The working and living conditions of migrant workers in the agricultural sector

Chtouka as a case study

DignityFIRM – Working Paper WP5

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1. Introduction

The Souss-Massa region presents a compelling case for examining migrants' working conditions in the agricultural sector. In fact, agriculture in this locality plays a crucial role, serving as both an economic engine and a vector for the socio-economic inclusion of the local and migrant populations that come to this region for work. The region stands out as the country' s leading fruit and citrus production zone, with with 450,000 T designated for export, representing 74% of all citrus fruit exported nationally. The region has had a 29% increase in the production of early vegetables, with 990,000 T destined for export constituting 78% of the country' s exports of early vegetables[1]. According to Bouchelkha "The adoption of new production techniques and their extension have made it possible to overcome climatic constraints, to diversify market gardening areas over a greater part of the year and to obtain very high yields: more than 100 t / h for tomatoes[2]."

The Souss-Massa region is one of the twelve regions of Morocco since the new territorial division of 2015[3]. This region occupies 7.6% of the national territory with an area of 53,789 km². It is located in the centre of the kingdom, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the West to the borders with Algeria in the East (Figure 1). It constitutes a junction between the North and the South of the country and plays a strategic role in the national economy. It is limited to the North by the Marrakech-Safi region, to the South by the Guelmim-Oued Noun region, to the East by the Drâa-Tafilelt region and the Algerian border, and to the West by the Atlantic Ocean. Its capital is Agadir-Ida Outanane. The Souss-Massa region constitutes two prefectures (Agadir Ida Outanane and Inzegane Ait Melloul) and four provinces (Chtouka Ait Baha , Taroudant, Tiznit and Tata), which include 175 communes, the majority of which are rural communes (154 rural communes)[4].

Agriculture in this region has benefited from significant expansion thanks to the Green Morocco Plan and recently the Green Generation plan, with numerous structuring projects at both production and value chain levels. These include the project to safeguard the Elguerdane perimeter, the National Irrigation Water Saving Program, and initiatives to promote and label local products. The Agropole d' Agadir, currently under construction, promises to further enhance the value of regional agricultural products by establishing a regional platform for processing, marketing and distribution. This 75-hectare project will include zones for

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[1] Souss-Massa. (n.d.).

[2] Bouchelkha, Mohamed (Ed.) (2003, p. 173).

[3] Portail national des collectivités territoriales. (2015, March 16).

[4] HCP (2020, October, p. 8).

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agro-industry, logistics services, commercial platforms, a business and personal services center, as well as a Qualipôle grouping together research laboratories and a training center[5].

This report aims to explore the actions and strategies of the main actors involved in the agricultural sector in two territorial communes, Sidi Bibi and Khmiss Ait Amira, in the province of Chtouka Ait Baha, the region of Souss-Massa. The two communes, increasingly known as the capital communes of sub-Saharan migrant farm workers, have become microcosms of global agricultural and labour trends, especially after the launch of agricultural policies oriented towards exportation of agricultural products to global markets. Drawing on 15 interviews with MWs and 15 interviews with state, non-state actors and employers, the report aims to study the strategies and interactions of the various actors involved and how these interactions shape migrant workers' conditions in this locality and in this sector.

The report is structured in four sections. The first discusses the case of Chtouka and how it developed into a hub for agricultural investment attractive to a diverse range of labour dynamics. The second describes the working and living conditions of migrant workers in the province. The third and fourth studies the various perspectives, strategies and interactions among the main local actors involved in shaping migrant workers' labour conditions, including employers, local state actors, local non-state actors and the migrant workers themselves. The fifth and sixth sections explore two specific themes related to the role of corporate social responsibility and NGOs in improving migrant workers' labour rights and promoting the living together with the migrant communities in the locality of Chtouka. The report closes with a presentation of the major findings about the how actors' interactions and the legal or policy gaps affect the working and living conditions of migrant workers in the province of Chtouka.

2. Description of the local case

2.1 The Province of Chtouka Ait Baha

This empirical survey targets the territorial communes of Sidi Bibi and Khmiss Ait Amira in the province of Chtouka Ait Baha, located in the Souss-Massa region. The province of Chtouka Ait Baha is made up of two geographical areas: the mountains and the plains. It is home to 321,480 rural residents, including 1,869 foreigners. The urban population does not exceed 172,143, including 4,929 foreigners. It "extends over an area of more than 940 km², and constitutes an extension of the Souss plain towards the southwest. It is limited to the north by the Agadir Biougra road, to the east by the outcrops of the primary formations of the Anti-Atlas, to the south by the Oued Massa and to the west by the Ocean"[6]. The plain area of the province is characterized by an arid climate with desert tendencies. It is hot and dry and its

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[5] Souss-Massa Region (n.d.).

[6] HCP (2020, October, p. 11).

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fertile soil is made up of sand rich in limestone and poorly supplied with potash and phosphorus [7].

Since 1980, this area has been considered an El Dorado for investors in the agricultural sector. The promotion of foreign investment (mainly Spanish, French, Dutch, etc.) makes it a production area for vegetables and early vegetables intended for local markets (30% of production) and international markets (70% of production). The agricultural dynamics of this area are strengthening with the Green Morocco Plan 2008-2020. With the creation of two desalination stations, it will experience in the near future the expansion of cultivated areas and, therefore, a need for agricultural labour.

Thanks to this dynamic launched since 1980, with the liberalization of the Moroccan economy, the region has become a centre of attraction for populations from other cities, because of the jobs it offers to a low-skilled workforce. In the space of 10 years, the number of the population increased from 371,102 in 2014 to 493,623 people[8] and the "overall public investment in the agricultural sector almost tripled between 2008 and 2017, rising from nearly 3.5 to 9.5 billion dirhams, representing an average annual growth rate of nearly 11.7%[9]." At the level of the regional plan for agriculture in the Souss Massa Region, this dynamic is held to be poorly controlled in terms of enforcement of fair and decent labour regulations, infrastructure and basic public services for the populations of the rural areas of Chtouka which has a high rate of poverty and insecurity[10].

