
THE EXPERIENCE OF CUNEO

Stop undeclared work in agriculture

RAISE UP



Zeno Foderaro

In July 2018 we set up sindacato di strada in Saluzzo because there was and there is still today an intolerable situation of workers exploitation and of housing and social hardship about 700 workers who since at least 7-8 years have been sleeping in the open air from May to November following the collection of apricots up to kiwis.

The goal is to organize workers: those workers you need to create a mini army that you need during the trade union negotiations for renewal of the contracts.

So the sindacato di strada was a different way to make trade union activity: do not wait for the workers to come into your office to tell you that they have problems, go to the workers on their workplace in

Zeno Foderaro is Secretary of Flai Cgil in Cuneo and since 2012 he has been involved in all the initiatives Flai Cgil realized against undeclared work in agriculture.

the countryside trying to inform them in advance about their condition which in most cases is exploitation and of gray labor.

The gray work is not to respect the canons of national and provincial contracts, despite the worker has signed a contract.

The first thing is organization: if you want to realize projects the organization is very important and for this reason we commissioned a research at the IRES Morosini institute on local systems of work in

the province of Cuneo and therefore also on the presence of foreigners in the agricultural sector, where they are employed, the different ethnic groups, the various forms of contracts, etc. and it was fundamental because we learned that there was a serious problem of exploitation of workers. Getting in touch with workers is essential, according to their origin they organize themselves in a different way. African workers behave differently from Chinese workers or Macedonian or Bulgarian workers, as a result also the methods of approach are different and having workers who act as intermediaries especially helping you to overcome language barriers it helps you work.

We started in 2018 with the sindacato di strada and we found interested people who approached us and we started to make contacts for the following campaigns because there are more or less always the same workers.

The organization is very important: it took two very intense weeks of physical, concrete patrolling, in the countryside thanks also to new technologies like the google maps tag.

We did the sindacato di strada for two weeks in July, during the harvesting of peaches and in these two weeks we have patrolled all the 21 Municipality of fruit cultivation in the Saluzzo area I tagged the fields of peaches on Google Maps in order to facilitate work and we started with the project we already know where to go.

This was our organization: two two eight-seater minibuses for each bus there had to be at least one companion expert in services who could give general answers to agricultural unemployment application and to accidents and disability applications, a companion from the immigration department who could answer on the residence permit that's the first thing the workers ask for and a Flai companion who is an expert in contracts.

"The street union is a different mode of trade union action in daily life: it does not wait for workers to come to union offices"

In the camps, if there is the owner, it is almost impossible to have contact with the workers because inevitably it comes

to the clash and you have very little time because even the worker is afraid to talk to you. You have an average of 5 minutes, or 10 if you are lucky, to talk to the workers we delivered a straw hat because they work at 40 degrees for 10-12 hours a day a bottle of water where we stuck on to the label the addresses of the offices, the telephone numbers of the officials involved in agriculture and immigration, and then because workers move mainly by bicycle we



The organization is very important: during the preventive patrol, the peach fields were marked with Google Maps placeholders.

even delivered bike lights for safety because in the early morning it is still too dark and this year too there have been too many accidents.

Relations with institutions are important: the Municipality of Saluzzo has helped us a lot regarding the Seasonal Reception Project which is a parallel project to the sindacato di strada and that allowed us, through the organization of reception, to organize the workers. The agricultural sector is not like the industrial sector, you do not have all the workers in one place of work, but they are scattered throughout the territory.

Given the housing discomfort we decided to organize the reception: in the evening at 19:00 when they came back from the fields there was the queue to come to the container of the Flai Cgil to check the paycheck or get more information.

As regards to communication, you need to evaluate the territorial context: we have evaluated not to communicate the initiative at the very beginning because we were afraid that employers would take immediate countermeasures and that was actually what they did during the second week.

It starts around 7:00 because being in Northern Italy the temperature allows it: the workers go to look for work in the fields, we organize the bus with the gadgets and then we leave for the area of Saluzzo.

You must have a proactive approach, a human approach that puts workers in a position to trust you. You must study: I have studied this type of phenomenon thanks to Flai which in the past made me participate in cultural exchange projects with foreign trade unions for example in Senegal trying to understand the culture of the worker, which is a culture different from ours and try to find meeting points.