

## Grow Economy:

Promote sustainable, inclusive  
and decent economic opportunities  
for Syrian Refugees and vulnerable  
Jordanians in the  
Agriculture Sector



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**Baseline Assessment Report**  
**June 2024**

# Executive Summary

Despite the pivotal role that Jordan's agricultural sector plays in employing 15% of the economically active population in Jordan — including half of all rural women — the sector still faces numerous challenges that limit its potential. This report by the Phenix Center aims to assess labour conditions in the sector, identify challenges, and provide recommendations for sustainable development. Conducted under the project “Growing the Economy”, funded by the Agence Française de Développement and in collaboration with multiple partners, the project targets the governorates of Irbid, Ajloun, Madaba, and Balqa from May 2023 to April 2026.

The project aims at the following objectives:

1

Improved climate adaptation, productivity, and income diversification of on-farm and off-farm income-generating activities for 600 small farming households.

2

Improved job skills and availability of year-round employment opportunities for 1,500 workers (at least 600 of whom are women).

3

Promotion of decent working conditions and workers' rights in the agricultural sector, especially for Syrian refugees and irregular workers including women and children, by targeting 1,640 individuals.

This assessment of Jordan's agricultural sector aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the extent of stakeholder awareness regarding labour rights and standards for decent working conditions and its challenges, including underlying dynamics between awareness and compliance. The assessment will examine compliance with labour standards, including local labour legislation and social security laws, and assess the risks and challenges facing disadvantaged groups in the sector, such as sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment in the workplace.

The assessment's research methodology relied on a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires distributed to 384 respondents, spanning both workers and employers on 192 farms in the targeted governorates. Qualitative data included Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with workers and employers, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with institutional stakeholders such as the Ministry of Labour (MoL), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Jordan Cooperative Enterprise, International Labour Organization (ILO), and labour unions in the sector, as well as a review and discussion of relevant papers and reports.

## The following conclusions, and corresponding recommendations, can be reached:

### Weak awareness and compliance with labour standards:

Particularly among sector employers. Comprehensive training programs that raise awareness and promote compliance are needed, in addition to promoting general social dialogue about labour rights.

### Legal and operational challenges:

Such as the lack of sector-specific support and investment, and complex labour laws and regulations. Such challenges require intervention to improve the legislative and operational environment.

### Inadequate working conditions for disadvantaged groups:

especially women and Syrian refugees, in the sector. Legal action and protection are necessary to ensure a safe and fair working environment for them.

### A lack of adequate training and qualification

for agricultural workers and farmers who rely on traditional farming methods. Specialized technical training is necessary for these workers to diversify their practices, improve their productivity, and become more market-competitive.

### The importance of the agricultural sector

in promoting economic and social growth in Jordan. To contribute to the goals of sustainable development, the agricultural sector must take a proactive role in improving labour practices and workplace environments.

These recommendations allow for tangible progress in promoting decent work and labour rights in Jordan. In improving working conditions in the agricultural sector, the lives of farmers and workers, especially the most disadvantaged, are also improved. Such equitable and sustainable growth is necessary for growing the agricultural sector, an approach towards sustainable development contributing to Jordan's national economy as a whole.

## 2. Legal and Operational Definitions

### First: terms as defined by Jordanian Labour Law:

#### Agricultural labour:

All that an agricultural worker exerts in plant or animal production in an agricultural holding or an agricultural establishment, and any work associated with it that is agricultural, whether permanent, temporary or seasonal.

#### Agricultural employer:

A natural or legal person who manages and supervises an agricultural holding or an agricultural establishment, and employs one or more agricultural workers.

#### Agricultural worker:

Any natural person who performs agricultural work for remuneration for the benefit of the agricultural employer and is subordinate to him.

### Second: Grow Economy's project-specific definitions:

#### Small farmers:

People who own or rent land and rely on their farms as their main source of livelihood, taking into account that the farm area should not exceed 30 dunams or less than (10 monoculture greenhouses).

#### Large, medium and small farms:

A farm is categorized as a small farm if the farm area is less than (30 dunams or less than (10 monoculture greenhouses), otherwise, it is a medium/large farm.

## 3. Background and Context

Jordan's agricultural sector, which employs 15% of the economically active population in Jordan (and half of rural working women), faces multiple challenges such as informal labour, outdated practices, insufficient investment, water scarcity, and limited financial and technical resources. These issues hinder economic growth and improvements in living conditions within the sector. To develop agriculture sustainably, it is essential to adopt modern technologies, promote sustainable practices, boost investments, manage water resources efficiently, and strengthen the financial and technical skills of agricultural workers to their rights and decent working conditions. Addressing these necessary developments will enhance sustainable development and create more opportunities in Jordan.

The project "Grow Economy: Promoting sustainable, inclusive, and decent economic

opportunities for disadvantaged Jordanians and Syrian refugees" is one of the flagship projects being implemented in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan over three years from May 2023 to April 2026, covering four main governorates in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: Irbid, Ajloun, Madaba, and Balqa. The project is funded by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) in collaboration with ACTED, Action Against Hunger (ACF), Terre des Hommes (Tdh), Phenix Center, ECO-Consult, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), in coordination with National Center for Agricultural Research. The project will reach 12,180 beneficiaries aiming to economically empower Syrian refugees and disadvantaged Jordanians working in the agriculture sector, including women, by improving working conditions, enhancing growth, and diversifying and strengthening sources of family income. The main objectives of the project are:

1

To improve climate adaptation methods, enhance productivity, and diversify income sources through both on-farm and off-farm incomes for 600 small farming households, to obtain stable and regular income throughout the year, and increase resilience to unforeseen issues.

2

To improve year-round employment opportunities and job skills for 1,500 workers and at least 600 women.

3

To promote decent working conditions and workers' rights in the agricultural sector, especially Syrian refugees and irregular workers who are women and children, by targeting 1,640 individuals.

The Phenix Center will focus on the third objective to promote decent working conditions and labour rights in the agricultural sector in Jordan. As part of the project's first phase, the Phenix Center is preparing this baseline assessment of the agricultural sector in Jordan.

## 4. Objectives

Through this assessment, the Phenix Center will focus specifically on labour rights and standards for decent working conditions, which will examine social security laws, migrants workers' rights, women's rights, and risks related to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. This assessment engages with farm owners, agricultural workers, representatives of agricultural sector institutions, and other stakeholders in Jordan to assess their knowledge and compliance with labour legislation and standards. Specifically, the assessment objectives follow as:

1. Assessing the degree of compliance that gauges both stakeholder awareness and compliance with standards, including work permits for migrants workers and social security law requirements.
2. Assessing risks and challenges within the sector, with a particular focus on issues such as sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment among disadvantaged groups.

The results of the assessment are expected to play a key role in shaping policymaking by providing baseline data, insights on labour rights standards, and findings on the implementation of decent work regulations. The findings are also expected to lay a foundation for the design and implementation of targeted training programs and capacity-building initiatives, tailored to address knowledge gaps among different stakeholders in the framework of the Grow Economy project. The main themes of the

assessment define the framework and guide the data collection and analysis process. Its key research questions are as follows:

1. What is the level of awareness among key stakeholders regarding labour rights in the agricultural sector in Jordan?
2. What challenges do workers face in accessing labour rights and decent working conditions in the agricultural sector?
3. What are the risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse in the agricultural sector in Jordan?
4. To what extent do agricultural stakeholders adhere to labour standards and address the risks of risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse in the agricultural sector in Jordan?



## 5. Methodology

This assessment used a mixed research methodology combining quantitative and qualitative methods to thoroughly understand stakeholder awareness and compliance with labour rights. It also identified workplace challenges such as sexual exploitation and abuse. This flexible approach allowed for cross-validation between both quantitative and qualitative methodologies – between survey results and focus group discussions (FGDs), for instance -- but also between worker and employer responses, enhancing the reliability of the findings. Additionally, the assessment reviewed sources related to national legislation and policies relevant to the agricultural labour market.

A questionnaire gathered quantitative data from agricultural workers and farm owners across the selected governorates, while qualitative methods included FGDs and detailed interviews with key stakeholders to explore their views on labour policies and challenges in Jordan's agricultural sector. Field observations also assessed actual workplace practices. The study emphasized data protection and secure storage, adhering to the Electronic Data Processing (EDP) and the Phenix Center's privacy standards. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using SPSS software, focusing on descriptive statistics like frequencies and percentages. This analysis also compared results with sources on legislation and policy. For qualitative data, thematic coding and content analysis were used to analyse interviews

and discussions, identifying recurring themes related to key policies and challenges in the agricultural sector. The study aimed to pinpoint areas for sustainable action.

Data were collected from employers, workers, and farmers across 192 medium and large-scale farms in the target areas. To accurately represent the target population, various sampling methods were employed: purposive sampling for selecting employers and farm supervisors; stratified random sampling to balance distribution among males, females, Jordanians, and Syrians; random sampling for worker questionnaires; and purposive sampling to include workers with disabilities or union activists if present on the targeted farms.



## 5.1 RESEARCH TOOLS

To achieve the objectives of the evaluation, a questionnaire was developed based on Jordanian Labour Law and the ILO's 2018 questionnaire targeting the agricultural sector in Jordan<sup>1</sup>. The questionnaire, guided by Jordanian MoL standards, international legislation, and stakeholder feedback, was divided into different sections for employers and agricultural workers to assess working conditions on farms. Quantitative assessment data was collected face-to-face by a specialised team using structured electronic forms in Arabic, directly surveying agricultural workers, small farmers, and farm supervisors or their representatives.