2.2 Rational for the choice of this location

The choice of this site is justified by several factors. Since 2018, waves of migrants were driven out of northern Morocco and transplanted to this site by the public authorities to alleviate the pressure of IMs on the northern areas. The province of Chtouka Ait Baha, with its strong agricultural potential, offers employment opportunities for both Moroccan migrants from several areas of Morocco, Beni Mellal, Khenifra, Safi, El Jadida, and for sub-Saharan Africans. Since 1995, researchers have reported that the region does not have sufficient labour, hence the recourse to other regions to meet the growing needs of a rapidly expanding agriculture. "The important regions of supply of agricultural workers are those of Azilal, Khénifra, Beni Mellal, Qalaât Sraghna. These regions alone contribute more than 64% of agricultural workers compared to only 18.7% of the workforce of regional origin [...] like the men working on farms,

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[7] Elattaoui, Houria. (2010, p. 4).

[8] HCP (2021).

[9] Ministry of Economy and Finance, Department of Studies and Financial Forecasts (2019, July).

[10] Elattaoui (2010).

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the "women in the packing stations also come from other backgrounds (more than 80%) but they are more of urban origin (Casablanca, Safi, Essaouira, etc.)[11]".

In a context characterized by the shortage of local agricultural labour[12] and the decrease in its attractiveness, employers often use a number of strategies to decrease costs, including mobilizing means of transport to take workers from their villages located more than 80 kilometres away in Tiznit, Aourir, Temsia, etc. The objective is to recruit a docile workforce, resistant to union mobilization, since they live far from the province of Chtouka, which would prevent them from participating in union mobilizations and strikes.

Since 2008 and even after the adoption of the 2004 Labour Code, the union movement has imposed on employers the respect of the legal minimum wage, employment contract, declaration to the CNSS, and the respect of working hours. The local press regularly reports union mobilizations and episodes related to work accidents. This situation forces employers to resort to a workforce living outside the province to ensure productivity. Yet, this strategy does not meet their labour needs. Recruiting local labour workers is becoming increasingly difficult. After the generalization of the social security coverage, workers eligible for the direct financial social support program are deserting the agricultural sector to benefit from a sum of money of 500 MAD per month in addition to the income from the informal employment they hold.

Initially, employers resorted to migrant labour to circumvent migrant mobilization strategies and ensure stability in farms. Secondly, the recruitment of these farm workers was encouraged by the launch of the migrant regularization operations launched by the King in 2014 and then in 2017. Moreover, the policy of regionalization of migratory flows, which consists of the transplantation of migrant communities from coastal cities to southern regions of Morocco, particularly in regions that offer job opportunities allows employers to recruit this workforce.

As evidenced by the statistics of the last census of 2024, the commune of Khmiss Ait Amira is known as the capital city of Sub-Saharans and it is home to more than 4,578 migrants out of a total of 108,650 migrants distributed across Morocco. However, these figures remain approximate compared to the actual number of migrants present in this commune. Some Farms and packing houses employ 70% of their labour force from internal migrantion. In addition to the strong presence of migrants in these two territorial municipalities, as well as their role in the agricultural sector, these two sites are characterized by the commitment of state and non-state actors in migration management at the local level, as evidenced by the creation of a reception and orientation office for migrants and their involvement in the process of developing the action plan of the municipality of Sidi Bibi and Khmiss Ait Amira.

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[11] Bouchelkha (2003, p. 172).

[12] Senhaji (2025, February 20).

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2.3 Methodology

The methodological choice is based on a triangular approach that combines in-depth semi-structured interviews with the stakeholders involved, documentary research, in order to collect the maximum amount of scientific, sociographic and interpretative data, as well as two focus groups with the actors involved in the agricultural sector in the province of Chtouka Ait Baha. The review of the literature is dedicated to the description and analysis of the state of the art of the agricultural sector in the province of Chtouka Ait Baha and the Souss Massa region. As for the documentary analysis, it is constructed from data published by institutions, researchers and reports emanating from studies and diagnoses carried out for and by national institutions and public departments.

The qualitative interviews were conducted with migrants, employers, and state and non-state actors at the level of 2 provinces (Agadir and Chtouka ait Baha). Interviews with migrants were conducted in two municipalities, Khmiss Ait Amira and Sibi Bibi. The choice of these territorial municipalities was made on the basis of the massive presence of migrants working in the agricultural sector in these two sites. Conducting interviews with some local state actors such as the employment authorities and the CNSS presented unique challenges as we had to address interview requests to the regional delegations, which refused to participate in the interview for various reasons, among of which the pending approval of the central government administrations. Interviews were conducted in compliance with the ethical rules (explanation of the project, consent, right to anonymity, prior agreement for recording). All rules of anonymity and confidentiality will be respected. It should be noted that the interviews were transcribed using a transcription software, but the quality of the transcriptions was poor. The research team was forced to redo the transcriptions by opting for interview summaries, which took a lot of time. The data analysis was carried out with primary regard to the variables of gender, migrant status, actors' function and positionality and the way these identity markers and positionalities of actors affect the various strategies and perspectives of migrants, employers, and state and non-state actors and thereby create precarious working conditions for migrant workers. All the data collected from each interviewed category is the subject of in-depth explanation and interpretation. The extracts cited in the report are presented as examples.

