

# **Employment in agriculture and access to food**

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6 September 2011, Paris

# Agriculture - Labour force

- 1.3 billion people employed in agriculture – almost half the global labour force
- more than 450 million waged workers (cc 40% of agr. workforce)
- over 50% are women
- 60 % of all child labour (132 million children aged 5 to 14). Children work because their parents are poor, but child labour undermines the capacity of adult workers to negotiate a decent wage
- migrant workers

# Employement in agriculture

- decreasing direct and full-time/seasonal formal employment
- increasing indirect, casual and informal employment - more workers are employed though middlemen, subcontractors, employment agencies, etc.
- forced and bonded labour continue to be largely used

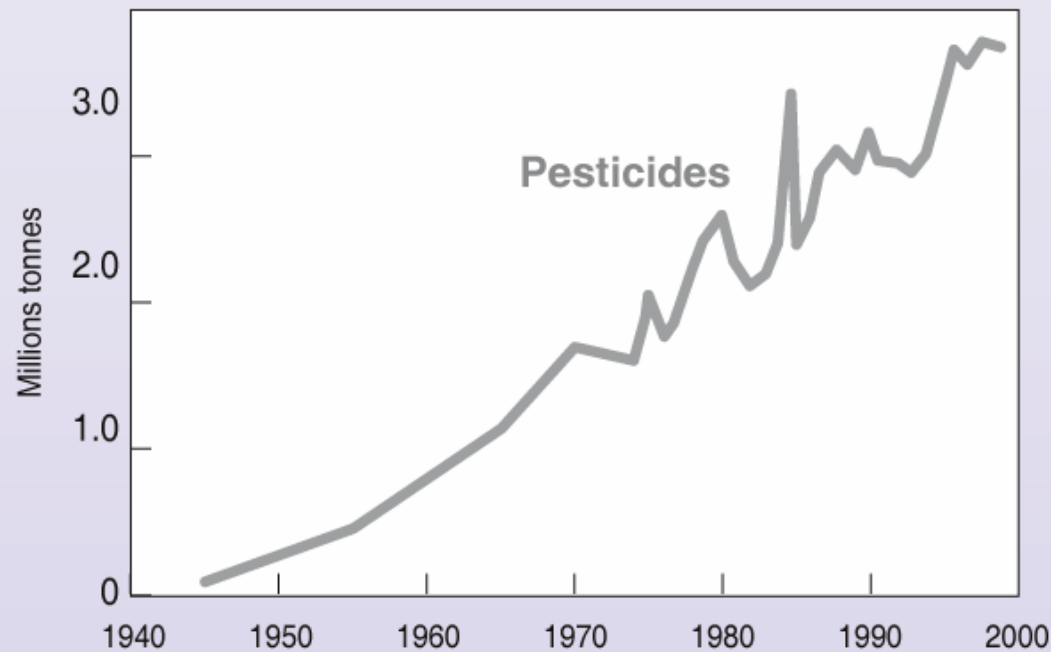
# Unsafe Work


- agriculture - one of three most dangerous industries (alongside construction and mining)
- 170,000 work-related deaths annually - agricultural workers are twice as likely to die at work than in any other sector
- 40,000 deaths due to pesticides
- 3-4 million poisonings
- only 14 countries have ratified the ILO Convention 184 on Safety and Health in Agriculture

**It is a direct cause of poverty and hunger, when the bread winner is killed or injured at workplace.**

# Agrochemicals become more complex and more toxic

Total global pesticides production





*“My breakfast and lunch is Gromoxon. It’s very nice if you get use to it ... except that it caused me to lose two babies through miscarriages. It makes your skin itch and makes it difficult to breathe at night.”*

**Barjiah, a worker on a palm oil plantation, North Sumatra, Indonesia**

# Labour standards?

- national legislations either denies the right to organise in agriculture, or excludes the sector from the relevant legal protections
- workers' right to collectively bargain is denied in many countries.
- less than 20 % of agricultural workers have access to basic social protection
- only 5% have access to any kind of labour inspection system or legal protection of their health and safety rights
- **ILC 2008, Committee on rural development for poverty reduction** recognised “decent work deficit” in rural areas

# Green jobs? - or no jobs

- The mass planting of the African palm and eucalyptus in **Latin America, Asia** and **Africa** is causing the extinction of thousands of jobs, degradation of the environment, a general exhaustion of natural resources and extermination of family farming.
- in Brazil, each 8 hectares cultivated by small farmers using mixed cropping generates one job. Large-scale mechanized monocultures generate 1 job per 67 hectares.
- in Colombia, where palm oil is replacing (largely unionized) banana production:  
1000 hectares banana = 2000 jobs  
1000 hectares palm oil = 100 jobs

Banana-grower with a well managed three hectares can live with his family, while with three hectares of palm – **Not**.