Before official data collection, the Phenix Center conducted a pilot test of the questionnaire in the Balqa and Irbid governorates, filling out 33 forms to confirm its effectiveness. Although the pilot achieved the correct proportions for farm size and locations, it did not meet the intended

gender and nationality distribution, as most farm owners and supervisors were Jordanian males. The primary data collection period spanned 7 days from March 27, 2024, until April 4, 2024, gathering 389 questionnaires, with 5 submissions discarded due to incomplete responses, resulting in 384 valid responses. Challenges in field conditions led to adjustments of initial targets: female participation was adjusted to 25% and Syrian participation to 40%. These changes ensured a more accurate representation of the agricultural sector's working conditions, especially considering the demographic realities of farm ownership and supervision. The sample was collected with a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%. Table No. (1) shows the actual sample distribution.

Table No. (1): Actual Sample Distribution

	Category	Number of responses	Percentage of sample
Characteristics of the respondent	Owner/Admin	192	%50
	Workers	192	%50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>%100</b>
Farm Size	Large to medium farms (30 dunams or more)	92	%48
	Small farmers (less than 30 dunams)	100	%52
	<b>Total</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>%100</b>
Gender	Males	279	%73
	Females	105	%27
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>%100</b>
Nationality	Jordanian	226	%59
	Syrian	158	%41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>%100</b>
Governorate	Balqa	117	%30
	Irbid	153	%40
	Madaba	56	%15
	Ajloun	58	%15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>%100</b>

Six FGDs were conducted across the targeted governorates to explore challenges in the agricultural sector, discuss recommendations, and explore ways to enhance working conditions on farms. These sessions involved a diverse set of participants that were split between 33% small/large farmers and 67% agricultural workers, between 46% females and 54% males, and between 50% with Jordanian nationality and 50% with Syrian nationality. The discussions were guided by questions informed by gaps identified during the quantitative data collection process and research on sector challenges. Participant consent was obtained for recording, and detailed notes were kept to capture nuances in the discussions. The tools used for collecting qualitative data are detailed in Annex (2).

8 KIIs were conducted with key informants, including representatives from the MoL, MoA, Jordan Cooperative Foundation, ILO, a local community organization, and a trade union activist in the agricultural sector with 1 Shawish from Irbid, and 1 Shawish Balqa. The gender split of the 6 KIIs was 7 males and 1 female, and the nationality split was 7 Jordanians and 1 Syrian. These interviews aimed to contribute to the study's understanding of decent working conditions, labour standards, and challenges in implementing these regulations, as well as gather recommendations for improvement. Specific questions tailored to each interviewee ensured comprehensive coverage of the objectives. The tools used for these KIIs are detailed in Annex (3).

## 5.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

Data was collected from 192 farms — 55% of which were owned — across 4 governorates. 52% of the 192 farms were small farms (under 30 dunums). The study included 384 participants, which were 50% agricultural labourers and 50% employers. Of the agricultural labourers, 68% were Syrian and 46% were female, with 57% aged between 18-30 years. Employers included both farm owners (which were 35% of total participants) and supervisors (which were 15%); 9% of employers were women, and 15% were Syrian. Of the total participants, 73% were male and 27% were female, with Jordanians at 59% and Syrians at 41%. The geographic distribution was 40% from Irbid, 30% from Balqa, and 15% from Ajloun and 15% from Madaba.



**448** Total Number of participations.



**384** Respondents Survey.



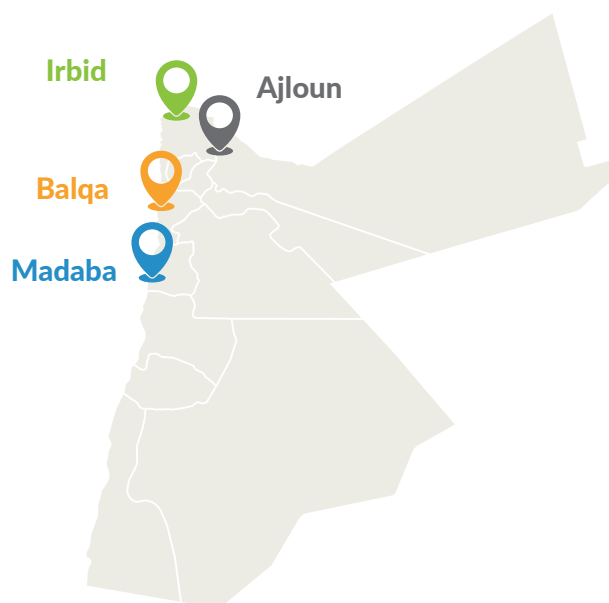
**6** FGDs sessions  
(2 in Irbid, 2 in Balqa, 1 in Ajloun, 1 in Madaba).

**58** Total participants in all FGDs



**8** KIs interviews.

### Targeted Governorates



## 6. Results

This assessment follows labour standards in Jordan's agricultural sector, including local laws and social security. It highlights challenges for disadvantaged groups including women, such as sexual exploitation, and workplace abuse. Results from the assessment include:

### 6.1 CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR



The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s 2023 report highlights significant agricultural losses due to climate change, stressing the urgency for increased funding and action. Agriculture, a sector crucial for global employment and revenue generation, faces substantial vulnerabilities that need addressing to ensure sustainable livelihoods and development. In 2020, the sector employed 866 million people worldwide and generated \$3.6 trillion in revenues<sup>2</sup>. However, despite employing over 15% of the economically active population, including 52% of rural women, the agricultural sector falls short of realizing its full market potential, only contributing 5.6% to Jordan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)<sup>3</sup>. It uses scarce water resources for low-value crops, which then face poor post-harvest handling and logistic coordination. Jordan realizes only 50% - 60% of its export potential for fruits and vegetables, missing out on over \$1 billion annually in

potential export earnings<sup>4</sup>. According to 2017 statistics from the Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2,204,111 dunams were used for vegetable production across 75,417 agricultural holdings in various governorates<sup>5</sup>.

The 2022 study by the National Center for Human Resources Development (NCHRD), titled "The Gap between Supply and Demand in the Agriculture Sector," identified several significant sector-wide challenges according to landholders. Key issues include high production costs such as land rent and labour wages, along with costly utilities such as water, electricity, and fuel. The sector also grapples with climatic challenges like adverse weather and water shortages, as well as the prevalence of diseases and a lack of available medicines and vaccines, as reported by agricultural employers<sup>6</sup>. The study highlighted that farmers face significant challenges due to high prices of production inputs like water, fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds, along with high labour costs. Additionally, the legislative and legal environment poses further difficulties, including weak support for investment, high taxes, and complex laws and regulations that govern the sector, particularly concerning the issuance of work permits<sup>7</sup>. These challenges point to the importance of intervention to improve the

legislative and operational environment for better sustainability in the agriculture sector.

Farm employers noted that the lack of a larger organized agricultural pattern leads to crop surpluses and reduced market value, negatively impacting farmers' incomes and their ability to meet obligations to labourers<sup>8</sup>. The MoA emphasized that the current political situation has adversely impacted the agricultural sector, particularly the demand for agricultural products due to the closure of neighbouring markets<sup>9</sup>. In response, the MoA has worked to strengthen exports via air freight and collaborated with the Jordanian Palestinian Agricultural Products Marketing Company to access Eastern European markets. Additionally, the ministry has implemented measures to streamline agricultural operations, such as revising import and export procedures for pesticides and fertilizers to increase competition and prevent monopolies, and launching training programs with international and local organizations to improve the skills of agricultural workers and the quality of local products in foreign markets.

Cooperative work is essential in supporting farmers in the agricultural sector, with the

Jordanian Cooperative Corporation playing a key role. This organization regulates and supervises agricultural cooperatives, providing services such as registration, supervision, auditing, and capacity-enhancing training. It also helps agricultural associations to gain access to support from donor agencies and represents them in international organizations. Despite its efforts, the sector faces challenges like limited financial and human resources, insufficient funding, and insufficient investment in training. To promote decent work, the Corporation offers specialized training programs and support services, including safety training, child labour awareness training, and skills enhancement for women and youth. Additionally, it supports women's cooperatives by offering training in cottage industries and develops modern marketing capacities of agricultural cooperatives to boost productivity and income<sup>10</sup>.

Hence, to strengthen the agricultural sector and achieve sustainable development, effective plans must be put in place that focus on comprehensive planning for the sector, address important sector-wide challenges such as low production and environmental degradation, and improve working conditions.

## 6.2 WORKING CONDITIONS AND DECENT WORK



The agricultural sector is crucial for employment in Jordan, providing jobs for many landholders and labourers, yet many workers face poor working conditions, including low wages and unsafe environments. The ILO promotes decent, safe working conditions that respect labour rights and human dignity. Improving labour conditions in agriculture is essential for enhancing worker livelihoods and boosting the national economy. The sector, characterized by its diverse geographical and operational contexts, predominantly employs unskilled or semi-skilled workers and faces a shortage of specifically trained labour. A focus on improving working conditions in agriculture is vital to addressing these challenges<sup>11</sup>. The professions and jobs in this sector demand high physical strength, and Jordanian labour is difficult to find.