As for the focus groups, interactions with the main stakeholders in the sector, namely migrant workers, employers, state and non-state actors, and researchers (see annex 2) were held at the Faculty of Languages, Arts and Humanities, Ait Melloul on 15th July, 2025 to discuss two themes: (1) Corporate social responsibility and migrant workers; and (2) Migrant agricultural workers in Chtouka and living together. The results of both focus groups will be included at the end of this report.

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3. Migrant workers' labour and living conditions

3.1 Legal status

According to the provisions of the Moroccan Labour Code, in particular in its article 516, employers "wishing to recruit a foreign employee must obtain authorization from the government authority responsible for labour. This authorization is granted in the form of a visa affixed to the employment contract[13]." In practice, the recruitment of migrants in farms, agricultural holdings or agro-food packing stations is an exception to this rule. Many employers are recruiting sub-Saharan migrant workers in violation of the Article 9 of the Labour Code, without an authorization from ANAPEC and without a CNSS declaration that ensures medical, social coverage and other allowances provided for workers[14]. There are no official statistics on the number of migrants recruited informally in the agricultural sector in the province of Chtouka. This absence in the official statistics confirms the irregularity of their status.

Belghazi and Bouzri reported in a study on the access of migrant workers to the Moroccan labour market that the most represented nationalities working in the formal sector were French (5,346), Senegalese (4,958), Spanish (2,722), Tunisians (964), Filipinos (905), Ivorians (899), Algerians (770), Americans (667), Turks (664) and Chinese (626)[15]. Concerning the sectors of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, Non-Maghreb Africans do not seem to present a large percentage. There is 23% Moroccans, 2% Europeans and 2% non-Maghreb Africans (Belghazi and Bouzri, 2023, p. 45). These low percentages demonstrate that most sub-Saharan migrants who work in the agricultural sector are hired on an informal basis rather than through a work contract. IMWs, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, cannot be declared to the CNSS by their employers since declaration requires a residence permit. They are therefore deprived of any medical, social coverage and other allowances provided for workers[16]. An interviewee echoed the same findings. "At the regional level, migrant workers who hold a residence permit are 6 percent, in Ait Amira I can' t name even one; three in Ait Amira, they are more in the commercial sector, these people are Senegalese. In fact, this is the first migrant community that settled in this province, before the arrival of other communities, which allowed them to benefit from the first regularization campaign launched in 2014". [MOR_WP5_Agri_6]

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[13] Kingdom of Morocco (2024).

[14] EuroMed Rights (2015).

[15] Belghazi and Bouzri (2023, p. 47).

[16] EuroMed Rights (2015).

The trade union representative of migrants ODTI explained that the high number of irregular migrants can be explained by migrants' lack of information about the legal procedures for obtaining a residence permit. He also enumerated a number of legal pathways a migrant can use to obtain Morocco's residence permit. "The majority of migrants lose their legal status on the Moroccan territory before starting the procedures, because they may be in a situation where they are victims of trafficking, but if not, all those who come to the territory and are well informed about Law 02.03 that is so strict know that even if you come legally and you want to start the procedure, you need financing. For example, for someone who currently wants to obtain resident status, it is only the status of entrepreneur. Therefore, you will need at least 100,000DH in your account to open a company and follow the process for obtaining the residence permit. The other legal route is to be started by an employer who recruits you; and to recruit you, you need talent, i.e. footballers, athletes, etc. Otherwise, there is the exceptional regularization which has not been renewed." [MOR_WP5_Agri_26]

Migrants describe the conditions of migrant recruitment to farm work as follows: "Most of the time it' s the passport [...] the passport, that' s all. If you don't have the original or even if the passport is not up to date, even if it' s expired, there' s no problem. There are others who accept the passport photo in the phone [...] others register without a passport, because they need labour to be able to produce goods." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]. Another stated: "For me, hiring without a contract means that employers avoid declaring workers to the CNSS, avoid paying taxes, which is why they offer informal jobs." [MOR_WP5_Agri_6].

The migrant workers interviewed stated that they work informally and that the caporals are entrusted by their employers with this task of selecting farm workers. The caporals select the workers needed and constitute a team of workers, which they can change any time. They have the necessary experience to choose workers capable of performing the types of jobs demanded, in terms of physical strength, endurance, and the workers' place of residence. Accompanied by the driver, the caporal goes to meet the migrants at the gathering place *Mawqef*[17] or posts the message about the demand for workers in WhatsApp groups. A migrant working as a caporal explained: "we make an announcement in the WhatsApp group: those who respond, I offer them training before they start work." [MOR_WP5_Agri_4]. These means of communication play an essential role in the process of recruitment for farm labour. In other cases, the driver plays the role of the caporal. In this case, the driver's mission is to mobilize the required number of workers and ensure their transportation from the Mawqef to the farm and after work return them back to the village. Workers' transportation is sometimes provided by the employer and in other times drivers charge migrants 10 dirhams to cover fuel costs.

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[17] Mawqef is the standing area of workers wishing to work, usually informally, for the day.

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3.2 Employment insecurity

The temporary production cycle and wage insufficiency

The lack of an employment contract that guarantees rights at work explains migrant workers' precariousness and insecurities, especially because of the seasonality of the agricultural jobs and the high probability of job loss, illness or work-related accidents. Article 17 of the 2003 Moroccan labour code took into consideration this temporary nature of employment in the agricultural sector and stated that definite contracts that last more than two years should become indefinite. *"In the agricultural sector, a fixed-term employment contract may be concluded for a renewable period of six months, provided that the duration of the contracts concluded does not exceed two years. The contract subsequently becomes of indefinite duration*[18]*."*

