving workers' health and safety.
- Produce reliable and unbiased information about what is happening and the best way to prevent it.
- Create off-season insurance to cover for the lack of jobs for migrant workers and temporary employees.
- Strengthen public policies to combat informality and promote workers' safety, through a multifactorial taskforce, by increasing enforcement at workplaces and especially during road transport/displacement between urban and rural areas.

WHAT COMPANIES SHOULD DO?

Companies have often taken advantage of the labour reform and insisted on denying the rights of the working class, thus causing damage to and decrease in production results. Hence the need to improve safety, health and working conditions, with the following recommendations:



- Provide hygiene and safety items to workers, on a wide basis and at no cost, in addition to implementing measures to restrict groups of people.
- Ensure job preservation and a safe and healthy environment, without putting pressure on workers.
- Ensure full payment of wages.
- Produce material with relevant information to raise awareness and guide the working class.
- Establish paid leave for people over 60, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and other people with comorbidities or risk groups.
- Provide free internet connection and free access to radio stations or TV channels in order to guarantee information.
- Commit to fighting informality, with the creation of a common policy for companies.
- Commit to combating the actions of so-called 'cats,' or group supervisors (middlemen who recruit workers for employers) by creating a common policy for companies.
- Invest in training for workers with low levels of education in order to upskill them.
- Ensure due diligence on human rights - so that companies have governance processes committed to protect and promote human rights throughout their supply chains.
- Maintain collective bargaining agreements currently in force and seek improvements on working conditions and income that consider workers' health and safety issues.

- Combat informality and all types of degrading labour, poor working conditions and forced labour.
- Support the structuring of schools and provide equipment and food to public school students.
- Provide proper PPE and hygiene products with adequate guidelines for effective use.
- Measure workers' temperature and test them, if possible.
- Avoid groups in cafeterias, accommodation, training sessions, transportation.
- Only allow meetings in open, airy rooms, with distancing.
- Guarantee paid leave for quarantined workers.



WHAT SHOULD UNIONS DO?

There are over 4 million rural wage workers across the country. The CONTAR system is organized in 12 states. A unionization campaign is underway to strengthen the system, hence the need to make the following recommendations to our organizations:

- Carry out information campaigns with effective communication materials and ensure that facts reach workers in real time, without distortions.
- Organize actions involving other actors - such as the creation of promotional materials with guidance on certain topics/diseases.
- Work to mobilize rural workers and farmers.
- Demand proper safety measures from companies in crisis situations.

**FOR YOU
TO YOU
TO FIGHT!**

Over 600 bargaining conventions and agreements.
Over 600 labour unions at your disposal.
For all the rights of rural wage workers.

CONTAR
Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores Assalariados e Assalariadas Rurais

Every union provides legal assistance, support in contract termination, combat against slave labour and a good welcome to solve your labour problems.

The Union is the place to improve your living and working conditions.
NATIONAL UNIONIZATION CAMPAIGN

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- Promote unionization campaigns, with visits to communities, in order to lead rural workers and farmers to join the union movement so that the unions become their reference.
- Promote dialogue with companies, so that unions are real allies to the working class.
- Create concrete proposals for maintaining employment and adequate wages.
- Maintain collective bargaining agreements currently in force and seek improvements on working conditions and income that consider workers' health and safety issues.
- Hold training sessions with rural workers on human rights, so that they learn more about the subject.
- Combat informality and all types of degrading labour, poor working conditions and forced labour.

- Commit to combating the actions of so-called 'cats,' or group supervisors (middlemen who recruit workers for employers).