As a result, employers resort to hiring migrant workers of different nationalities, particularly Egyptians and Syrians. According to 2024 data from the Jordanian Department of Statistics, 2.7% of all employed workers in Jordan aged 15 years and above were employed in the agricultural sector. The percentage of males working in this sector is 3.2%, while the percentage of females is 0.6%. Among all Jordanian workers, 1.9% are employed in agriculture, with 2.3% of them being male and 0.3% female. Non-Jordanian workers

make up 3.8% of the total non-Jordanian labour force, with 4.3% males and 1.0% females. These data demonstrate that the proportion of males in the agricultural sector is much higher than that of females, regardless of nationality<sup>12</sup>.

Employers and agricultural workers highlighted the impact of migrants labour on the employment opportunities available to Jordanian workers<sup>13</sup>.

They perceive foreign workers as strong competition for local workers because they are willing to work for lower wages and under more challenging working conditions, which negatively affects employment opportunities and limits the ability of Jordanian workers to secure jobs with reasonable pay. They also pointed out challenges in recruiting migrant labour, such as the complexities of obtaining permits, the high associated fees, and the tendency of some migrant workers to leave their assigned farms or switch to other sectors.

The agricultural sector is crucial for employment but also involves high risks, particularly for vulnerable groups such as migrant workers, women, and children, who often endure dangerous working conditions. The ILO emphasizes the importance of transitioning from the informal to the formal economy to protect workers' rights and improve working conditions. However, in Jordan, existing national legislation does not adequately support the agricultural sector, increasing the risk of workers' rights violations. This underscores the need for legislative improvements and stronger enforcement to promote better working conditions in the sector.

## 6.3 JORDAN'S NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR LABOUR IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

This section of the report provides an overview of Jordanian legislation regarding work terms and conditions in the agricultural sector, examining how these standards are applied on farms and their effectiveness in achieving standards of decent work.

### 6.3.1 NATIONAL LABOUR LEGISLATION ON AGRICULTURAL SECTOR



Jordanian Constitution's Article 23 guarantees citizens the right to work and provides labour protections through legislation ensuring fair wages, working hours, paid rest, and compensation in cases of layoffs, illness, and disability. It also addresses conditions for women and juveniles and supports workers' rights to form trade unions. Jordanian Labour Law, which aligns with the constitution, regulates employer-worker relationships and covers labour contracts, minimum wages, employment conditions for different groups, and safe work environments. The Labour Inspectorate enforces these laws, working to ensure compliance, guide employers, and foster employer-worker cooperation to promote safety, as well as regulate the labour market, including managing foreign workers.

Despite Jordan's ratification of the Labour Inspection Convention No. 81<sup>14</sup>, the country has not ratified the Labour Inspection Convention in the Agricultural Sector No. 129<sup>15</sup>. Jordanian

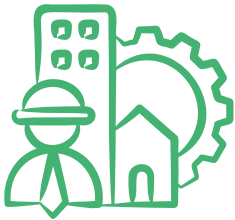
Labour Law has evolved to better protect agricultural workers, who were historically excluded until 2008 amendments which led to further improvements with the Agricultural Workers Regulation No. 19 of 2021. This regulation mandates adequate housing, eight-hour workdays, overtime compensation, and proper occupational safety and health conditions, aimed at preventing exploitation. However, exemptions for employers with three or fewer workers and the limited scope of inspections, which focus mainly on complaints and permits for non-Jordanian workers, indicate ongoing challenges in enforcement and coverage, leaving some workers unprotected.

Jordanian Social Security Law No. 1 of 2014 extends coverage of social security to all workers over sixteen subject to labour law, regardless of contract terms or wage mechanisms. However, it excludes the irregularly employed and those with fewer than sixteen working days per month. Article 12 mandates that agricultural employers with more than three workers provide social security coverage. In 2021, the Jordanian government issued Communication No. 41 allowing agricultural holdings to delay applying coverage for old age, disability, death, maternity, and unemployment insurance until 2023 for workers mandated by Agricultural Workers Regulation No. 19 of 2021. Coverage for work



injury and maternity insurance began at the start of 2023. Other social insurance for agricultural workers remains pending activation as of this report's preparation.

### 6.3.2 LABOUR STANDARDS AND INSPECTION



Despite MoL efforts to protect agricultural workers, including the 2021 Agricultural Workers Law and periodic inspections and awareness programs about occupational rights and safety, challenges persist in the sector. These include ensuring compliance with new regulations, addressing child labour, and enhancing overall working conditions, as discussed during an interview with a MoL representative<sup>16</sup>. Many employers do not comply with labour laws, resulting in worker exploitation such as in forms of unpaid or delayed wages and unsafe working conditions. The Shawish phenomenon complicates law enforcement, as a Shawish, who is responsible for employing workers and setting their conditions, acts as an intermediary between labourers and owners which can obscure the direct accountability of employers.

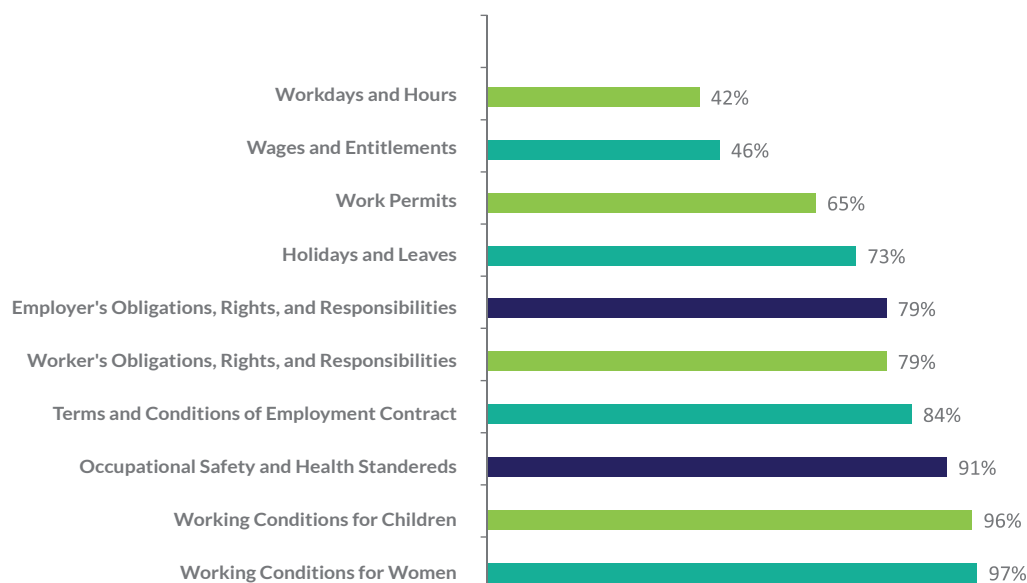
In addition, the lack of awareness of labour laws and legal rights among agricultural workers makes them vulnerable to further exploitation and

inadequate working conditions<sup>17</sup>. Agricultural workers are faced with a weak social protection system, lacking benefits and rights enjoyed by workers in other sectors, namely the insurance-linked to social security. To strengthen the enforcement of laws related to labour rights, the MoL is working to train agricultural extension workers in the MoA on terms and conditions of work so that they will be able to monitor labour law violations and refer them to the ministry, thereby promoting effective enforcement of laws in the sector.

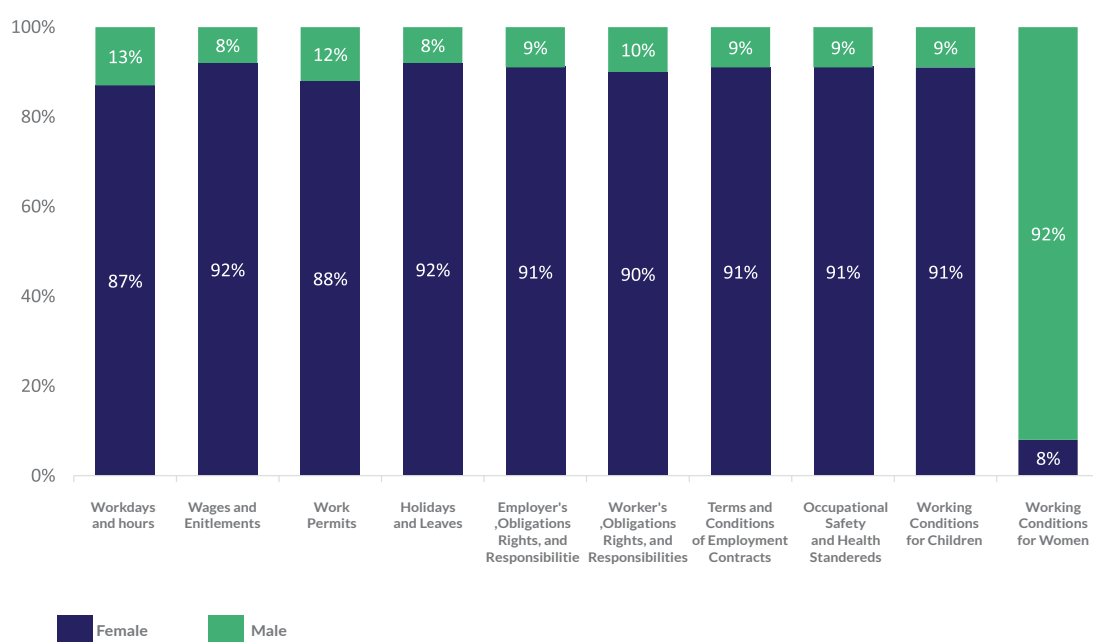
The MoA works to enhance decent work conditions in cooperation with MoL and international organizations like the ILO, World Food Program (WFP), and the World Bank, through training programs and project supervision in the agricultural sector<sup>18</sup>. Additionally, a joint committee involving the MoA, MoL, Ministry of the Environment, and partners like the ILO has been formed to promote decent work in Jordan's agricultural sector.