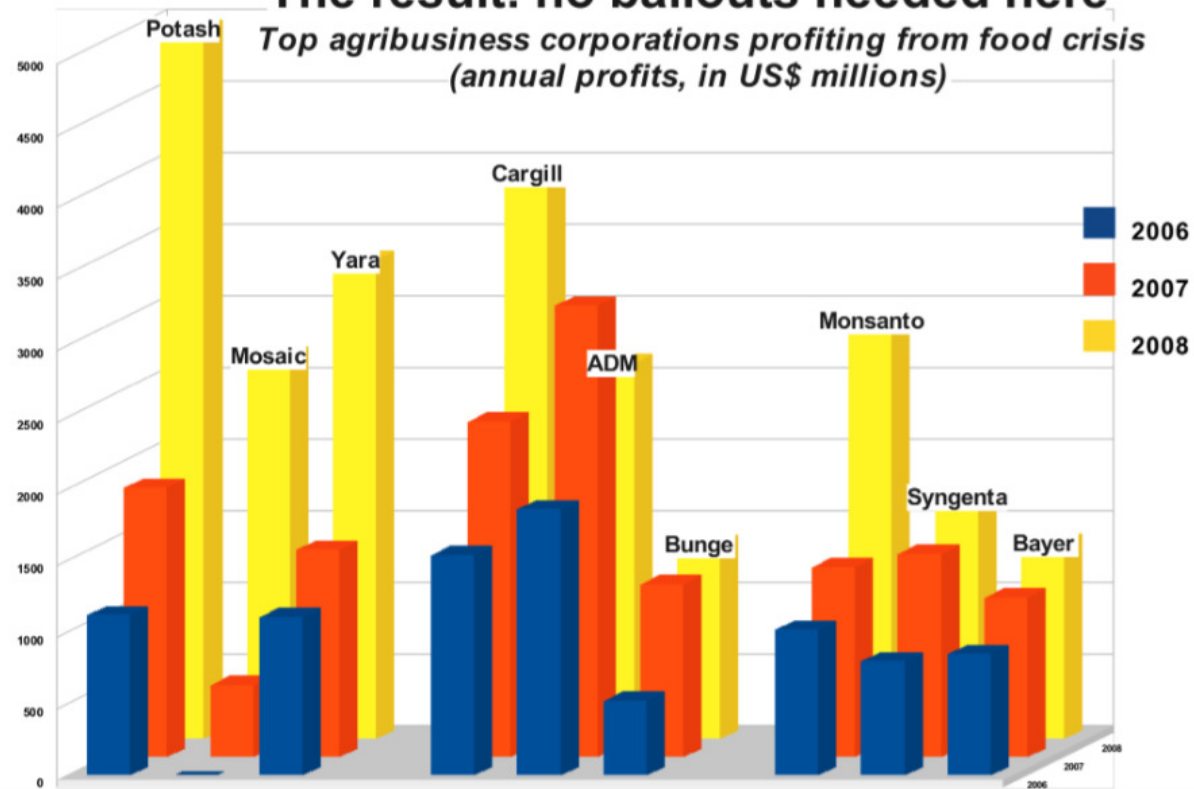
# Global food - permanent crisis

- high rates of malnutrition among agricultural workers - those who help feed the world are among the most food insecure
- workers right to a **living wage** must be insured in order to buy the food they need for them and their families. There are clear ILO and other statistics on the low wages in agriculture – as low as 1 USD per day
- crop price has an impact on wages
- lack of workplace rights means lack of access to adequate food and potable water

.....while the number of hungry people has increased in the last few years, corporate profits for the traders and primary processors are at the record levels .....

## The result: no bailouts needed here

*Top agribusiness corporations profiting from food crisis  
(annual profits, in US\$ millions)*



- Between 1995 and 2000, the price of maize in Mexico fell by 70 % while the price of tortillas, the staple maize bread increased by 300%, and quadrupled in the space of few months in 2007. In these 5 years, an estimated 1.3 million workers and small farmers were forced to abandon the countryside in search of work. Many of these were forced to leave Mexico.

# Conclusions

## Agriculture - a better workplace

- No matter how many billions or even trillions flow into agriculture, this investment fails to deliver decent work and fails to advance the **right to food**. Social regulation at national level, including the implementation of ILO standards, is necessary to ensure that these capital flows are channelled into **decent work, poverty alleviation and sustainable food security**.
- The most fundamental demands of agricultural workers - for a **living wage, for collective bargaining rights, for a safe living and working environment** - take us in the direction of sustainable agriculture - “green jobs”.

The background is a solid blue gradient. A thin, light blue curved line starts from the top left and arcs towards the right. A larger, semi-transparent blue triangular shape is positioned on the right side, pointing towards the center.

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**