

Agri-employers from Cahul: „This autumn, we harvest the grapes, while children win football cups”

The Monitoring Team of the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and Food Industry (FNPAIA) recently conducted a visit to Cahul to monitor how agri-employers from this region harvest their crops in this school year without child labour.

The FNPAIA Team for Monitoring the Code of Conduct for Employers on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Agriculture and the Food Industry visited several agri-enterprises from Cahul Raion to see how agri-employers observe their Code of Conduct.

„After FNPAIA launched discussions with its member-employers about child labour, I changed the priorities”, said Petru Mihov, the manager of „Terra-Vitis” Ltd from village of Burlacu, Cahul. „Now the children are busy playing football, as extra-curricular activities. They have won many awards and football-cups”, proudly said Petru Mihov.

In Burlacu, a village with a population of 2 500 inhabitants, there are only 300 school-children. For several years Petru Mihov has been growing 73 varieties of grapes with advanced technologies, but not with child labour. In fact, the children have their own work and the manager specified: „to study well at school. After classes, the children play football and are real competitors to the adults”.

In Burlacu, the FNPAIA Monitoring Team witnessed an example of how agri-business can combine profit with social responsibility. This is the goal of an enterprise, said Petru Mihov: „getting of profits and contributing to economic growth of the country”.

Mr Mihov’s statement is confirmed by the opinion of other agri-employers, met by the Monitoring Team in Cahul. Ecaterina Vulpe, director of the „Agro-Prut,” cooperative thought that the Moldovan tradition to educate children through work, should be transformed into theoretical modules where the children would learn how vegetables grow, while this theory would be applied on the school-plot. „We really don’t want the children to be taken out of the school and brought to work for us. We have machinery and technologies for that; and we don’t know how to keep the adults so that they would not go to foreign countries”, said Ecaterina Vulpe. „We need to educate in our children love for their homeland”.

A similar situation is registered in village of Larga Nouă from Cahul: with priorities on education. Ion Curjos, manager of „Natcubi-Agro” Ltd, has decided some years ago to cultivate crops, which does not require much manual work.

The Monitoring Team wanted to know if there were cases when children were sent to work on the fields instead of going to school, based on agreements between the school and agri-enterprises. In Burlacu and Larga Nouă the contact has rather a different contents – support offered by the managers to schools and/or kindergartens. For example, the director Ion Curjos contributed in the framework of a project, to procure computers for the school. Along with the „heart projects”, as Petru Mihov calls his sports initiatives for the children and the youth, he contributed with financial support to repair the roof of Burlacu school. „I did not do it in exchange of children’s work even if sometimes I need extra labour. There are over 70 employees working for the enterprise „Terra-Vitis” and we also hired an engineer in charge of occupational safety. The things should have their good arrangement: employees – with jobs, and children – with school”, stated Petru Mihov.

Since 2005 the FNPAIA is implementing a project on Combating Child Labour in the Agricultural Sector in Moldova, with technical assistance of the ILO Bureau for Employers’ Activities (ILO-ACT/EMP) and funding from the Government of Norway. The objectives of the project are to create awareness among employers’ communities on the issue of child labour, create attitudes

against the worst forms of child labour, and to encourage employers to hire minors only in accordance with legal provisions.

The CODE OF CONDUCT FOR EMPLOYERS on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in agriculture is available online at:

http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/projects/code_conduct_en.pdf (in English) and

http://www.fnpaia.org/data/files/library/11/CoddeConduita_ROM.pdf (in Romanian):

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