

Hazelnut won't Remain on the Branch

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS



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Agricultural Workers and Their Children in Hazelnut Harvesting and Necessary Measures

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Harvesting and Necessary Measures A Rapid Assessment

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A Rapid Assessment

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Acknowledgment

The Covid-19 outbreak brought along many restrictions while those related to travel and personal contact forced us to alter our survey methods. Having long years of experience in actual fieldwork in many studies, the Development Workshop Cooperative has been organizing its activities online for the last four months. This present rapid assessment was also concluded on the basis of distance interviews and desktop review within such a short period of time as two months.

We are greatly indebted to agricultural intermediaries and hazelnut orchard owners as well as academics, professional organizations, civil society organizations, chambers of agriculture and firm representatives who sincerely shared their views with us.

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Executive Summary

Emerging first in China at the end of 2019 and then rapidly spreading to other parts of the world, the Covid-19 outbreak affected Turkey starting with March 2020 and measures taken as a part of control efforts led to halting and/or slowing down of economic activities and production in many sectors. Agriculture is one of the leading ones among these sectors. Agricultural activities in Turkey spread over a long period from the end of March to November and the sector employs hundreds and thousands of seasonal migrant agricultural workers in various crops. Decisions and measures designed to counter the outbreak have already started to affect production processes in different crops and locations where seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children are employed.

The basic objective of the rapid assessment “Possible Effects of Coronavirus Outbreak on the Participation of Seasonal Agricultural Workers and Their Children to Hazelnut Harvesting and Relevant Measures” is to expose risks that seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children Face/may face in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic as the most vulnerable and invisible layer of the society, how the present pandemic may affect production processes, and to contribute to the development of local, regional and national measures to minimize these risks particularly in the context of seasonal migrant agricultural workers who are expected to participate in hazelnut harvesting in August 2020. The assessment also seeks to investigate the possible effects of the outbreak on hazelnut harvesting.

Four major instruments were employed in the assessment. Firstly, there was desk review of news and discussions in the world and in Turkey on possible effects of the pandemic on agricultural production and food supply chains. The process analysis which followed examined measures adopted in Turkey under

the Circular issued by the Ministry of Interior, General Directorate of Provincial Administrations on 3 April 2020 and local commission decisions taken in line with this Circular in the period April-May 2020 in provinces where there is tea and hazelnut production. Then there were the key actors/institutions platform to facilitate the tracing of the process and to confirm the implementation of measures adopted in various locations. The WhatsApp group consisting of 95 participants as representatives of different institutions that the Development Workshop Cooperative had established contacts during its earlier studies served as an important communication platform providing update information about relevant developments taking place, working of measures adopted and problems that arose.

As a part of this preliminary work, two survey instruments were designed as questionnaire and semi-structured interview form. The questionnaire was administrated to 50 agricultural intermediaries taking workers to hazelnut harvest and 50 hazelnut orchard owners who were selected from two administrative districts of each of the provinces of Düzce, Giresun, Ordu, Sakarya and Samsun which, according to TÜİK data, accounted for 80 per cent of total hazelnut production in Turkey. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from 31 institutions having different responsibilities at different stages of hazelnut production including relevant government agencies, farmer/producer unions, civil society organizations, private sector firms, chambers of agriculture and professional organizations.

In the period 16-30 May 2020 when the rapid assessment was conducted it was observed that all these actors were in a state of waiting in relation to what could happen in hazelnut harvesting under outbreak circumstances. There are four factors that play their roles this



The survey study was applied to 50 agricultural intermediaries who brought workers to the hazelnut harvest and 50 hazelnut garden owners selected from two districts of Düzce, Giresun, Ordu, Sakarya and Samsun provinces that realized 80% of the hazelnut production according to TURKSTAT data.

waiting period: **(a)** The fact that what was experienced in the period April-May 2020 in relation to the implementation of Covid-19 measures pointed out to some significant uncertainties, **(b)** the expectation emerging at the end of May 2010 that there will be gradual normalization in June and some measures that lead to uncertainties will be lifted, **(c)** the expectation that the effects of the outbreak will have vanished until harvesting that will start at the end of July, and **(d)** the fact that the Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers Monitoring Commission, which was established under the Circular on Seasonal Agricultural Workers issued back in 2010 and amended in 2017 and used to take important decisions relating to hazelnut harvest, has not met yet.