Data from questionnaires indicate a significant lack of awareness among employers about Jordanian Labour Law's requirements and standards. Lack of awareness about labour laws and legal rights exacerbates vulnerability to exploitation and poor working conditions in the agricultural sector. When asked, 85% of farm owners admitted to being unaware of the labour law provisions that regulate employer-worker relationships in the agricultural sector. Figure No. (1) shows the percentages of employers who responded that they were unaware of different requirements of Jordanian labour law.

**Figure No. (1): Percentage of employers who responded that they did not know the requirements of Jordanian Labour Law**

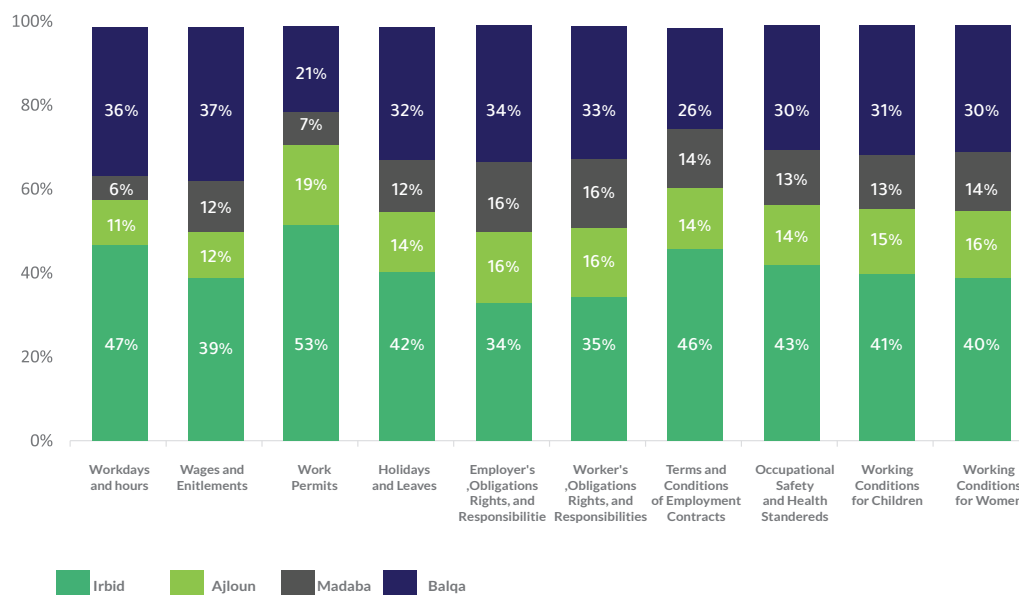


**Figure No. (2): Percentage of employers who responded that they did not know the requirements of Jordanian Labour Law – Gender**



The quantitative data reveals a significant lack of awareness among employers regarding the requirements and standards of Jordanian labour law. Specifically, male employers were more aware than their female counterparts of the requirements of Jordanian labour law, while female employers were more informed about women's working conditions (see Figure 2). The lack of awareness of labour laws and legal rights exacerbates the risk of exploitation and poor working conditions in the agricultural sector.

**Figure No. (3): Percentage of employers who responded that they did not know the requirements of Jordanian Labour Law – Governorate**



The low levels of employer awareness regarding Jordanian Labour Law requirements and standards can also be disaggregated by governorates. Figure No. (3) shows that employers in Irbid were the most unaware of Jordanian Labour Law, followed by those in Balqa, while employers in Madaba had the highest levels of awareness. As for workers, FGDs revealed that they are largely unaware of their labour rights and expressed a need for specialized training and awareness sessions.

Over 90% of surveyed employers reported that their farms had not been inspected by labour officials in the past year. Penalties were issued to some for employing non-Jordanian workers without proper permits and for failing to meet occupational safety and health standards. Only 5% of surveyed employers reported that all permanent workers were registered with the Social Security Corporation, while 70% were required to make monthly social security contributions. Only 13% of surveyed permanent workers on farms are registered with Social Security, including 6 Jordanians and 65 non-Jordanians, with only one being a female worker.

Employers view social security contributions as a financial burden, while workers also report financial difficulties that affect the provision of a stable work environment. Workers cited high costs and the need for regular employment with one employer as barriers to subscribing to Social Security. Additionally, workers who joined Social Security for short-term agricultural projects (two to three months) encounter financial problems from accumulated fines and fees because their contributions are not suspended after project completion. In addition, Syrian workers are reluctant to pursue work permits, both because they do not believe they are needed and because such permits would obligate them to pay accumulated social security contributions, which would impose a significant financial burden. 12% of workers responded that employers bear the costs of treating a work injury for permanent workers until their recovery, while 53% of employers indicated that they bear these costs.

FGDs revealed that the nature of the treatment provided in cases of work-related injuries is that of first aid only. The data also indicated that more than 99% of employers do not provide any kind of health insurance for workers.

### 6.3.3 LABOUR CONTRACTS, WORK PERMITS, FAIR EMPLOYMENT, AND WAGES



Under Jordanian Labour Law, a labour contract, which may be verbal or written, outlines a worker's obligations under an employer's supervision, with wages and terms specified. The contract can also be fixed-term, open-ended, or for a specific job. Employers must provide two copies of any written contract, and if a written contract is not provided, workers can prove their rights through legal means. On the study's targeted farms, there were 394 permanent male workers and 155 permanent female workers. Temporary labour includes 1,696 males. Additionally, over 79% of employers reported rehiring more than 70% of seasonal workers annually.

The vast majority of agricultural workers surveyed (89%) engage in verbal contracts, particularly temporary and seasonal workers, with only 12% having written contracts, primarily permanent workers. 7.3% of those surveyed work without any contract. This highlights a significant informality in the sector and a lack of awareness about workers' rights, as well as employers' neglect in recording under what conditions the offers of employment were made. Although verbal contracts are legally recognized under Jordanian Labour Law, they

offer weaker protection and make it challenging for workers to enforce their rights during disputes. Temporary work is prevalent and contributes to job insecurity, with 82% of surveyed workers employed on a temporary or daily basis. Only 29% of those surveyed have contracts extending beyond eight months.

Payment methods for the surveyed workers varied. Over 75% of those with verbal contracts were paid daily, but most workers with written contracts received monthly pay. Overall, 41% of surveyed workers received daily pay, 32% weekly, and 17% monthly. 10% were compensated in kind or not paid at all as they work within family settings. This points to the prevalence of family labour in agriculture, often resulting in low wages and limited labour rights for women and children. The average working hours for most workers were from 6 to 7 hours per day, six days a week, with 95% working 8 hours or less daily, while the rest of the work over 8 hours, with some up to 15 hours, typically due to multiple tasks like irrigation spread throughout the day.

The MoL regulates non-Jordanian workers, including Syrian refugees, in the Jordanian labour market dizing processes for obtaining necessary work permits and ensuring workers and employers comply with permit requirements, as well as adhere to authorized professions<sup>19</sup>.

Cabinet Decision No. 14845 dated January 2, 2024, extends the deadline to June 30, 2024, for Syrian workers to correct their status in Jordan in permitted occupations for non-Jordanians.

This allowance includes exemptions from work permit fees, surcharges, delay penalties, import stamp fees, retroactive work permit fees, and medical examination fees that are required for issuing a work permit<sup>20</sup>. An agreement was also recently signed between the MoL and the General Federation of Trade Unions regarding the issuance of flexible work permits for workers<sup>21</sup>.

The MoL has decided to issue flexible work permits for Syrian refugees, applicable across various professional groups in different economic sectors, including agriculture. This decision requires beneficiaries to participate in social security<sup>22</sup>. It is worth noting that the MoL has granted employers who employ Syrian workers as agricultural workers an exemption from paying the fees for flexible work permits, as only 10 dinars is charged as an audit fee when issuing a flexible work permit for a worker who is an agricultural worker and works in the agricultural sector. From the survey, 81% of employers indicated that their non-Jordanian workers, predominantly Syrians 68%, lack valid work permits for the agricultural sector. Only 6% have valid permits but for different sectors or under other employers. Among the Syrian workers, 62% are without the proper permits, 6% possess valid permits, and 9% hold flexible work permits<sup>23</sup>.

During FGDs, both employers and workers expressed reluctance to obtain work permits for Syrian workers, viewing them as unnecessary due to the MoL's lack of enforcement and the legal status of Syrians as refugees in Jordan. Additionally, employers stated that without

continued fee exemptions for work permits, they could not afford to issue them due to high costs<sup>24</sup>. 18% of surveyed workers pay for their work permits out of their own pockets, contrary to Jordanian Labour Law, which mandates that employers cover these costs. Workers reported paying fees to various entities including employers, MoL, associations, and Shawish. This suggests confusion about permit acquisition procedures and potentially illegal practices like pressuring workers to secure employment opportunities.