Despite the existence of a law governing seasonal work, the regulation remains inconsiderate of the workers' rights and unresponsive to the new technical innovations in the agricultural sector which has made that there are some products that are no longer seasonal and that they can be produced intensively over the year. This implies, as suggested by an interviewee, that legislation should be tailored to these changes in the agricultural sector. *"There are regulations governing seasonal work. But I think these regulations need to be updated. I see that there is no longer any seasonality in the agricultural sector. With technical and technological development, there are now greenhouses. Melons can be grown in October, outside of their season. Tomatoes, strawberries, and blueberries are grown year-round. Except for a few trees, like oranges, which are produced in a specific season. If we categorize products in the agricultural sector, there are products that are seasonal and others that are not. So it is the legislator who must make these categorizations. There is a difference depending on the nature of the products."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]

Interviews have shown that employment insecurities refer to the t*emporary nature of farm work which depend on the production cycle.* These insecurities are further exacerbated for irregular migrants who do not have the right to stay nor to work and they are much more affected by the fluctuating labour market needs. They are an available and cheap reserve force since they cannot benefit from a permanent contract, particularly in terms of paid leave, social protection and the right to unemployment in the event of end of contract. As explained by a Caporal in Ait Amira, the availability of agricultural work depends on the agricultural production cycle, which varies depending on the seasons, activities but also the type of products, i.e. tomatoes, peppers, beans, blueberries, raspberries, etc. *"The work continues, it depends on the product, the tomato can last 9 months, even a year. The raspberry, no, the work lasts three to four months; the pepper, the bean, four to five months maximum." [MOR_WP5_Agri_6]*

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[18] *Ibid.*

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It is the harvesting period that requires employers to use a large number of workers in this sector, but for a period not exceeding three months, concerning the harvest of blueberries and raspberries. Another migrant stated that employers generally prefer women for the picking, even if the picking of tomato is physically difficult for women: *"I don' t recommend a woman to work on a tomato farm, it' s very physical, harvesting should be quick, carrying a 40-kilo bucket for eight hours of work."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]. Previous research indicates that a substantial number of women work including migrant women (native and sub-Saharan) often face additional work-related difficulties, such as lower wages, exposure to toxic pesticides without adequate protective equipment, strenuous physical labour, sexual harassment[19]. According to Halima, a Senegalese migrant, this is the only sector that offers employment opportunities to unregistered migrants and even poverty forces pregnant women to work in agriculture. In these circumstances, women expose their health, and that of their baby to various risks: *"Well, ehh. Actually, what I don't accept is pregnant women working, because it's not normal."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_20]. Precariousness affects migrant women more than men as it is more difficult for them to access employment for periods exceeding six months. Some migrant women claim that the caporals or mediators in charge of labour selection sexually exploit them in exchange for a job offer.

Precarity and insecurity are also reflected in wages. In fact, employers have increased the legal wage in accordance with the government' s decision. It went from 60 to 65, to 75, reaching 90 MAD in 2024. Migrants say this improvement is insufficient. *"There is a little improvement. From 60, to 65, to 75, to 90 MAD per day. We want 120 MAD, for a number of hours we cannot decide, eight hours is long, six hours is ok." [MOR_WP5_Agri_6].* For the past four years, due to rising consumer prices, migrants have been unable to save money to cope with the days where they are unemployed. Wage increases have become a priority demand for Moroccan workers in the agricultural sector[20]. Several sit-ins were organized at the end of 2024 to demand a daily wage of 150 MAD for farm workers. Migrants did not participate in these demonstrations, but they believe that these demands suit them well.

Loss of employment without compensation

The recruitment of migrants without an employment contract that specifies the terms of dismissal and compensation where applicable creates precarious working conditions for migrants and causes feelings of insecurity with regards to their employment. The caporals in charge of recruitment have the right to dismiss or no longer employ a migrant worker on the grounds of absence or lack of docility and responsiveness to their work constructions. An interviewee describes that farm work cannot be guaranteed: *"By the way, there is no*

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[19] Medland (2021).

[20] The government signed on April 29, 2024 a social agreement involving the most representative trade unions, employers' professional organizations so as to increase minimum legal wages for agricultural and non- agricultural activities. As of December 26, 2024, the government council adopted the draft decree no. 2.24.1122 for the application of this agreement.

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guarantee, from one day to the next, he tells me [the caporal or the employer] I don' t need you anymore." [MOR_WP5_Agri_4]. MWs are not entitled to justified absences in the case of illness, or in the organization of religious holidays for Christian migrants, because the official holiday list does not include non-Muslim holidays[21]. *"Migrants work on December 24th; the most important day for Christians. We ask for it, but it doesn't happen. We can't take time off on that day. If you're not punctual, you're out!"* [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

In case of illness or work accident

In regards to health care, regularized migrant workers with a residence permit and an employment contract can easily be registered with the National Social Security Fund (CNSS), which entitles them to benefit from a mandatory health insurance scheme (AMO) covering their medication and hospital care. Foreigners in an irregular situation do not have access to this scheme because they do not have a residence permit[22]. Refugees and migrants who entered the Moroccan territory irregularly can also have access to basic health services provided by Public Health structures[23]. At the workplace, the intersection of illness or physical disability with the migrants' irregularity often exacerbates migrants' precariousness and poverty. In the event of illness or work accident caused by the job, IMWs are easily dismissed from their work. They are forced to seek another employer. Migrants who experience physical difficulties are excluded by their caporals who are aware of their situation, as Boubaker stated *"if you're sick one day, two days, the bus won't wait for you, it'll get another one."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_10] This indifference of employers towards the health of migrants causes them a feeling of unease. According to Doumbia: "The lack of respect and consideration, when you get sick, they have to look at us. You see, I left work on Thursday, I got sick there. Still, the boss has to look at us, or give us [...] but nothing." [MOR_WP5_Agri_19]. Neither seniority nor dedication to work during the past periods when they were active can protect IMWs from insecurity that constantly threatens them especially in cases of illness or accidents.