Meanwhile, it was also found that hazelnut orchard owners and representatives from institutions involved in hazelnut harvest started at the end of April to closely follow developments taking place in tea harvest and to think about the possible effects of the outbreak on hazelnut harvest. It must also be noted that most of suggestions developed in this context were related to hazelnut harvest and problems of migrant agricultural workers including their families and children that had been stated for a long time. For example, while continuous access to safe water, access to bath and hot water in accommodation areas, toilet facilities, coverage of transportation costs and prevention of child labour may have gained more importance and become more visible in the context of efforts to prevent transmission the outbreak, they are actually essential needs not limited to the context of the disease. It is therefore expressed by different actors interviewed that interventions made in these areas in the context of disease prevention may serve as the ground for long-expected improvements.

For following up problems pointed out under the survey and ensuring that suggestions for solution are actually translated into sustained improvements there is need for regular data flow relating to the sector. Hazelnut production constitutes a commercially valuable agricultural production extending over a rather large area, involving different actors, owners of different orchard types and sizes and where yield may vary with respect to location and altitude. Regular collection of data relating to production and producers is necessary to understand the problems of the agricultural production and to respond to needs that derive from differences mentioned above. A data collection matrix of hazelnut garden owners was developed in the light of information gathered under the study to respond to this need (Annex 8). Annual data related to orchard owner typology, labour force needed and cost calculations to be collected by using this instrument will provide an important database making it possible to closely monitor the sector and introduce improvements.

To mention basic findings of the assessment we can list the following:

Firstly, measures taken against the Covid-19 outbreak, in particular travel restrictions and rules related to half capacity in transportation vehicles are known by all interviewees; but there are still uncertainties about exactly how they are to be implemented. It is stated that there will be difficulties in supplying required labour force if these rules are implemented including transportation costs that will inevitably rise, but with uncertainty about who is to cover these increased costs. Nevertheless, there is also the widespread opinion that since hazelnut-purchasing prices will be high this year cost implication of rules may not pose a significant problem. It is said that hazelnut output in Düzce and Sakarya provinces may fall

by half in case seasonal migrant agricultural workers cannot, partly or totally, take part in harvesting. For other provinces it is said that the traditional imece (collective work) practice may be re-introduced, otherwise absent orchard owners may take up their orchards with their families, there will be higher domestic labour force supply as a result of increased unemployment, and that nobody will leave hazelnut on trees since higher prices are expected this year. In short, there is a common belief that hazelnut will not remain on branches.

Hazelnut orchard owners and representatives from different organizations interviewed admit that there will be difficulties in the implementation of measures adopted against the Covid-19 outbreak, but also regard these measures as an opportunity to take different but mutually reinforcing steps ahead including: formal registration of intermediaries and workers they represent, better grasping the need for labour force that varies by years and geographical regions, reconsideration of costs involved, spread of some new techniques as mechanized harvesting and ground covering along with required investments and plot arrangements, and initiatives to ensure coordination between different actors with important places in hazelnut production.

In order to keep under control possible effects of measures against Covid-19 on crop farming, seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their children, it is necessary to ensure the coordination of local institutions that are expected to develop solutions on the basis of central decision-making mechanisms in agricultural production and specific needs arising from production processes in different provinces. This structure will provide the ground for the leading actors of hazelnut production including agricultural intermediaries, orchard owners, big firms, local headmen, relevant

professional and civil society organizations to be in a rewarding communication.

It is a common concern expressed by different actors that implementation of Covid-19 measures will inevitably increase costs and families may turn to let their children work as a coping strategy in the face of altered circumstances. In fact, this is a global concern going beyond hazelnut production alone. On the other hand, studies suggest that the effect of unexpected changes in income on the incidence of child labour varies with respect to the type of labour force, mode of production and regional-cultural differences which make any universal generalization impossible.

Representatives from institutions interviewed state different opinions on this matter. Firstly, it is stated that it is not a preference but a must for families to travel with their children; the use of children as labourers would be inefficient for orchard owners anyway, but full control in this regard is not easy to achieve especially in cases where families stay at places close to orchards. If alternatives do not exist in places where worker families stay children may still enter in orchards for such things as carrying water, etc. though not as full workers. It is further stated that even if the cost increases are compensated for, all family members including children may work in case sufficient labour force cannot be supplied and the yield is high.

They say orchard owners attach importance to the presence of their own children in orchards since they see it as a way of acquiring knowledge and experience in this activity. Pointing out to stagnancy in construction and some other sectors, academics and civil society organizations (CSOs) speak about the possibility of larger participation by local workers and since employers avoid using child labour they maintain that the situation may not actually be

different than in earlier years. In all cases, it is said, official interventions and supervision will have its special importance while stressing the need for continuous information building.