Shawish often charges fees for their services, which is illegal under national law and international conventions. According to the International Labour Convention No. 100<sup>25</sup>, it is prohibited to deduct any part of the wages paid directly or indirectly by the worker to the employer or his representative or any intermediary (for example, a contractor or a supply contractor) to obtain or maintain employment, and the work of such intermediaries is illegal under Article 11 of Jordanian Labour Law. The MoL has pointed out such illegality of the work of Shawish, which can sometimes be used negatively as a means of exploiting workers, including encouraging child labour or charging illegal fees from workers<sup>26</sup>.

During FGDs, agricultural sector employers and workers indicated that the role of the Shawish is essential, as the Shawish performs important organizational and administrative duties in the employment process, in addition to as a supervisor of workers and a mediator between the worker and the employer to resolve disputes.

The Shawish can also be part of a structural issue related to the rights and guarantees of workers when the employer does not fulfil the agreed-upon wage for the worker. Among the two Shawish interviewed<sup>27</sup>, the Shawish is responsible for paying workers' wages on behalf of the employer, and has a role in resolving disputes, as he is responsible for distributing wages and verifying workers' rights, including dealing with emergency circumstances such as illness, and most often the Shawish monitors the workflow and directs workers to ensure work efficiency.

FGDs and Shawish interviews discussed how Shawish typically charge one dinar per worker regardless of hours worked and may receive an additional two dinars for organizing and monitoring work. Employers and some Shawish noted that in some cases, the Shawish take a commission from employers per worker or work as a supervisor for a salary without commission. Sometimes, they work alongside the workers or simply act as intermediaries without any extra commission. 82% of surveyed employers hire workers directly, while 18% use third-party Shawish. 97% of surveyed employers claim not to deduct recruitment fees from wages, while 3% of workers reported paying fees to employers or agents. The use of Shawish is common in the agricultural sector, where 77% of daily wage workers are hired directly, and 24% through agents.

Although paying fees to a Shawish is not licensed by MoL and violates Jordanian Labour Law, some employers or recruitment agents take advantage

of workers and charge them additional fees. 50% of surveyed workers indicated that they pay recruitment fees to the Shawish directly, 17% to the employer, and 33% to other parties such as associations. For 3% of surveyed workers, they did not pay recruitment fees directly but part of their wages was deducted to cover recruitment fees, which also violates Jordanian Labour Law. These findings indicate that some employers and recruitment agents charge workers illegal and additional fees, infringing upon their codified rights. The government should take serious steps to address this phenomenon, such as tightening the monitoring of Shawish, educating workers about their rights, and strictly enforcing Jordan's labour law.

The Agricultural Workers Law of 2021 guarantees labour rights, including to minimum wage and leave, in the agricultural sector. However, female workers in Tabqat Fahal earn just 1.25 dinars or less per hour. Wages vary with crop quality, and these workers often receive no extra pay for working on public holidays or vacations<sup>28</sup>. According to responses from surveyed employers, 16% of workers working on their farms were paid one dinar or less for a typical hour of work, while 84% were paid the minimum wage or more (1.10 dinars and above)<sup>29</sup>, and 3% of workers were paid in kind (such as in food or part of the harvest). According to surveyed workers, their hourly wage ranges from less than 1 JD to 2.25 JD, with 66% earning 1 JD or less, which is below the minimum wage. Additionally, 28% of surveyed employers reported differences in wage based on nationality, with Jordanian and Egyptian workers earning



more than Syrians due to social obligations and perceived productivity.

18% of surveyed employers reported a gender wage gap, with female workers earning less due to their tasks requiring less physical effort and shorter hours. In FGDs, workers reported that their average wage per hour falls between 1 JD and 1.25 JD, with pay differing for males and females, and Jordanians and Syrians, doing the same work. Also, during FGDs workers described how Egyptian workers are paid more due to the nature of their work and greater commitment<sup>30</sup>. Workers also described how the wages difference between Jordanians and Syrians has diminished given that Syrians now live under similar economic and social conditions<sup>31</sup>. Finally, workers highlighted that wage payments are often delayed until the harvest season and the selling of crops. This can result in some workers not receiving their wages if the crop is not sold or if bad weather damages the crop.

Workers on these farms are paid directly in cash by employers, not through bank accounts. Of the surveyed employers, 44% reported that they did not pay overtime as is required by law, while 68% of surveyed workers reported that they do not receive a salary for overtime. Agricultural workers do not get paid leave, whether for weekly, annual, sick, or religious holidays, or financial compensation. 78% of surveyed employers admitted not providing weekly leave, and over 85% did not offer annual or sick leave as per legal requirements. 95% of surveyed workers say they

do not get annual leave, 84% reported not getting paid weekly leave, and 53% were not paid for official holidays.

### 6.3.4 WORKERS' HOUSING AND MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION



The Agricultural Workers Law Article 9 requires employers to provide suitable housing and facilities for agricultural workers if the work or labour contract necessitates it. While Jordanian Labour Law lacks specific housing requirements, Directive No. 1 of 2003 under Public Health Law No. 47 of 2008 details housing specifications, such as specifications for housing location relative to pollution and noise, and provisions for sitting, sleeping, resting, and eating areas. International Convention No. 184 also addresses workers' housing<sup>32</sup>. Care facilities should be provided at no cost to the worker. Further, the state should set minimum standards for workers' accommodation in the facility. The ILO Plantations Convention No. 110 requires relevant authorities to encourage the provision of adequate housing facilities for farm workers and to set minimum standards for such housing, as well as indicates that the employer provides free transportation to and from the farm if the workers are not provided with housing<sup>33</sup>.

According to this baseline assessment's quantitative data, 36% of surveyed employers provide free housing for workers, while 11% of farm workers reported paying for housing. Housing types vary: 73% were tents, 23% were concrete buildings, and 9% were caravans. Additionally, 73% of on-farm housing was reported to have structural defects, and 43% of surveyed workers reported living near pollution and noise sources, impacting their health. Given the remote nature of farm work, many workers live on-site. In a 2019 ILO study on work conditions within the Jordanian agricultural context, over 47% of workers reported that they received free on-farm accommodation<sup>34</sup>.

Regarding housing services, the 2019 ILO study on Jordan's agricultural sector and decent work found that 100% of workers had access to potable water, electricity, and sanitation facilities<sup>35</sup>. However, 45% of the workers surveyed for this assessment face a shortage of potable water, and 44% a lack of sanitation services. While electricity is generally available, 7% of surveyed workers did not have electricity in their housing. Additionally, 77% suffered from inadequate temperature, humidity, and ventilation. Surveyed workers also reported that crucial safety equipment, specifically first aid kits (84%) and firefighting gear (85%), were lacking in their housing. These findings underscore the urgent need to enhance living conditions for agricultural workers by improving infrastructure, ensuring maintenance, and enhancing safety measures within farm housing.

Particularly in rural areas that lack adequate infrastructure, providing transportation to and from the workplace is vital to ensure worker well-being. Often workers are transported by unsafe means, especially for women workers, where employer-provided minibuses or pick-ups are transporting a large number of workers beyond vehicle capacity, which increases the likelihood of accidents going back and forth between the work site<sup>36</sup>. In this context, 62% of surveyed employers indicated that they provide transportation for workers such as a bus, car, or pickup truck if on-farm accommodation is not provided, and this service is often free (except in 1 case).

When surveying workers on this matter for this baseline assessment, about half of the workers (51%) confirmed that their employer provides them with transportation to and from the farm, 90% of which is free of charge. This aligns with a 2019 ILO study on Jordanian agricultural work, where more than 52% of workers had stated that the employer provides transportation<sup>37</sup>. In terms of the types of transportation available, 41% of workers surveyed in this assessment responded they were transported by pickup trucks, 36% by buses, and 23% by cars. In addition, a small percentage (6%) reported using other modes of transportation such as a tractor or walking.

Concerns over unsafe transportation were raised by 69% of surveyed workers. The main concerns, as raised by female and male workers during FGDs, were overcrowding through loading more people beyond vehicle capacity, and the mixing of men and women in transportation<sup>38</sup>. In addition,

workers are at risk of falling when transported in the back of the pickup truck, as it is an open area meant for transporting goods and not people.

Of surveyed workers who did not have access to transportation, 32% lived near the farm and 31% lived on the farm. 13% of surveyed workers reported that their employer refuses to provide this service, while 5% reported they bore the cost of transportation themselves.

### 6.3.5 OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH



According to the ILO, each year 355,000 deaths occur globally on the job. The agricultural sector, which employs half of the world's workforce, is responsible for half of these deaths and is among the most dangerous for worker safety and health due to the wide range of activities entailed by its work. Risks that workers face include exposure to chemicals (pesticides, fertilizers), dangerous machinery and tools, inappropriate equipment, extreme temperatures, noise, electricity, biological hazards, heavy lifting, long hours, and inadequate living conditions. They also face social and psychological risks like isolated/solitary work, abuse, and harassment. Jordan's Labour Law includes general provisions on occupational safety and health but lacks specific provisions to protect agricultural workers.

