

PRESS RELEASE

„Our richest crop are the children”, stated the agri-employers involved in the initiative of combating the worst forms of child labour in agriculture and the food industry

Bălți, December 10, 2008

During its visits across the country, the FNPAIA Monitoring Team discovered many encouraging examples of agri-entrepreneurs’ awareness of and compliance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct for Employers on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in agriculture and the food industry, but there is still some room for improvement.

The Monitoring Team, consisting of representatives from the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and the Food Industry (FNPAIA), visited several localities in five regions across the country – Orhei, Hâncești, Ștefan Vodă, Florești and Bălți, between 11 November and 9 December 2008 and identified many cases where agri-leaders were well acquainted with provisions of the Code of Conduct, promote its ideas and are involved in community initiatives for the benefit of children.

„Employers’ interest is to hire young people with real life skills who can work with advanced machinery and new technologies in their adult life. Here we need to find a balance between education and work experience without over-stepping the line between education through work experience and exploiting young workers”, stated academic Mihai Vronschih, Chairman of the Balti Association and leader of the FNPAIA Code Monitoring Team.

The Code of Conduct for Employers adopted by the FNPAIA in December 2007 makes a clear distinction between light work on the one hand, and harmful and hazardous work on the other. The term “child labour” does not refer to light work. The term “the worst forms of child labour” comprises work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, abuses and exploits the child and deprives the child of an education. (*ILO Convention No. 182*).

The FNPAIA Monitoring Team have identified many cases of good practices, where agri-managers use the Code of Conduct and refuse to hire children under the age of 15, prohibit certain types of heavy or harmful work to persons under 18, or set a reduced duration of work per day or per week for persons aged 15-16 and 16-18. The common voice of the employers, expressed during the monitoring events, was that “this Code is a very useful document – the main challenge is now to follow its provisions”, and that “our richest crop are the children”.

Vasile Pușcaș, manager of “Sturza Agro Nord” admitted that he passed through an intensive “thinking process” and came to the conclusion that “we need to help our younger generation to grow”. This was the reason why he adhered to the Code of Conduct.

At the same time, the FNPAIA team uncovered a few cases where the provisions of the Code and the labour law were not so closely followed. For example, a few agri-employers when signing an employment contract with persons under the age of 15, had not requested a written consent from parents as required. The members of the Monitoring Team have further the mandate from the FNPAIA, that if a child under the legal working age is identified, or youth under 18 years are involved in hazardous labour, they can insist that the employer takes measures to rectify the situation ensuring that the child’s best interests are taken in consideration.

The Code of Conduct for Employers on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in agriculture and the food industry was developed in a participative process. This Code represents a new initiative

at the sub-regional level, and was presented in June 2008 at the ILC in Geneva and also at an inter-regional workshop on good practices and sharing experiences on child labour, in October 2008 in Baku, Azerbaijan.

In the regions of the Republic of Moldova where the FNPAIA Monitoring Team conducted its monitoring visits, FNPAIA activities on combating child labour are promoted by the Agri-employers Associations: „Asproagro” (Orhei), „Viitorul” (Hâncești), „Uniagro-Prim” (Ștefan Vodă), „Floragrosper” (Florești) and UPA Bălți, which are members of the FNPAIA.

The message carried out by the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and the Food Industry in its awareness raising campaigns is that “The place of the child is at school and child’s work is to study”.

The initiatives mentioned above are conducted by the FNPAIA within the framework of their project on combating child labour supported by the ILO-Bureau for Employers’ Activities.