When asked which actors can do what on possible effects of Covid-19 measures on hazelnut harvesting, agricultural intermediaries and orchard owners point out to the regulating and supervisory role governmental agencies which they refer to as the “State”. While expectations from private firms as to the cost of supply of some materials needed in implementing measures are stated, there was no opinion concerning CSOs. On their part, firms state that they are presently active in informing agricultural intermediaries and orchard owners and they are going to update their present training activities related to outbreak measures. Representatives from commercial firms say some problems of seasonal migrant agricultural workers may disappear when labour force supply and demand is managed in a planned way. They add government agencies may play a coordinating role in initiatives to this end, but required cooperation has not been ensured yet. CSOs say they have started their work in the context of their annual support will update their hygiene kits within the framework of measures adopted against the outbreak.

When the report was being prepared, it was announced that gradual normalization would start on 1 June 2020 with mention of some flexibility in rules related to travels, but without any clarification as to how these rules would be applied in the case of seasonal migrant agricultural workers. According to post-interviews conducted with target groups, the rule of “reducing the maximum number of passengers” in longer distance travels is still in effect, but not supervised as rigidly as it was at the beginning of the process. Meanwhile it

is stated by highest authorities that all initial measures would be made applicable again in case of a revival of the outbreak or a possible incoming of a second wave. It can therefore be considered that data collected on this agenda under the rapid assessment is important also as independent from outbreak circumstances. As a matter of fact, one of the basic themes that all parties agree is that problems faced by seasonal migrant agricultural workers as well as their families and children, which exist independent of outbreak environments, have now become much more visible in the context of measures taken against the disease. In this sense, the present report may be seen as an extension of earlier studies in hazelnut production conducted by the Development Workshop Cooperative and a contribution to efforts to give effect to required improvements.



Suggestions Relating To Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers Who Will Take Part In Hazelnut Harvest During The Virus Outbreak

In the second half of May 2020 when this rapid assessment was made, the parties were still waiting to see the effects of the outbreak. Although “gradual normalization” started as of 1 June 2020 with travel restrictions largely lifted there were still uncertainties about how these flexibilities would affect the mobility of seasonal migrant labour. It was announced by authorities, however, that partially mitigated measures would be re-introduced in case of a second wave of the disease. Meanwhile, although 13 guidelines prepared by the Ministry of Health for ministries related to trades that they are in charge of, there is yet none related to those engaged in agricultural production.¹

Thus, comments and findings related to travel restrictions most frequently expressed by different participants were maintained in the “Suggestions” part of the report. It must be stressed here that the point that is strongly and commonly mentioned by intermediaries, orchard owners and institutions is that the problems of seasonal migrant agricultural workers in hazelnut harvest do not emanate from the recent Covid-19 outbreak. Indeed, measures that are stated as necessary against the outbreak in April-May 2020 actually coincide with needs that have been stressed for years in relation to working and accommodation conditions of seasonal migrant agricultural workers. Another point commonly agreed upon by different groups is that steps taken during the outbreak in relation to working and accommodation conditions of workers will contribute to long-term improvements in the solution of existing problems. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that problems that become visible with the Covid-19 outbreak cannot be solved at once. The outbreak must become a fresh starting point for the so-

lution of these problems in medium and longer terms and lay the ground for joint efforts by the parties for more concrete outcomes.

It is observed that regular data collection is critical in ensuring sustained solutions and improvements. This regular data collection must consider different actors involved including different types of orchard owners, different plot sizes and different modes of harvesting with respect to area and altitude in a rather wide geography. For this purpose, a hazelnut orchard owner data collection matrix was prepared in the light of information collected in the study (ANNEX-8). With data annually collected for orchard owner typology by using this matrix, there will be an important database for monitoring the sector and introducing necessary improvements.

Cooperation and Coordination in Ensuring Easy Access to Information and Supervision of On-going Practices

- As stated in the section discussing outbreak-related developments taking place in Turkey, Seasonal Agricultural Workers Coordination Boards were established under governorates in some provinces on the basis of a circular issued by the Ministry of Interior on April 3, 2020 concerning the ways of implementing Covid-19 measures in agricultural production. These boards are expected to take decisions that also pertain to seasonal migrant agricultural workers and to work in cooperation with Provincial Public Health Boards under Health Directorates and Provincial Pandemic Boards under governorates. However, star-

ting from mid-April there were serious uncertainties relating to the travel possibilities and permissions of “absentee farmers” and seasonal migrant agricultural workers.