The Instructions for Inspection Procedures for the Agricultural Sector, Article 3, mandates that labour inspectors visit agricultural facilities to ensure compliance with occupational safety and health provisions and related legislation and to verify work injuries for workers not covered by the Social Security Law. Data collected during this study showed a significant lack of compliance in employers implementing safety procedures in line with basic legal requirements, with 78% of surveyed employers not conducting initial and periodic medical examinations for workers, and 89% of workers reporting their employers do not provide these examinations. 57% of surveyed employers did provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), but despite its relative availability, only 57% of surveyed workers reported using it, leaving many at increased risk of accidents. FGDs revealed that employers often do not provide this equipment due to its high cost, especially for non-permanent day labourers<sup>39</sup>.

In regards to safety practices, 72% of surveyed employers reported complying with chemical storage standards, and 74% that the safety of drinking water is ensured during spraying. However, about 80% of farms lack proper fire detection, firefighting systems, and emergency plans. Additionally, 53% of surveyed employers take measures to protect workers from extreme weather, while 41% said that noise levels are acceptable in 56% of farms, and lighting is adequate in 76%. As for providing safety amenities, 45% of surveyed employers responded that they provided workers with suitable and adequate sanitation facilities, 65% with hand-

washing facilities (soap and water), and 82% with potable water.

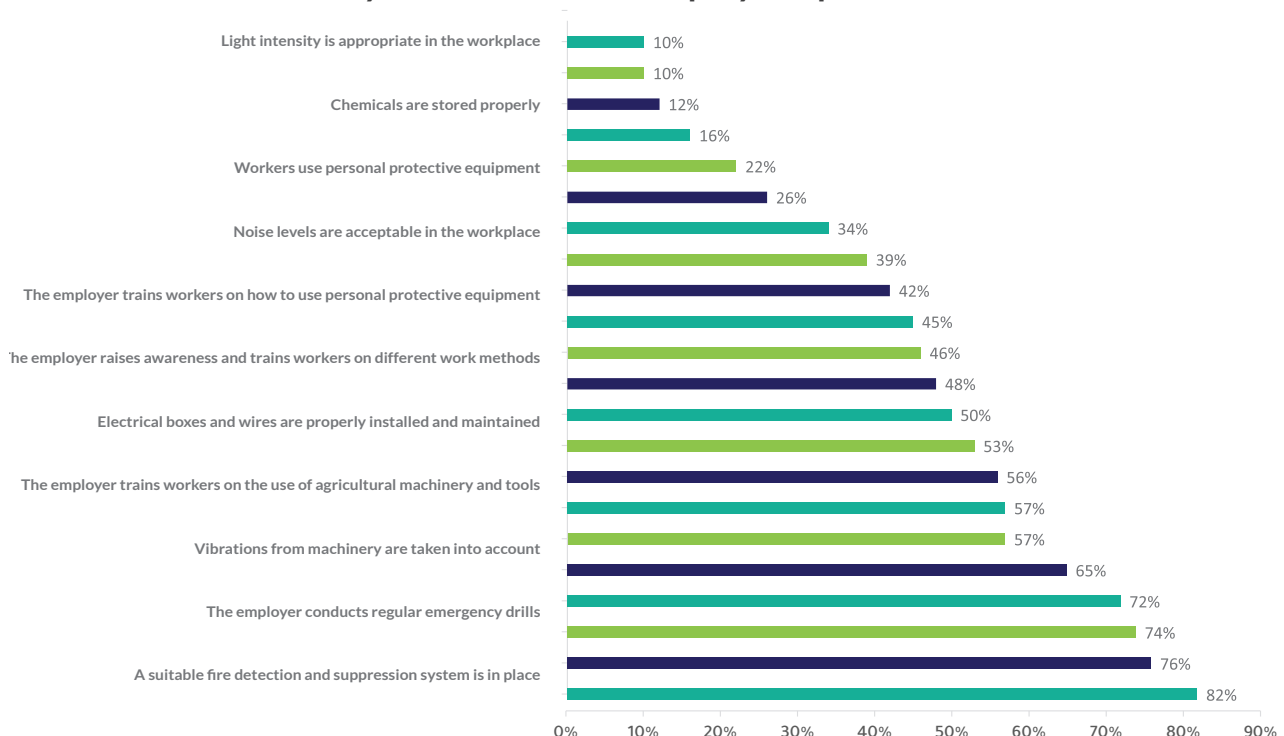
Workers indicated that the majority of employers do not educate and train workers on different work methods and their risks. 62% of the workers surveyed had not received any training or awareness about work methods and hazards. As confirmed by the FGDs, this leaves workers without knowledge of how to deal with potential workplace hazards, which only increases the likelihood of accidents and injuries.

Data gathered from employers on work-related accidents and injuries in the past 12 months described only 3 accidents reported on 3 farms:

two due to foot slips and sunstroke, and one involved wind destroying six greenhouses.

Data gathered from workers described 3 work-related injuries: pesticide poisoning, a pregnant woman's haemorrhage due to exertion, and a worker's fall. These injuries highlight risks from chemical exposure, strenuous work, and unsafe conditions. Despite the low number of reported injuries, the variety and nature of these incidents call for improved occupational safety and health procedures. Employers should enhance safety measures and improve records and reports of injuries. Figure No. (4) shows compliance with legal safety requirements based on employer survey data.

**Figure No. (4): Percentage of compliance with legal requirements for occupational safety and health from employers' point of view**



### 6.3.6 WOMEN AND CHILDREN LABOUR



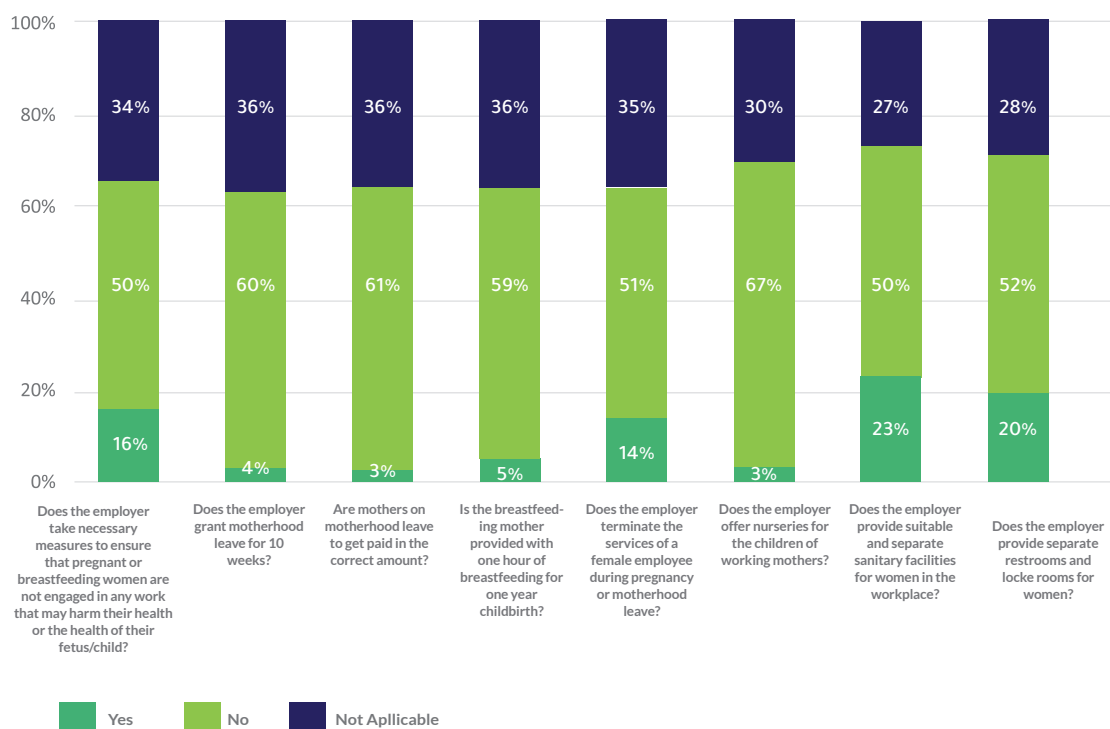
According to the ILO, high unemployment in Arab countries hinders women's labour market participation. When they do participate in the labour market, women often have to balance domestic responsibilities at the familial level, and their jobs, at which they often face lower wages and skill mismatches, are complicated by a lack of care facilities, and safe transportation. This host of challenges is then reinforced through unfair legislation. Despite contributions from Jordanian and Syrian women in agriculture, data on their participation is limited and outdated due to the informal nature of the work<sup>40</sup>. A 2019 ILO study shows a significant number of women working in Jordan's agriculture sector, especially in vegetables. Farmers suggested implementing flexible work systems, providing transportation, and offering nurseries, to improve working conditions and increase women's participation in tandem<sup>41</sup>.

International conventions, such as the International Labour Convention No. 100<sup>42</sup> and Article 18 of the Convention No. 184<sup>43</sup>, emphasize

that pregnant women should not be assigned to harmful work before maternity leave and also emphasize the need for measures to take into account the needs of working women concerning pregnancy, lactation, and reproductive health. However, FGDs indicated that workplace measures to protect pregnant women are often absent and rely on individual employer initiatives, exposing pregnant women to health risks that affect them and their unborn children. In addition, employers may fire or refuse to hire pregnant women if they feel their performance is affected by their pregnancy<sup>44</sup>.