Precarious transportation called "jackal" puts workers' safety at risk

STUDY RESULTS

IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON FAMILY FARMERS INCOME AND CONSUMPTION

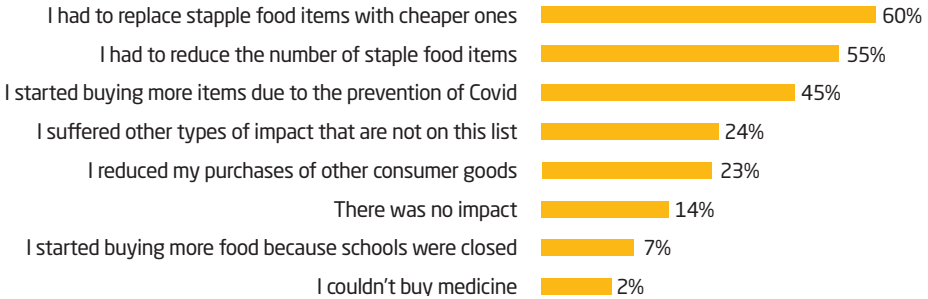


More than two-thirds of the farmers interviewed had their income reduced due to the pandemic. Among the causes are the drop in prices paid per ton of fruit and the increase in production costs, which already affected farmers before the pandemic, and the closure of farmers' markets. The interruption of sales under government procurement programmes - such as the National School Feeding Programme (PNAE) and the Food Acquisition Programme (PAA) - due to the closure of schools affected the income of those who used to sell their products to these programmes.

The government programmes Emergency Aid and Brazil Aid were important sources of additional income for a significant number of family farmers.

The pandemic had a major impact on consumption for respondents, who reduced their purchases or changed items, especially food.

IMPACT ON CONSUMPTION



About 50% of the families interviewed included school-aged children during the pandemic. Students stopped going to school and took up online activities, facing major difficulties to follow lessons because of poor internet connections or lack of quality equipment such as computers and mobile phones.

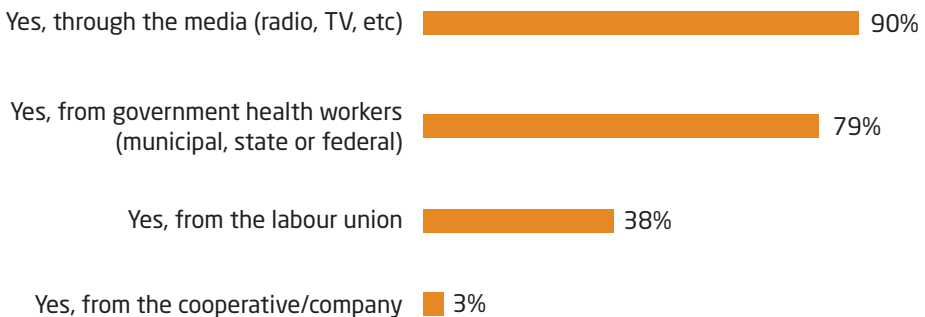
HEALTH IMPACTS ON FAMILY FARMERS

Farmers' regular routines protected them during the pandemic: they usually go from home to farm and back, often without having contact with many people. In addition, many followed Covid-19 prevention protocols such as wearing masks and keeping social distancing.

Farmers were well informed about measures to prevent contamination, having resorted to different forms of care. Vaccination rates were high among them, preventing many cases of the disease.

The chief source of information for farmers was the mainstream media and, to a lesser extent, their unions, which posed a great opportunity for union action.

DID YOU RECEIVE GUIDANCE ON COVID PREVENTION?



IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC ON RURAL WAGE WORKERS - INCOME AND CONSUMPTION



Temporary employees such as season workers and day laborers are hired during the orange harvest, often through middlemen. Companies claim that they hire all employees in their hometowns and without intermediaries, but middlemen still play a role - they were responsible for hiring 71 of the 172 workers interviewed.

Among respondents, 40% said they were migrants, which indicates that a significant part of wage workers can be considered vulnerable. It is important to stress that the living conditions of workers who migrate in search of income is a structural problem in Brazil rather than an effect of the pandemic.

However, the situation of workers who do not have steady jobs and do temporary work and/or migrate to find employment was worsened by the pandemic. Temporary employees are more vulnerable because, in periods of crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic, they are not hired and therefore lose their income sources. Companies interviewed reported that they stopped hiring temporary labour - migrant or not - which impacts job offer and affects workers. Some of those who lost their jobs were unable to find other employment, increasing their vulnerability.

