**International Dialogue on Migration 2020**

**COVID- 19 crisis: reimagining the role of migrants and human mobility for the achievement of the SDGs**

***15-16 October 2020, Palais des Nations, Geneva***

*FAO Intervention under the theme: Protection of vulnerable migrants during and beyond COVID-19*

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown into the spotlight the *essential* role migrants play in agriculture and in our food system. It has also highlighted the many *vulnerabilities* of migrant workers in the sector and the need to improve conditions at work, in transport and in housing. We have seen this, for example, in the outbreaks amidst migrant labourers on farms and in meat, chicken and seafood processing plants.

In addition, large shares of migrants in the agricultural sector work under informal or casual arrangements, which leave them unprotected, vulnerable to exploitation, poverty and food insecurity, and often without access to healthcare, social protection and the response measures being put in place by governments.

From the earliest stages of the pandemic, it was already clear that measures affecting the movement of people (internally and internationally) and resulting labour shortages would impact agricultural value chains, affecting food availability and market prices – and *also* the impact this would have on *lives and livelihoods* of migrant workers and their families, and that they would be among the most *vulnerable groups*.

In early April, FAO published the “Migrant workers and the COVID-19 pandemic” global policy brief focused on migrant workers in the agri-food system. A regional brief for sub-Saharan Africa has also been published and ones for Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Central Asia are coming soon.

As part of our initiative on Keeping Food and Agricultural Systems Alive during the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO has compiled a database of policies and measures put in place by governments, including analysis of pros and cons for agriculture and food systems and including coverage of the issues facing migrant agricultural workers and their families. The database is being continuously updated, we welcome you to take a look and also to share contributions on policy measures to protect migrant agricultural workers during the pandemic.

In July, FAO co-organized **listening sessions on Addressing the Vulnerabilities of Migrant Workers in Agriculture** with the UN Network on Migration. More than 100 participants gathered for the sessions. Representatives of migrant associations, agricultural migrants themselves, as well as trade unions from Europe, North America, Africa and the Near East regions intervened and shared their experiences and the many challenges and gaps they face. Many highlighted how those challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic but are often pre-existent and structural to the agricultural sector. These vulnerabilities were echoed in the subsequent webinars hosted by FAO regional offices and partners.

At FAO, we are working on the ground to keep food systems alive during this pandemic, and also providing livelihood support to rural migrants, returnees, and remittance-dependent households. The pandemic has highlighted what we already knew - the essential role that migrant play in agriculture and our food systems, and also the many vulnerabilities that they face, which have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. We look forward to continuing to grow our collaborations and partnerships in this area at global, regional and country levels, and to not just meeting the immediate needs emerging from the pandemic, but contributing to longer-term shifts and improvements in the sector and for rural migrants.