Only 16% of surveyed employers reported taking necessary measures to protect pregnant or breastfeeding women at work. About 50% do not take any preventive measures, and 60% do not provide paid maternity leave for 10 weeks. Additionally, 59% do not grant nursing mothers a nursing hour as required by Jordanian Labour Law. Regarding termination, 14% of surveyed employers terminated services during pregnancy or maternity leave, while 51% did not. Furthermore, 67% of surveyed employers reported no nurseries for working mothers' children near the workplace; only 3% had such facilities. Significantly, 50% of surveyed employers who employ women on their farms reported not providing women workers with proper sanitation facilities separate from male facilities, and 52% that they did not provide spare rooms or restrooms for women.

**Figure No. (5): Percentage of compliance with legal requirements for women work from employers' point of view**



A group of female agricultural workers indicated during FGDs that there are no sanitary facilities inside the farm for either males or females. As a result, women workers are forced to not drink water for several hours while working with great exertion under the sun, which endangers their health, particularly risking kidney-related disease<sup>45</sup>.

Asignificant lack of protection and care for women working on farms — especially in safety during pregnancy and breastfeeding, provision of paid leave, and adequate health facilities — evidence the need to take urgent measures to promote the rights of working women and improve their working conditions.

The MoL reported that child labour remains a concern in the agricultural sector. Data from the assessment's surveyed employers indicated that 59 children were working on 16 farms, who were divided between Jordanian (56%) and Syrian

(44%) nationalities, with 70% boys and 31% girls.

81% of these children work with their parents on the farms. Field observations indicated some employers employing their children on the farms, with some Shawish confirming that it is common for children aged 14 and above to work on farms<sup>46</sup>.

However in FGDs with employers, some owners are unaware of children being employed on their farms, since the Shawish are responsible for hiring and supervising workers, and in many cases, the owner is not present on the farm during working hours<sup>47</sup>. Regarding the availability of schools in the vicinity of the farms, this assessment's employer survey data indicated that 42% of the targeted farms have schools in which workers can enrol their children and which are easily accessible to children, as more than 82% of them can be reached on foot and without the need for transportation.



### 6.3.7 EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



Employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Arab countries remain limited despite integration efforts. In Jordan, as noted by a study from the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), this employment gap remains persistent and cannot be explained by a lack of abilities or willingness to work. Employers retain several negative perceptions of employing people with disabilities, citing perceptions of increased accident risk, lower productivity, customer dissatisfaction, high costs of necessary accommodations, communication barriers, and concerns about their commitment to work schedules<sup>48</sup>. FGDs for this assessment confirmed that employers are particularly hesitant to hire individuals with limb or visual impairments, as they believe these impairments affect productivity and work capability<sup>49</sup>.

The assessment research process found 6 farms (3% of those studied) that employ 8 workers total with disabilities, including one female, from Jordan, Syria, and Pakistan. The disabilities include motor, visual, intellectual (Down syndrome), hearing, and speech disabilities. Half

of these workers have permanent contracts, while the rest are on temporary or seasonal contracts. Employers adjust the workload according to the workers' abilities, and one employer provides specialized equipment to facilitate their work.

### 6.3.8 ASSAULT, HARASSMENT AND ABUSE



Work environments in the agricultural sector are particularly vulnerable to workplace abuse, given that many workers are non-citizens and/or women, and that much of the work occurs in isolated areas. The ILO reports that agricultural workers, especially migrants and women, are highly susceptible to discrimination and violence. This is worsened by the limited scope of labour law, weak inspection services, and scarce regulations for agriculture. Laws to prevent workplace violence do not adequately protect these workers, particularly given their isolation and the difficulties in reporting abuse<sup>50</sup>.

In 2023, the Jordanian government amended the Labour Law to include a paragraph on harassment in Article 29. This allows workers, if assaulted by the employer or representative, to leave work



without notifying the employer and retain their legal rights provided they inform the MoL within two weeks. Assault includes beating, humiliation, or any form of sexual assault. However, experts find the protections provided by this amendment still inadequate<sup>51</sup>. Jordan has not ratified the ILO Convention No. 190<sup>52</sup> on workplace harassment and violence, adopted at the 108th International Labour Conference in 2019. This convention would promote workers' rights by ensuring a safe and healthy working environment and prohibiting harassment and violence, including sexual harassment. It emphasizes preventive and legislative measures as well as strengthening mechanisms for reporting and investigating violations. A 2020 ILO study found that safety concerns and harassment are common for women job seekers. Employers must prevent harassment and ensure a safe working environment with male colleagues, supervisors, and customers<sup>53</sup>.

Data from this baseline assessment indicates while cases of verbal or physical abuse by an employer or their representatives are not common, they are not completely nonexistent. According to the questionnaire, 11% of respondents reported that they or their colleagues had been verbally or physically assaulted out of which 7% were women and (9% were Syrians). Addressing these cases of abuse requires strict and effective preventive measures. While 96% of participants responded

that they or their colleagues had not been subject to sexual abuse or harassment, it remains important to enact preventative measures and raise awareness. The 1% of participants who had reported such harassment were all Syrian workers. During FGDs, workers noted some cases where Syrian workers in particular are mistreated and threatened with deportation back to the camps or not being hired again<sup>54</sup>.

To continually ensure a safe working environment, workplaces need to have reporting mechanisms that are confidential and accessible for workers to refer to instances of verbal or physical abuse. Only 15% of surveyed workers reported the existence of such mechanisms — 83% did not. Without such mechanisms, workers may not be able to report harassment, abuse, or other violation cases safely, particularly because confidentiality is procedurally necessary to protect against reprisals and address fears of sanctions, job losses, or social fallout. In FGDs, sometimes workers, both male or female, indicate that the issues related to abuse or violations are handled through the Shawish or the farm official without resorting to another party<sup>55</sup>.

### 6.3.9 FORCED LABOUR



Jordan has taken several measures to combat human trafficking, including ratifying the Forced Labour Convention No. 29<sup>56</sup> and No.105<sup>57</sup> and passing a special anti-human trafficking law. This law covers cases of transferring and threatening individuals by force or coercion for exploitation.

The Human Trafficking Prevention Act No. 9 of 2009 defines human trafficking as recruiting, transporting, harbouring, or receiving persons for exploitation through threats, coercion, fraud, or abuse of power. It also includes exploiting those under 18. Article 77 of Jordanian Labour Law punishes an employer for withholding a worker's travel document and forcing employment, while Article 29 allows workers to leave without notice if assigned different work, are forced to relocate, or if transferred to a lesser job. The law permits overtime work with commensurate overtime pay. Survey data collected indicates that the vast majority of agricultural employers do not keep worker documents (such as a passport or work

permit) and do not prevent workers from accessing them when needed. 94% of surveyed workers reported that employers do not keep these documents, while 3% reported that employers do keep the documents but do not block access to them. Regarding overtime, 96% of surveyed workers responded that they have never worked overtime without prior consent and 2% reported having been forced to work overtime without their consent, while 95% of surveyed workers responded that they have never been transferred from one workplace to another or from one employer to another without their consent and 4% reported having been transferred without their consent. Responses to such trafficking violations are low overall and reflect that most employers respect workers' rights regarding document retention, overtime, and forced labour transfers. Still, individual violations exist and could potentially indicate instances of forced labour, and as such need to be followed up to ensure full compliance with legal standards and worker rights.

### 6.3.10 FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



Jordan has ratified the ILO Convention No. 98<sup>58</sup>, which supports the right to organize and collective bargaining. However, it has not signed the Convention No. 87<sup>59</sup>, which emphasizes freedom of association and protects the right to organize.

According to a 2023 policy paper by Phenix Center for Economic and Information Studies, agricultural workers in Jordan lack trade union organization specific to its sector, depriving them of the dispute resolution tools and rights to collective bargaining that are guaranteed by Convention No. 98 and the Jordanian constitution<sup>60</sup>. Instead, agricultural workers must fall under the General Trade Union of Workers in Water, Agriculture, and Food Industries. Under Jordanian Labour Law, union establishment is restricted to Jordanians, which marginalizes the rights of non-Jordanian workers who constitute a significant part of the agricultural sector. The Agricultural Workers Law does not explicitly

address forming unions for the sector and defaults to the provisions of the Labour Law, which does not ensure union freedom. Finally, the Labour Law gives MoL control over union registration and classification, which weakens the ability of agricultural workers to represent themselves in new trade unions. The sector's informal nature, low levels of union awareness, and worker fears of organizing then form further non-legislative challenges to organizing Jordan's agricultural workers<sup>61</sup>.

The survey evidenced the significant weakness of labour organizing in the agricultural sector. In FGDs, both workers and employers saw no benefit in joining unions, and in surveys, all employers claimed not to oppose labour-organizing activities. Unionization on surveyed farms is essentially non-existent, with only 0.5% of respondents participating — at the same time, 1% of surveyed workers reported employer retaliation for union activities. Overall, the data indicate low awareness of trade union organizations and labour rights more broadly, highlighting the need to promote the importance of labour unions and protect workers' rights to unionize.

