

Thriving Agricultural Communities



Supporting a multi-stakeholder approach in answering the question of the prevalence, if any, of child labour in the agricultural sector in North Carolina.

The agricultural sector is the largest contributor to exported goods in the United States. In North Carolina, agriculture alone contributed **\$92.7 billion dollars** in 2019 to the state's economy, while also accounting for **17% of all jobs**. Now more than ever, the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic have reinforced the critical importance that farmers play in helping to ensure that we not only survive these times, but that they are also continuing to work tirelessly to ensure that America has the resources, nourishment, and sustenance it needs to emerge and thrive in a post coronavirus era. Shocks to supply and demand in 2020 have tested the limitations of the sector, but in North Carolina, **agriculture stakeholders from across sectors** have banded together to support and reinforce good labor practices and to protect children from the pressures of child labor.

Collective action to address shared concerns

Throughout 2020, government representatives, farmers, agricultural trade associations, companies, civil society, farmworker organizations, and the University System of NC came together to advance the development of a multi-stakeholder supported Child Labor survey for North Carolina. The survey and/or 360 Assessment of Child Labor in Agriculture in North Carolina has three primary objectives:

1. Identifying good practices in the agricultural sector which are helping to prevent and/or reduce child labor
2. Identifying potential blind-spots, or entry points where child labour may enter into the equation, and
3. Supporting collective action to scale up good practices and/or close identified child labor gaps, to ensure that agriculture communities have the resources, knowledge and support needed to thrive.

Designing a state-wide survey that identifies the impact or prevalence of child labor within North Carolina's agricultural workforce by applying a 360 Assessment of:

- H-2A Temporary Agricultural Workers Program
- Seasonal Work
- Migrant Labor

Need for qualitative and quantitative child labor information

In 2019, the **Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing Foundation [ECLT]** received a delegation of growers (representing agricultural and tobacco farmer associations) from North Carolina, who voiced their concerns related to a global perception* of the prevalence of child labor in agriculture production throughout the state. Existing reports on child labor in North Carolina's agricultural supply chains are limited in providing quantitative data combined with qualitative/contextual approach (especially through the lens of COVID) to answer the question of the prevalence of child labor throughout the state. The Delegation further noted that any support provided by the Foundation, to identify both good practices and existing gaps in fighting child labor in the state "would be welcome and needed to help ensure that good labor practices were being supported, reinforced, and adapted to support both farmers and farmworkers alike".

U.S. Government Support

Subsequent to the growers' request, ECLT met with representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor International Labour Affairs Bureau in Washington DC. and with the U.S. Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division to receive the necessary guidance and support for carrying out such a survey. In mid-2019, ECLT was notified that the Wage & Hour Division in North Carolina received clearance to serve as a Technical Advisor for this effort.

Stakeholder consultations

Public institutions, in addition to the USDOL, include:

- NC Department of Agriculture
- NC Department of Commerce
- NC Department of Health & Human Services
- NC Department of Labor
- Mexican Consulate – Raleigh, NC

Farmers' associations include:

- North Carolina Growers' Association
- Tobacco Growers Association of North Carolina

Company support including from: Alliance One, Altria, RJ Reynolds, Universal Corp and ECLT Board.

Agricultural focused organisations including: Farm Labor Practices Group, GAP Connections, NC Agribusiness Council, NC Farm Bureau.

Ongoing engagement with trade unions, human rights and local farmworker organizations.

“The U.S. Department of Labor’s Wage and Hour Division is committed to ensuring minors and their parents are aware of the child labor rules and that employers comply. We encourage employment opportunities for minors, but they must be safe”.

Wage and Hour Division District Director, Tom Gauza, 2019.

Building a broad network of support

Throughout the course of 2020, ECLT has maintained strong contact and engagement with key agricultural stakeholders throughout the state, to ensure the requisite buy-in and support for the development of the proposed child labor survey, to determine the prevalence, if any, of child labor in agricultural supply chains, and to identify and support the collective actions needed to address and close any gaps. See above for stakeholder support and/or consultations.

Way forward

Throughout 2020-2021 ECLT, with the support of the University System of North Carolina’s Agro-medicine Institute and NC Department of Agriculture (state statistician), will work to design and implement a quantitative and qualitative survey tool that will elicit information from across various agricultural sectors including:

1. Number of children or youth working in the fields by age group including migrant or seasonal and non-migrant seasonal.
2. Availability of, and/or barriers to, child and youth programs in areas where children and youth are working in agriculture.
3. Health and safety education, procedures and equipment utilized in agriculture for children and youth.
4. Opportunities that exist for partnership to ensure availability of, and access to, programmes to serve children and youth.

Results from survey will be used to support:

- **Policy recommendations,**
- **Awareness raising efforts,**
- **Effective programming,**
- **Collective solutions which bring value to the state and ensure that agricultural communities thrive.**

About ECLT

The ECLT Foundation is committed to collaborative solutions for children and their families that combat the root causes of child labor in areas where tobacco is grown.

We advocate for strong policies, share best practices to multiply our impact, and engage rural families so they may benefit from farming while ensuring that their children are healthy, educated, and encouraged to reach their full potential.

Principles of the survey

- **Protect Children from Child Labor**
- Ensuring Credibility (qualitative approach) with Confidentiality (quantitative measures)
- Dissemination of Results lead to collective solutions and actions