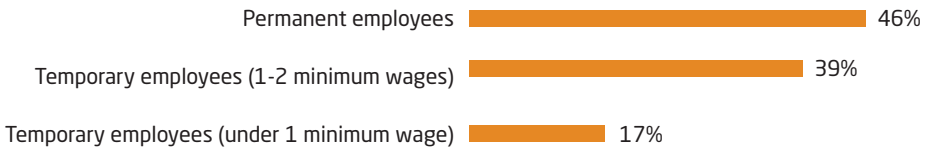
Of the total respondents, 46% are permanent employees and the others work under different forms of temporary employment. The former earn higher wages. Among the latter, 17% earn less than one minimum wage and 39% earn 1-2 minimum wages, which is low pay in Brazil. The economic situation of rural wage workers, however, is not only linked to the pandemic – it has been gradually deteriorating over the years.

Rural wage workers lost income during the pandemic. Around 42% of respondents saw their earnings decrease. Of these, 23% were unable to find other jobs; 55% did informal work; and 58% lived on government aid.

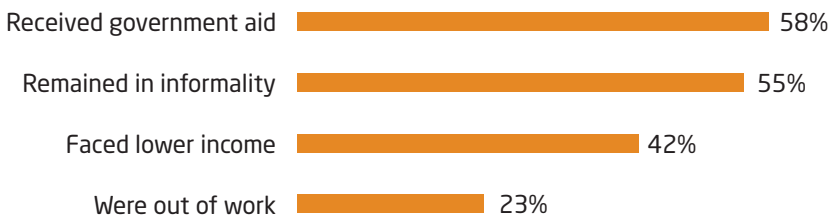
While workers’ earnings decreased, they had to buy more food, since children stopped going to school and therefore had no access to school meals. Thus, they needed more food while they had to reduce or replace staple food items, in addition to purchasing more hygiene and health items due to the pandemic.



RESPONDENTS’ EMPLOYMENT STATUS



RESPONDENTS’ INCOME STATUS



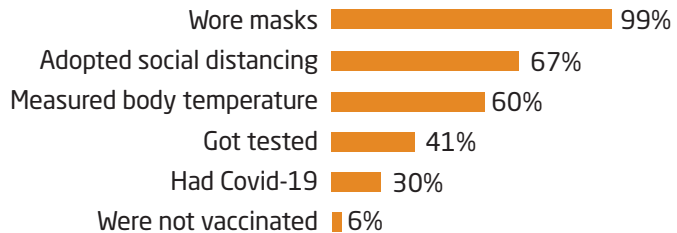
IMPACTS ON THE HEALTH OF RURAL WAGE WORKERS

Only ten respondents - 6% - had not been vaccinated. Despite high vaccination rates and preventive measures, 51 workers had Covid-19 - 30% of all respondents. The companies interviewed claimed that they took measures regarding workers infected, such as placing them on leave and providing support at their homes in some cases.

The main preventive measures were cleaning hands and wearing masks, with about 99% of mentions; social distancing (67%); measuring body temperature (60%); and testing - about 41% of respondents were tested.

Their chief source of information was the mainstream media, mentioned by 128 of the 172 respondents. Unions were mentioned by 45 workers, but 52% of them said they had kept in contact with unions throughout the pandemic. Companies reported that they spread information and provided training to employees. Most respondents kept contact with unions during the pandemic - 90 workers or 52%. However, 54 (31.4%) said they never had contact with their unions, while 28 said they had lost contact. Note that work in agriculture has not decreased or stopped throughout the pandemic. And while this guaranteed workers' income, it also made them feel under pressure to keep working, even at the risks of contracting Covid-19. Respondents also feared losing their jobs due to the global economic crisis that took hold in the period, which of course affected workers in all segments and not just those in agriculture.

COVID-19 PREVENTION



PROTECT PEOPLE WORKING IN THE FIELDS

With these recommendations, we hope that thousands of rural wage workers and family farmers will be served by mechanisms to protect their health and income in times of crisis. The study conducted by IMAFLORA, CONTAR and CONTAG is a contribution to the development of these mechanisms in the orange supply chain.

It stands out for its field research, with direct consultation to workers and farmers, showing the reality of those who experienced and felt the challenges posed by the pandemic. Another core aspect is that the study points out some solutions for companies, unions and governments, as each of these actors has its own unavoidable responsibilities in the task. It is the sum of actions that can strengthen and protect those who work in the fields and guarantee food on their tables.

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