3.3 Income inadequacy

In the context of rising costs and inflation, a tripartite agreement was signed in 2022 to promote the rights of workers, increase the minimum wage by 10% overall and reduce the number of required days to contribute to pension funds. *De facto* policies were being implemented to improve the living conditions and the wages of farmworkers. However, due to the fact that IMWs do not have legal documentation for their stay in Morocco, they may not receive their exact daily wages as stipulated by the government, especially when there is a

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[21] See Decree No. 2-04-426 of 16 kaada 1425 (December 29, 2004, p. 18) establishing the list of paid holidays in industrial and commercial enterprises, liberal professions and agricultural and forestry operations.

[22] EuroMed Rights (2015, p. 8).

[23] Ministry of Health (2021, p. 24).

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high labour supply. In the case of high labour demand and labour shortage, migrant workers may work longer hours than others with employment contracts and receive higher wages, than the wage stipulated by the SMAG[24].

Table 1: Wage increase for SMAG in Morocco

Year	**SMAG: Agricultural sector (wages per day)**
2020	73,22 MAD
2021	76,70 MAD
2022	84,37 MAD
2023	88,58 MAD
2024 According to the new agreement signed on April 29, 2024	A 10% increase: +5% in April 2025; +5% in April 2026.

Sources : TY Consulting (2022) and Alaoui (2024).

According to migrants, the income they earn is insufficient. For them, this situation is explained by the increase in the price of consumer goods and housing more particularly. Due to the strong presence of migrants in the two communes of Sidi Bibi and Khmiss Ait Amira, the price of rent of a small two-bedroom house with a kitchen has increased from 500 to 700 MAD, to 1200 MAD and sometimes even more. The argument migrants use to justify the inadequacy of wages resides in their ability to save and afford housing. For the majority of migrants: *"The salary is insufficient. On the other side, in Europe, agricultural workers are better paid than in Morocco. You calculate: paying for the house, the debts at the shop, the little that is left to eat, sending a little back home, the whole problem is in our inability to afford the expenses of housing."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_10]

Compared to their countries of origin, the salary in Morocco is high, as evidenced by a caporal, which must be considered with caution, because team leaders earn a higher salary than agricultural workers. Despite the increase in salaries, the high cost of basic necessities limits the migrants' ability to save. *"The problem is not the salary increase; […] In 2020, things were cheaper, a litre of oil is 50 MAD, now it is 100 MAD. The price of houses is increasing, a two-bedroom apartment rent costs 1200 MAD."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]

Morocco has been facing high prices since 2022, and even before. The annual consumer price index this year will have increased by 6.6% and the annual core inflation indicator by 5.8%[25]. According to the HCP report, the increases in food products observed between November and December 2022 concern Milk, cheese and eggs with 2.3%, Oils and fats with 1.9%, Fish and seafood with 1.7%, Vegetables with 1.1%, "Coffee, tea and cocoa" with 0.7%, Bread and cereals

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[24] Mixed Migration Centre (2022, p. 13).

[25] HCP (2025, January).

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with 0.4% and Meat with 0.1%[26]. Food price increases continue. Between December 2024 and January 2025, the main products concerned are Fish and seafood with 6.0%, Vegetables with 4.7%, Meat with 2.0%, Fruits with 1.6%, Milk, cheese and eggs with 0.6% and Coffee, tea and cocoa with 0.5%[27]. Thus, in this situation, migrants' incomes are insufficient despite wage increases, which forces them to live in extremely difficult living conditions (crowded housing, malnutrition, etc.).

3.3 Lack of rights protection, work and living conditions

The Moroccan labour code stipulates in chapter III article 304 paragraph 1 and article 336 on Occupational medical services, that enterprises employing at least fifty employees must create a Safety and Hygiene Committee. In addition to these legal provisions, occupational medicine started in Morocco with the adoption of Dahir No. 1-56-093 of 08/07/1957. This Dahir established the obligation to create medical services in companies employing at least 50 employees and in any company at risk, regardless of the number of its workforce[28]. The supervisory services are inflexible when it comes to establishing and ensuring the proper functioning of medical services within companies. Furthermore, the report the occupational health doctor writes about the company has an impact on the number of points awarded to the insurer[29].

The existing legal framework is sufficient, however, migrants reveal that working conditions do not meet the necessary health protection standards. They often cite two major sources of risks. The first is the lack of specific personal protective equipment at work, as one migrant observes: *"Regarding the work and working conditions, most people complained. We are exposed to chemicals; there is no equipment or protection against this danger. Sometimes we cut fruit, and at the same time other workers pump [spray] the products [...] we breathe this."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]. Migrants bear some responsibility. Either they do not ask for protective equipment, gloves, or they do not use the available equipment, as one migrant claims.

For migrants, they are at risk because of the chemicals and pesticides used in farming. The lack of protective equipment puts IMWs at risk of many health problems such as poisoning, chest pain, whole body pain, blood tension for those who work in the tomato industry, cancer, headaches and other psychological pressures. *"There is no protection, there are no gloves, there are no masks* [...] *we are the ones who buy the gloves and the boots for those who go up; we also see that among the Moroccan workers."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]. IMWs' expenses of health treatment are not covered by a health security fund nor by their employers.

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[26] *Ibid.*

[27] HCP (2025, January).

[28] Le Matin (2013, May 15).