- Measures adopted in provinces with tea and hazelnut production in the period April-May 2020 were examined as a part of rapid assessment and it was observed that various exemptions were introduced to restrictions in these areas as harvest time came closer.
- During interviews, it was found that some orchard owners were living elsewhere, even abroad, and engaged in occupations other than farming; titles of their plots back in their hometowns or villages are held by their parents and they faced difficulties in getting travel permission. These permissions could be secured through warrants of attorney upon the initiative of chambers of agriculture. It was further found that similar difficulties are also faced by agricultural intermediaries who are assisted by hazelnut processing firms and others producing final goods.
- It is observed that Chambers of Agriculture, hazelnut firms, agricultural intermediaries and orchard owners all have their concerns about how measures related to travel as well as in working and accommodation areas are to be implemented in practice.
- Meanwhile, the mobility of seasonal migrant agricultural workers is a source of worry for both workers and orchard owners. For example, some agricultural intermediaries say workers have their hesitations about going to Zonguldak (included in curfew together with 30 metropolitan pro-

vinces) and Düzce and Sakarya (for their proximity to İstanbul).

- In spite of all these uncertainties, there is still need for channels to provide correct information endowed with information concerning differences at local level. Such an information channel will also serve an important function in coordinating the work of different actors.
- It must be noted that it is important to ensure two-directional flow in these channels rather than one channel where parties are merely notified by centrally taken decisions.
- It may be considered to set up WhatsApp communication groups at province/district level to inform different actors taking part in hazelnut production. Since agricultural intermediaries presently communicate with hazelnut orchard owners and local headmen to estimate labour demand and plan for travels, orchard owners try to obtain information on specific issues from chambers of agriculture and firms and local headmen convey decisions taken at governorate level to their localities, such a communication platform will be important to ensure that information held by specific actors is shared by all.
- During interviews it was frequently stressed that supervision is needed not only in interprovincial travels but also in places where seasonal migrant agricultural workers stay and work in their destination districts/provinces.
- Supply of correct information by Agriculture and Forestry Province/District Directorates, İŞKUR Provincial Directorates,

Province/District Health Directorates, METİP province offices and Chambers of Agriculture in provinces receiving intensive labour migration will also facilitate the participation of local security forces to the process for purposes of enforcement.

- Such coordination that will be created for ensuring information flow and supervision of measures as open to the participation of different actors at local level will also be functional after the pandemic in introducing improvements in many fields including matching of supply and demand.

Organization of Intercity and Urban Travel

- It was a serious uncertainty for both hazelnut orchard owners and seasonal migrant agricultural workers how people at age under 20 and over 65 could be able to travel given their lockdown. Then, with decisions taken in April and May substantial exemptions were introduced. By 1 June 2020, the requirement of interprovincial travel permit was lifted as a part of gradual normalization process while there are still uncertainties how the half capacity rule in transportation is to be implemented.
- Due to travel restrictions introduced in April-May 2020 and uncertainties still going on about half capacity rules in vehicles transportation costs are expected to rise with implications on production costs.
- Although it is said in many cases that accommodation and working areas are close to each other at walking distances, workers will have to travel from tent settlements to orchards, to different districts of the same

province or to neighbouring provinces. It is still not clear how these travels will be organized. There is need to introduce rules about this issue and determine how related costs are to be covered.

- Hazelnut harvest season coincides with the period in which remedial education is delivered either in schools or online. Irrespective of the present outbreak, this poses some difficulties to workers in organizing their return to home. It is yet unclear how things go this year given the outbreak conditions.
- All these uncertainties leave workers in hesitation as to taking part in hazelnut harvest. At present there is need to come up with a solution how increased costs will be covered and to extent cash support to intermediaries and workers for transportation.
- The coordination mechanism mentioned above may assume important functions in regulating transportation both during the outbreak and after.

Improvements in working areas

- Agricultural intermediaries and hazelnut orchard owners must be informed how distancing measures will be followed in working areas. Given hazelnut as the issue, distances between trees may be too short and there must be solutions particularly on keeping this distance in orchards located in high altitude and/or inclined places. Agricultural intermediaries and workers must be informed about these solutions before harvest.

- Health teams must regularly visit working areas and conduct inspections related to the delivery of health services needed and implementation of measures.
- Firms' active participation to work safety and health measures must be ensured. Firms' participation to efforts to ensure transportation to working areas, provision of bath and toilet facilities, supply of safe water, nutrition and hygiene materials is important. Firms may also develop a common plan to ensure the mobilization of orchard owners in these issues.
- In hazelnut orchards, suitable spaces must be allocated to workers for meals and resting which must also be large enough for observing the rule of physical distancing.
- Seasonal migrant agricultural workers must be given priority in providing personal protective equipment and this equipment must be distributed free to workers by orchard owners, chambers of agriculture, traders and governmental agencies.

