



## The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture statement on the impact of COVID-19 on child labour in agriculture

1. The COVID-19 pandemic presents a highly distressing concern for the potential impact on child labour in agriculture. The enduring spread of COVID-19 continues to take a toll on agribusinesses, agricultural value chains, food production systems and access to schools in rural communities worldwide. It therefore affects livelihoods, household incomes and learning opportunities. The on-going socioeconomic decline and its particular consequences on those who produce essential food and agricultural products, along with the movement restrictions caused by the outbreak put children of farm households at heightened risk of being pushed into child labour.
2. That is, many more children could be added to the over 108 million children in child labour that are estimated to work in agriculture. They typically work very long hours and are exposed to working conditions that are hazardous to their health and restrict their ability to attend school. Compounded by eroded household livelihoods, the temporary school closures may cause many children to permanently drop out of school.
3. Lacking access to adequate social protection, vulnerable groups such as smallholder farmers, informal sector workers, rural youth and migrant workers are likely to see their livelihoods severely impacted by the gender-biased economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Those already facing hunger and extreme poverty, needing humanitarian assistance face particularly dire conditions.
4. The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) is deeply concerned on the potential impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the prevalence of child labour in agriculture and the potentially lasting deleterious effects on child growth and development. To address these risks, IPCCLA call for immediate nationally and internationally coordinated responses to provide support to vulnerable rural households so as to prevent a situation where families fall deeper into poverty and deploy more children in agricultural labour.
5. Emergency responses to prevent acute livelihood losses will need to be aligned with long-term strategies to eradicate child labour in agriculture. Moving towards universal access to social protection, health and education services, enforcement of occupational safety and health standards and labour rights, freedom of association and guaranteeing gender equality should be important ingredients of such strategies. The IPCCLA encourages all key stakeholders, governments, farm organizations, trade unions, employer associations and NGOs to help develop such national strategies and provide support to the agricultural sector and rural areas where the loss of markets and the collapse of essential services have eroded rural livelihoods.
6. In addition, governments and rural stakeholders are encouraged to create conditions for vulnerable and disadvantaged children in rural areas to access remote learning modalities and facilitate catch up classes and - where feasible – move to safe re-opening of school premises. Special measures should be taken to enroll children who were previously out of school or experienced barriers to access education.
7. IPCCLA will continue providing technical assistance and facilitating dialogue and cooperation with governments and rural stakeholders to promote action towards the eradication of child labour in agriculture. The partnership will further seek to influence COVID-19 responses such that these are considerate of the welfare of children and minimize adverse impacts on agriculture and rural livelihoods. Finally, IPCCLA encourages inter-sectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration and joining forces for the upcoming International Year on Eliminating Child Labour (2021) and beyond.