[29] *Ibid.*

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Associations are filling this gap by providing migrants with health services and medication. This is the only solution available to migrants: *"In terms of social protection, there is no right to that; if you are injured, you are the one who treats yourself, the money you earn, you treat yourself."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]*;* "If you have an accident, your boss won't cover it. If your means are limited, you look for charities." [MOR_WP5_Agri_10]. The lack of protection makes these migrants '*disposable' workers*, as one migrant puts it: "Employers don' t provide care; they ask migrants to stay home when they are sick." [MOR_WP5_Agri_4]

Migrants' testimonies raise several questions, especially since employers and other stakeholders claim that all producers are obliged to ensure workplace safety. Most farms have certificates attesting to their compliance with safety standards. Producers and packaging companies, in this case, claim that they provide protective equipment against the risks associated with each task, but the migrants refuse to use them. Certainly, the packing stations comply with protection standards, because the partners ensure compliance with safety standards. However, as confirmed by stakeholders in this sector, it is difficult to ensure compliance with these standards on farms that extend over thousands of hectares. Labour inspectors raise issues related to the exercise of their profession, insufficient staff, and lack of resources, which limits their role in terms of monitoring. Migrants claim, on the day of the labour inspection visit, that it is always a day of rest. A Guinean migrant, observed that: *"The inspectors are a really important part; when they come, they are already informed, they take a team, they look at the hygiene side; for the team of sub-Saharans, they [employers] say: "Tomorrow is a rest day."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

4. Actors' strategies and frames

4.1 Employers

The Souss-Massa region' s agricultural sector is a major part of its economy, contributing 17.3% to regional GDP and 9% to national GDP. The region has some 451,165 hectares of cultivated farmland, of which 106,664 hectares are equipped with drip irrigation systems[30]. The agricultural sector in Souss-Massa comprises a mix of small family farms, cooperatives and large agri-businesses[31]. The region has benefited from substantial investment under initiatives such as the Industrial Acceleration Plan, the Green Morocco Plan and the Green Generation Plan. These initiatives have promoted modern agricultural practices and strengthened the region' s export capacity, particularly in fruit, vegetables and seafood processing. International investments and partnerships have also played a crucial role, with companies exporting to international markets[32].

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[30] Souss-Massa Region (n.d.).

[31] Atlas Original (2021).

[32] Atlas Original (2021).

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In Morocco, Law No. 65-99 on the Labour Code is the legislative text that sets out all the rules relating to the organization of social relations within the company and in the field of work. The provisions of this law apply to persons bound by an employment contract regardless of its terms of execution, the nature of the remuneration and the method of payment that it provides for and the nature of the company in which it is executed[33]. Undocumented migrants are not included among the categories mentioned in that law because they do not have administrative documentation for their residency and employment status.

Strategies

This section is based on three interviews; two interviews with employers in the sector of agriculture in the locality of Sidi Bibi and Ait Amira and one with the representative of the Moroccan Interprofessional Federation for the Production and Export of Fruits and Vegetables (FIFEL).

Increased productivity

Interviewed employers used the term productivity to discuss the recruitment of sub-Saharan migrants and the wages offered. They believe this workforce represents an alternative to the shortage of Moroccan agricultural workers. An interviewee has demonstrated a preference for Moroccans, Senegalese, and Ivorians over English-speaking workers: "The boss prefers Ivorians, along with Moroccans; the boss says the others came looking for adventure (irregular emigration)." [MOR_WP5_Agri_7]

Moroccan workers prefer to work on a piecework basis. From an economic perspective, this type of work is beneficial to both the employee and the employer as it ensures productivity and a pre-set wage. However, piecework does not meet quality standards. The determination of the task to be performed is still a matter of disagreement. An employer emphasises the issue of productivity as follows: *"In the agricultural sector, when we talk about the productivity of farm workers, there' s a big problem. The productivity of workers is very low: before, four or five people worked for a hectare of tomatoes, now we need seven or eight to achieve the same productivity. That' s the problem. The productivity of migrant workers is higher than that of Moroccans, especially the productivity of Senegalese workers."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_14]

The representative of the FIFEL confirmed this issue and added one of the causes of the shortage of farm workers is the availability of the direct social support for vulnerable workers. *"Moroccan workers are losing interest in agricultural work, especially since they benefit from direct social support, and therefore prefer to work without a declaration for social protection and security. Due to the shortage of workers, Moroccan workers are in a powerful position and they often demand payment on task work not on a day of work. That's why employers resort to hiring immigrants." [MOR_WP5_Agri_17].* To face this situation, employers recruit IMWs because they are available. In the interviewee's terms IMs are god sent. "*They benefit, and we*

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[33] Kingdom of Morocco (2003, September 11).

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benefit. But a quick solution to this problem is needed, for those who want to stay and even for those who want to transit." [MOR_WP5_Agri_17]. Another alternative which might also smooth the problem is mechanisation. "Mechanisation of work is the best solution; it is better than relying on a workforce that has become unavailable." *[MOR_WP5_Agri_17].*

For employers, salary is not the problem, but the problem is in profitability. An employer observed that he is willing to pay the same salary Moroccan agricultural workers get in Spain provided they give the same productivity: *"In Spain, there are Moroccans working on farms in Almeria, El Ejido [...] Moroccans earning 40 euros a day, the equivalent of 400 MAD, more than the minimum wage. These migrants [...] I can give them the same salary as long as I achieve the same profitability. The problem is not the salary, but the profitability."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_11]

IMWs represent an alternative to ensuring the continuity of production and harvesting in farms, which raises concerns about the employer' s legal responsibility. Moreover, the choices of many Moroccan agricultural workers not to be registered in the CNSS also raises the same legal responsibilities. According to our interviewee: *"Employees refuse to be declared to the CNSS; and we' re forced to employ them. The product is perishable; how can we pay for it without accounting for it? They' re paid under the table. The employees are encouraging people not to apply the law; the employer will be punished, but not the employee." [MOR_WP5_Agri_11]*