Improvements in accommodation areas

- Interviews suggest that in most cases; houses, barracks and building existing in orchards are used for workers' accommodation. Alternatives include temporary tent settlements and METIP areas. In this context, problematic areas and orchards can be identified in the light of data obtained by firms in their social work and efforts can be made to provide alternative workers' accommodation facilities to workers. For example, public buildings presently vacant can be used for this purpose.



- In all cases, agricultural intermediaries and hazelnut orchard owners must be informed about how personal distancing rule is to be implemented. Besides face-to-face information building there may be informative materials like posters and brochures to be widely disseminated. Preparations can be made to mobilize government support in this issue.
- Prior to hazelnut harvest camping sites must be visited to identify needed materials and services.
- The Red Crescent, AFAD, private firms and civil society organizations must provide free additional tent support to ensure social distancing in cases where workers stay in buildings, barracks or annexes in orchards.
- Throughout the harvesting period, there must be regular inspections to check how measures are being implemented. Social workers in firms may have a leading role in this. There may also be mobile teams at province/district level to do the same with the participation of personnel from both public and private sectors.
- Number, age intervals, people aged 65+, those with chronic diseases and pregnant women to stay in workers' accommodation areas must be identified and recorded. Data obtained must be applied on a map to be given to the government body in the district and each district must develop an emergency plan in this context.
- Supply of safe and adequate water without cuts is one of the most pressing needs for seasonal migrant agricultural workers.

This gained a special importance given the outbreak. This need must be urgently met particularly with the support of local governments.

- There must be support in supplying materials that may be needed in workers' accommodation areas including soap, cologne, tissue, hygienic pad, diaper etc. The importance of washing hands is frequently stressed in this process. Large bins with taps may be placed in both orchards and staying places for hand washing. These bins may also be used to inform workers with visual materials placed on.
- Costs of electricity and water used in houses, barracks or annexes in orchards are covered by orchard owners. These costs must be covered also for all seasonal migrant agricultural workers staying in tent settlements out of METIP spaces.
- It is stressed that healthy nutrition is important in combatting the outbreak. Families must be supported by providing spaces

and means where they can make their meals and also food support. Families must also be provided cooking units.

- Facilities such as bath, hot water and toilet must be available for ensuring personal care and hygiene after working hours considering that the season is summer. These facilities must be regularly disinfected and relevant materials must be supplied.
- Regular waste collection and disinfection must be ensured in camping spaces.
- There must be informative panels on Covid-19 outbreak in camping sites which must also include communication information of places to apply in case there is any need.
- In camping sites or in their vicinity there must be spaces and facilities to respond to needs of children.
- During interviews some institutional representatives mentioned the possibility of higher incidence of child labour as a ba-



lancing strategy against increasing costs triggered by the pandemic. Given this possibility, there must be information building and supervision activities in camping and workers' accommodation areas. Monitoring the participation of children in production process specifically gains importance for this year.

- Temporary tent settlements must be regularly visited together with regular health check-ups. Besides, to be supplied by orchard owners, simple thermometers can be used by team leaders to take the temperature of workers on daily basis. It is therefore important to inform both orchard owners and working team leaders about the indications of the disease.
- There must be emergency quarantine spaces close to settlements and workers' accommodation areas against possible cases of transmission.
- There must be necessary infrastructure to take the place under quarantine if any case of Covid-19 is detected while extending necessary health and food support.

Support package for seasonal migrant agricultural workers engaged in crop farming and their families

- The implementation of measures against Covid-19 will have their bearing on costs of production. Some institutional representatives interviewed say the price of hazelnut is expected to be quite high this year and this high price will positively mitigate the situation for farmers. Nevertheless, a series of in-kind and in-cash support sche-

mes must be considered to keep seasonal migrant agricultural workers and families protected against negative effects of cost increase.

- In this context, there must be work on needs assessment and resource utilization to follow production process in provinces.
- Throughout the outbreak, support schemes like the Red Crescent Card which is presently available for Syrians under temporary protection can be considered for seasonal migrant worker families who are citizens of Turkey.
- Those who will be eligible for such support schemes may be determined by the board suggested at local scale in coordination with orchard owners, agricultural intermediaries and the Chambers of Agriculture.



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