

# THE EXPERIENCE OF LECCE

Stop undeclared work in agriculture

RAISE UP



## *Monica Accogli*

The main activity I have dealt with since joining Flai is the “sindacato di strada”.

The “sindacato di strada” activity is the only way to get in touch with workers involved in harvesting.

The goal of the activity is to dismantle the gangmasters’ system.

Before starting the initiative, I conducted an analysis of the socio-economic context mainly because the territory of Lecce is quite articulate, counting 97 municipalities.

I used official data sources, such as the Chamber of Commerce, the national social security institution, the Employment Center and also data I personally retrieved from internet sources

Monica Accogli has been in Cgil since 2005 and she currently is Provincial Secretary General of the Flai Cgil of Lecce.

Our comrades from local Chambers of Labor help us effectively. As our province counts indeed many municipalities, it is advisable to interact directly with those who know each Municipality well.

It is necessary to prepare at least two months before to be able to organize the initiative.

Economic resources need to be found among into the Flai funds at each level involved:

national, regional and territorial union.

When you go to the fields it is important to offer gadgets to workers.

In recent campaigns, we have offered straw hats and water, but it is also important to give to workers information material with the contact details of the Flai comrades.

At first, it is advisable to open a dialogue with the Prefecture; then, subsequently, it is necessary to also open the dialogue with the police.

Our hope is that the employment centers will also be directly involved in this activity because they could confirm the commitment we place in the entire campaign.

In Lecce province it is a well established practice to dialogue with the prefecture through a permanent table. At this table sit the trade unions Cgil, Cisl and Uil, Fai, Flai and Uila and also employers' organizations Confagricoltura, Coldiretti and Cia; as well as the Region, the Province and also the mayor of the municipality of Nardò; which is the municipality where the problem of caporalato is more present.

**“The hope is that all social and institutional parties approach the phenomenon of caporalato in a proactive way”**

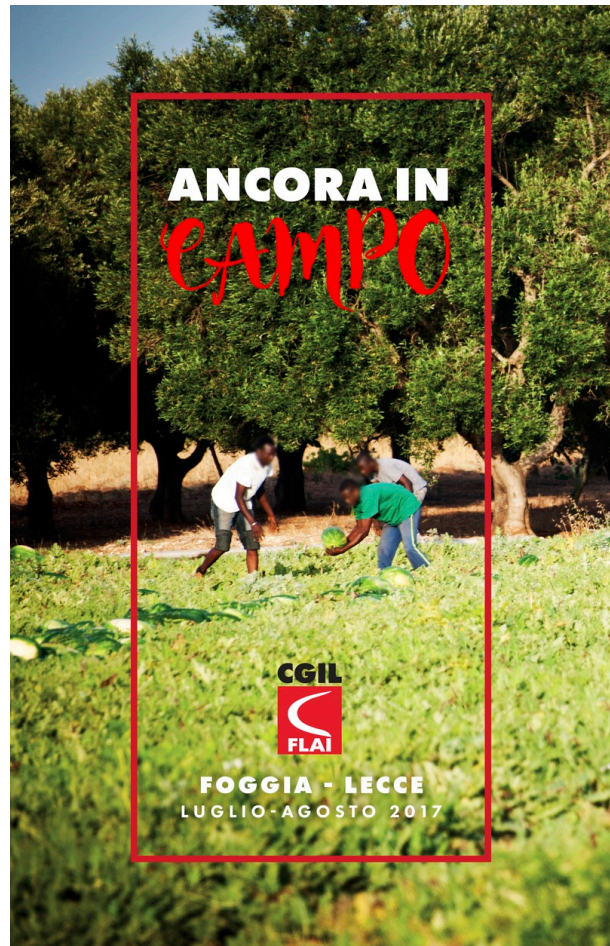
During the planning phase of the project it is necessary to exchange views with the territorial Confederation; then, during the executive phase, the approach that the INCA patronage (National Confederal Assistance Institute) offers through its advice is fundamental.

In Lecce, Flai Cgil press office gives a crucial contribution because, even

before the opening of the on-field activities communicate to all the newspapers about the beginning and the whole action.

Furthermore, in the past years, we have organized a press conference within the hospitality village.

Also throughout the harvesting campaign we inform through the various social networks on everything that happens daily, sharing photos or simply the story of the typical day.



With the campaign “Ancora in campo”, which takes place in the months of July and August, Flai wants to denounce what happens in the countryside and towards workers engaged in harvesting tomatoes and watermelons about their rights, respect for contracts and wages

For the past two years, the Puglia Region has established a hospitality village at the former “Boncuri farm”, the place where the migrant workers were staying anyway. Several containers can accommodate migrant workers provided with regular residence permit.

In the past years, approximately 300 migrant workers have stayed at this center.

The village is managed by the Civil Protection and it is the meeting point where workers are picked up and taken to the fields to harvest the product.

With Flai Cgil Puglia camper, we move starting in the early hours of the morning.

The meeting point is at the hospitality village. Usually we gather at the village at 5 am already

and we move in groups of 3 to 6. Comrades from Inca may also attend.

Then we move immediately to the harvest fields. Once in the fields, we meet with the workers and of course we deliver the gadgets we have with us (as the straw hat) and we begin to chat starting from the work they do.

In the afternoon, we return to the hospitality village because the workers return to the village during the afternoon hours.

Thanks to our Inca comrades, we are able to provide social security consulting.

When we go to the fields we notice immediately whether there is the presence of the gangmaster or not because, when the gangmaster is not there, we notice a kind of enthusiasm on the part of the workers towards us, they welcome us very often with a smile.

When, instead, they are indifferent to our presence, we immediately understand that the gangmaster, or even the entrepreneur, are nearby.

The data we collect during the entire season are registered in some tables and from those data we begin to evaluate the positive aspects and the negative aspects from which to start.

The hope is that all social and institutional parties approach the phenomenon of caporalato in a proactive way.

In reality, we read instead an attitude that is nothing short of sufficient in the sense that they await,

only if urged, they answer, but they are never proactive. We can certainly improve the sharing phase.

The hope is that a coordination can be established at national level through which to share the best experiences and be able to establish which are the essential steps to keep with this on field union activity.

It would have been appropriate, even before engaging in the activity of ‘sindacato di strada’, to have acquired geopolitical notions because very often

the origin of the workers from the different territories can make the difference.