Faced with the shortage of labour and the growing need for labour to harvest perishable products such as tomatoes, blueberries, raspberries, etc., migrants are activating the role of the labour standing areas (*Mawqef*). Employers seeks various recruitment strategies. In peak seasons, they recruit workers on a daily basis to meet the labour needs for harvesting crops, as explained by an employer: *"When production is high, we are forced to resort to the mawqef. I specify: there are two types of agricultural workers; workers who are brought from far away and sent home every day using our means of transport. During the harvest period, we resort to mawqef. The day labourer works by the day, receives the salary the same day. The labour code requires him to be registered even if he works one day. But these workers refuse to be declare to the CNSS. We are talking about the social index, which allows them to benefit from direct social aid from the State" [MOR_WP5_Agri_14]*

Labour shortages, climatic hazards and natural disasters make other employers reduce their investments and opt for small and medium-sized farms so as to be able control their activities from these factors. As stated by an employer: *"I' m talking about five hectares and more. These farms meet these conditions (employment contract, protection, work safety, occupational health, etc.). These standards are applied in 80% of farms. Now, we are starting to invest in small and medium-sized farms because the labour problem is big and risk management is great. Farmers are starting to manage farms of less than 10 hectares to control expenses and face risks." [MOR_WP5_Agri_14]*

Despite the existence of the Generation Green 2020-2030 strategy, which aims to ensure continued investment in this sector by prioritizing the creation a new generation of agricultural

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entrepreneurs, and safeguarding the sustainability of agricultural development, many farm employers are thinking about changing their investment from agriculture to other sectors. "Employers are thinking about changing sectors because there are several challenges, including the labour shortage." *[MOR_WP5_Agri_11]*

The Democratic Union of Agriculture in one of its press releases maintains that employers and agri-businesses have set up exploitative systems that result in low wages and poor working conditions. Employers, including large agri-businesses and small and medium-sized farms, often suppress workers' efforts to organize and improve their conditions. They do this by repressing protests, retaliating against union organizers and creating dangerous working environments, characterized by a lack of protective equipment. In addition, caporals exploit non-unionized workers, keeping them uninformed of their rights. These practices are the result of a companies that prioritize profit over worker welfare, with systemic problems exacerbated by lack of regulations and corporate strategies[34].

Frames

Employers justify their choices by referring to the following reasons: rationality, profitability, good governance and the attractiveness of their farms to ensure agricultural production. As a principle of microeconomics, *rationality* measures productivity in terms of the number of employees assigned to each cultivated hectare. The developed perspective on labour refers to this theory of production. Some migrants are well aware of the capitalist rationale adopted to optimize the sub-Saharan workforce, and of the strategies implemented by agricultural employers to achieve this, namely the use of sub-Saharan caporals. They also emphasize the psychological consequences of this rationale. The excerpt below illustrates this awareness. *"there are farms that have a capitalist vision, they try to reduce the proportion of Moroccans to optimize the sub-Saharan workforce, because they are subject to targets that may be daily, weekly, or monthly. When they do the planning, if it is in time, a Moroccan group can achieve the objective that was established for a Moroccan group in a week, the sub-Saharans do it in two or three days less than the Moroccans, because not only do they work like machines, because the first catalyst that makes them work well is their own brother who put them in front who makes them work yalah! yalah! go ahead Go ahead. That contributes to stress, and this stress causes a lot of illnesses among the sub-Saharans that no one talks about. These people accept this because the vast majority are illiterate and do not know the consequences, not only of their rights, but also the repercussions of these consequences on their health." [MOR_WP5_Agri_3]*

Profitability refers to employers' capacity to produce for profit. In a meeting with the Prime Minister, farmers stated that exportation of agricultural products is what keeps the production for the local market alive, especially that the cost of return has become higher. *"People see that everything that is exported is a problem. But in reality, it is export that keeps the local product alive". "Without the government's sea water desalination plants that was established*

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[34] Democratic Union of Agriculture (2018).

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in the difficult circumstances of Covid 19 and the Ukraine-Russia crisis, we could not talk today about tomato, because there was the problem of water, and a series of crises that started with Covid19, and then with the Ukraine-Russia war which had a negative impact on prices. The production costs of agricultural products rose three times in the last 3 years[35]*."* What is not said is that the use of informal daily labour allows the employer to minimize costs. Similarly, the employment of migrant labour who live on site and in proximity of the farms in Laqlia and Sidi Bibi allows employers to reduce the additional transportation costs of bringing workers from far away and then sending them home each day, which amounts to additional 40 MAD costs per worker.

Good governance of the farm is key to success. To increase attractiveness to farm work, some employers cater for the needs of their workers, including IMWs, and provide the necessary labour and welfare conditions that make them productive. For an employer: *"Since there is a need, what can we do to attract these people? Workers need housing, a shower, and a kitchen for every three people. The farm' s reputation is important; without workers, we cannot produce. The material is perishable. The caterer is the worker; to make profit, good management is required. The satisfied worker takes care of the plants." [MOR_WP5_Agri_14]*

4.2 Migrant workers

Strategies

Due to their legal non-existence and the absence of short legal pathways that guarantees their access to the formal labour market, IMWs, as well as a large precarious portion of non-qualified Moroccan nationals, work informally in hazardous and often exploitative conditions in farms. Aware of their irregularity, IMWs have no choice but to surrender to the precarity of their labour conditions and develop what previous research calls the invisibility syndrome so as to obtain sufficient income and be able to cover their rent, maintain their living, and fulfil the European dream[36].

Interviews with IMWs revealed the same results. IMWs are aware of the impact of their administrative status and their vulnerability on the strategies they adopt. They have strategies that they are cannot implement. IMWs make use of strategies such as adaptation, negotiation, support for the struggles of Moroccan agricultural workers, individual contestation, collective mobilization, etc. One migrant describes this situation as follows: "There were strategies, but

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[35] Transcribed from a video. One of the interventions of member of the FIFEL in a meeting with the prime minister (2023). The Prime Minister chairs a meeting with members of the Moroccan Interprofessional Federation for the Production and Export of Fruits and Vegetables.
https://www.cg.gov.ma/ar/ألبوم-الفيديو/رئيس-الحكومة-يترأس-احتماعا-مع-أعضاء-الفيدرالية-البيمهنية-المغربية-لإنتاج-وتصدير-الخضر.