# Conclusions

This assessment traces labour standards in Jordan's agricultural sector, including local laws and social security. It highlights challenges for disadvantaged groups, looking at issues like women's employment, workplace abuse, and sexual harassment. Key conclusions from the assessment include:

## CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR:

1. The agricultural sector faces numerous challenges, including difficult climatic conditions, lack of resources, and high production costs.
2. Traditional agricultural methods limit productivity and are less adaptable to changes.
3. The Agricultural Workers Law 2021 excludes some groups, like people with disabilities and women, leaving them unprotected.
4. Standards for decent work are not widely known, and the Shawish phenomenon can further hinder employer accountability for upholding such decent work standards and worker rights.
5. Few agricultural workers are registered under and receive benefits of the social protection system.
6. Verbal contracts and reliance on temporary labour encourage informal work in the sector, reducing job security and stability.
7. Wages for agricultural workers are not aligned with wage requirements of local and international laws, and there is insufficient oversight of work permits for Syrian workers.
8. The sector is hazardous, with poor implementation of safety standards and inadequate reporting of accidents.
9. Organizing workers into unions is challenging due to the sector's informal nature.

## WORKING CONDITIONS AND DECENT WORK IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR:

1. Workers in the agricultural sector work in difficult and hazardous conditions with low wages.
2. Payment methods for agricultural workers vary between monthly, daily, weekly, and hourly.
3. Most workers work 6 to 7 hours a day, 6 days a week.
4. There are wage disparities among Jordanian, Egyptian, and Syrian workers, with lower wages for women.
5. Most agricultural workers live on farms and face infrastructure problems.
6. Workers rely on employer-provided transportation, which needs improvement to ensure worker safety.
7. Women and Syrian refugees face difficult working conditions, including discrimination and unequal pay.
8. There is a lack of protection for female workers during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and no provision for paid leave.
9. The work environment in the agricultural sector is characterized by the potential for assaults and harassment.
10. National legislation is insufficient to protect workers from discrimination, and psychological, physical, and sexual violence.
11. Current Jordanian legislation has not ratified Convention No. 87, which emphasizes the right to freedom of association, and restricts the establishment of unions to Jordanians only.

## THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL CONTEXT OF WORK IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR:

1. Current Jordanian laws have not ratified Convention No. 87, which restricts the establishment of unions to Jordanians only.
2. Jordan has taken legal steps to combat forced labour and human trafficking, but it needs to strengthen the enforcement of these laws.
3. Despite significant legislative progress, labour laws and social security procedures in Jordan still face challenges in implementation and coverage, leaving certain groups of workers inadequately protected.
4. There are significant challenges in ensuring compliance, raising awareness, and providing adequate social protection for workers.
5. There are considerable gaps in employers' knowledge of legal requirements, workers' rights, social security registration, and the provision of health insurance, exacerbating the challenges faced by agricultural workers in Jordan.
6. Agricultural workers in Jordan face significant challenges, including widespread informal work, inadequate wages, lack of social security, and limited enforcement of labour rights.
7. Agricultural workers in Jordan face major challenges, including unsuitable living conditions, insufficient safety measures, and unsafe transportation options, highlighting the need for improved infrastructure and stricter enforcement of standards.
8. Agricultural workers in Jordan face significant occupational safety and health risks due to inadequate safety measures, insufficient training, lack of protective equipment, and poor living and working conditions, emphasizing the urgent need for better enforcement and awareness.
9. Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in Arab countries, including Jordan, remain limited due to persistent negative attitudes and various barriers, with only a small percentage of farms employing workers with disabilities and providing necessary accommodations.

# Recommendations

Workers in Jordan's agricultural sector face low wages, lack of written labour contracts, weak social protections, hazardous conditions, and inadequate conditions for women workers. These issues are worsened by a lack of awareness among employers and workers about legal rights and decent work standards. The following recommendations aim to improve conditions, raise awareness, and enhance commitment to decent work standards. Several of the recommendations extend beyond the scope of this project but are still included below, aimed at government stakeholders. These broader recommendations are essential for addressing systemic issues and fostering long-term improvements in the sector.

## CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR:

1. Design and implement specialized technical training programs in agriculture and modern agricultural techniques to enhance efficiency and productivity in the agricultural sector. This includes transferring knowledge and modern techniques to farmers to improve their agricultural practices and increase their productivity.
2. Provide trained labour through enhanced technical training and youth-oriented programs in specific technical fields, with a focus on specialized crops and modern farming methods.
3. Support the use of technology in the agricultural sector by providing technical and financial assistance to employers for adopting modern technologies such as solar panels, advanced irrigation techniques, and hydroponics to improve efficiency and working conditions.
4. Support research and technological innovations in agriculture to boost productivity and reduce costs.
5. Support rural areas and marginalized groups by offering employment programs and interest-free grants or loans for women, persons with disabilities, and refugees to support small projects. This can be done in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Social Development, banks, financial institutions, and donor agencies. Additionally, promote work in small agricultural projects through financial grants, soft loans, land access, and specialized training for those interested, in cooperation between relevant government agencies and donors.
6. Encourage dialogue between workers, employers, and the government to ensure a stable work environment that supports workers' rights in the agricultural sector.
7. Review legislation in consultation with employers and workers to enhance compliance with international standards and ensure comprehensive coverage for agricultural workers, while increasing employers' commitment to applying these laws.
8. Develop solutions to facilitate the application of laws to seasonal workers, such as developing standardized contracts for seasonal workers to guarantee their rights through collaboration between employers, labour representatives, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Agriculture.
9. Standardize payment methods to ensure transparency and stability, especially by promoting the use of formal banking systems for wage disbursement.
10. Implement initiatives to promote gender equality in both permanent and temporary roles, ensuring fair employment opportunities and equal working conditions.
11. Implement training programs on safety and occupational health requirements and work hazards targeting workers and employers in the agricultural sector.



## WORKING CONDITIONS AND DECENT WORK IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR:

1. Facilitating social security enrollment and supporting employers financially in covering enrollment costs, to strengthen the social protection system for agricultural workers.
2. Explore collaborations with international donor agencies to implement targeted financial support programs for agricultural workers and employers in this sector.
3. Strengthening inspection teams with necessary resources and training to enhance the capacities of supervisory authorities, especially MoL, for effective agricultural labour inspection.
4. Increasing the number of inspector visits to the agricultural sector and more strictly enforcing labour laws, to strengthen the enforcement of labour laws through inspection.
5. Coordinating further between government agencies such as MoL and MoA, trade unions, and international organizations by forming committees and implementing projects aimed at the agricultural sector's working conditions and labour standards.
6. Conducting awareness campaigns and continuous training, as well as preparing educational material, targeting both workers and employers about their legal rights and responsibilities.
7. Promoting programs such as the “Gold List” MoL program for companies committed to labour standards, and providing incentives such as tax exemptions, facilitated recruitment of migrant workers, or reduced water and electricity tariffs, for participant companies — as part of a larger effort to encourage employers to improve working conditions and increase compliance with decent work requirements
8. Establishing a clear legal framework regulating the work of Shawish and clearly defining their responsibilities to ensure direct accountability of employers and protect workers from exploitation.
9. Reducing work permit fees and extending exemptions for work permit fees granted to Syrian workers to organize the Syrian workforce in the sector.
10. Issuing flexible work permits to Syrian refugees to integrate Syrian refugees into the labour market by involving the private sector and relevant authorities.
11. Supporting employers to improve working conditions and the environment, focusing on conditions for women's employment by providing necessary protective equipment for workers, and providing caravans for use as restrooms and health facilities for female workers.
12. Implementing national and international regulations related to housing standards and health facilities, ensuring the availability of clean water and sanitation services.
13. Strengthening the enforcement and monitoring of policies related to the prohibition of child labour, with enhanced control over the illegal employment of children on farms.

14. Raising awareness among agricultural workers about the dangers of child labour and its social and economic benefits to the community, in cooperation with civil society and non-governmental organizations.
15. Develop suitable and motivating labour policies that encourage the employment of persons with disabilities and ensure their rights and safety in the work environment.
16. Providing targeted training programs for employers and employees on the needs of persons with disabilities and how to adapt the work environment to facilitate their employment.
17. Implementing continuous awareness campaigns to educate workers and employers about the importance of reporting harassment and assaults, in addition to providing training for workers on how to protect themselves and report safely.
18. Establishing a clear and confidential complaint mechanism related to workplace harassment or abuse, promoting a culture of reporting violations, and protecting whistleblowers through providing hotlines and dedicated complaint offices in agricultural areas.
19. Enhancing cooperation between the government and international organizations to combat forced labour and human trafficking, including enhancing reporting mechanisms and rapid intervention.

## THE JORDANIAN NATIONAL CONTEXT OF WORK IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR:

1. Providing necessary support to farmers, such as organizing their work, adopting coordinated agricultural patterns, and opening new export markets, through more proactive governmental institutions such as the MoA and affiliated bodies.
2. Strengthening the role of agricultural cooperatives by improving access to finance and technical support to support small farmers, especially through cooperation between MoA, the Jordan Cooperative Corporation, and non-governmental organizations.
3. Conduct specialized training on the role and importance of agricultural cooperatives for the agricultural sector in cooperation with the Jordan Cooperative Corporation and the International Labor Organization.
4. Raising awareness among agricultural workers about the importance of unionization and collective bargaining, especially through enhanced dialogue between social partners (government, workers, and employers).
5. Ratifying International Labour Organization Convention No. 87 to enhance freedom of association rights and protect the right to organize, and amending the Jordanian Labor Law to allow migrant workers to establish and join unions.

# Annex

Annex (1): Quantitative research tools: Survey questionnaire for the study.

Annex (2): Qualitative research tools: FGDs for the study.

Annex (3): Qualitative Research Tools: KIIs for the study.

Annex (4): Quantitative Analysis Data.

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