[36] Bachelet (2018).

they are not being implemented; there are ideas, but there is fear; they intend to strike, but it has not been carried out." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

Adaption

Adaption to the available working conditions is a strategy IMWs use for several reasons. First, IMWs have no other choices or better job options. Agriculture is the sector that allows migrants with an irregular status to access employment and have a salary that meets their basic needs while they are in transit or just arrived in the country. One migrant emphasizes the importance of jobs created for migrants in the following way: "For employers, hiring without a contract, after all, these people create jobs. If there are no bosses, we will be in unemployment. At least they create jobs that allow you to live in a society. The boss creates jobs, even if the conditions are difficult." [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]

Second, IMWs are forced by their precarious living conditions to accept the available work. They have no other options to survive outside their country of origin since they have no support networks nor can they rely on family solidarity. Despite the precarious conditions described above, work in the agricultural sector allows migrants to earn an income and meet their needs and those of their small family. An IMW observed: "If you don't accept, how can you live? Put your family before yourself, you left your country, you are forced to accept these conditions." [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]

Third, IMWs' irregular residence status limits their opportunities. They accept work in the agricultural sector for a short period of time while waiting for other opportunities to continue their migration to Europe or to be regularized to be considered for other more attractive jobs. "It depends on each person' s schedule. He works for a short time because he won't stay. For the person who wants to work for a long time, he won't accept." [MOR_WP5_Agri_4]

Regularising their situation is a way that guarantees IM' s transition to other jobs. IMWs' accept the imposed working conditions because they are irregular. Those who do have a residence permit change their sector of activity, as evidenced by the comments of several migrants. It is the irregularity that explains the concentration of migrants in this sector and at the same time forces them to accept working without a social and health coverage. For the migrants interviewed: "Those who have a permit work in Agadir, as do the women who work in the packing stations." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

Migrant women believe that regularizing their administrative status allows them to obtain well-paid jobs, particularly domestic work, which offers a daily wage of 200 dirhams. "I clean, I pick the children up from school, I start at 7 a.m., I leave at 8 p.m. If the Moroccan is nice to me, he gives me 200 dirhams; if he's not nice, 120 dirhams. Working at home is better than on the farms. [...] "With the residence permit, if I have the residence permit, things will change. Here, with the residence permit, I have many opportunities to find work, you see. You can find a good job, a contract, a job where you're well paid, taking care of children, I can find it with

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the residence permit." [MOR_WP5_Agri_19]. It is the irregular situation that explains the concentration of migrants in this sector and forces them to accept the working conditions.

Negotiation and contestation

Most migrants support the strategy of negotiation and contestation to improve their working conditions, as it allows them to access work without difficulty. For this migrant caporal: "The best way is understanding, connection between the caporal and the boss. If you convey your concerns, that' s negotiation." [MOR_WP5_Agri_4_ IMW Caporal]. Migrants adopt this strategy when they demand to work under the direction of an African caporal. They demand a replacement for the Moroccan caporals for the following reasons: "migrants don' t trust Moroccans who aren't interested in working conditions, we can use the word racist to talk about that. Moroccans, in Darija, say Azi (black) in a racist way (we can' t say it, but it' s the facts, words that we don' t understand in Darija (Arabic dialect)." [MOR_WP5_Agri_6]. The negotiation strategy is defined as discussion, dialogue, and good communication. For most migrants: "revolt doesn't work, telling people not to go to work doesn't work (...) The strategy is to stay at the table to discuss." [MOR_WP5_Agri_10]

Unionisation

The least widely used strategy is unionisation. IMWs believe that unions are not interested in their situation, either because "they do not have a residence permit" or because they are not Moroccan. Migrants also believe that employers recruit them because they cannot go to unions to demand their rights. An IMW noted: "Yes, there are those who prefer migrants, they say that they will not demand rights, because Moroccans have the right to see the unions." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

In Morocco, despite restrictions on foreign workers exercising their right to form a Labour union[37], members of the migrant community, supported by the Democratic Labour Organization (ODT), created the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco (ODTI) in July 2012[38]. The objective of the ODTI is to fight for the protection and respect of the physical, moral, social, cultural and professional rights of immigrant workers in Morocco without discrimination[39]. The migrant representative of ODTI in Agadir stated that they have "tried to discuss with employers, something that was not done. We met with the labour inspector and asked him to organize a round table with the employer to discuss issues related

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[37] There are still many legal barriers that limit the union action of foreign employees, including Article 416 of Law No. 65.99, which does not allow migrant workers to access administrative and management positions in the professional unions to which they are affiliated. Morocco' s failure to ratify Convention 87 on freedom of association and the protection of the right to organize of 1948 also adds to this.

[38] EuroMed Rights (2015, p. 5).

[39] Amiyeto (2012, August 31).

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to labour rights of migrants, but it was not done [...] The income of migrants, although equal to that of Moroccans, does not allow them to earn a decent living. They earn a bare minimum of 90 DH per day. With that, they cannot pay for a room, they cannot feed and clothe themselves." [MOR_WP5_Agri_26]

The National Human Rights Council recommends the reactivation of this convention and the revision of Article 416 of Law No. 65.99 of the Labour Code. For the unions, it is time to revise this code. The National Human Rights Council recommends the ratification of this convention and the revision of Article 416 of Law No. 65.99 of the Labour Code[40]. For unions, it is time to revise this code. As several activists in this sector confirm, the unionization rate does not exceed 6%. Migrants believe that unions should become involved in improving the living conditions of agricultural workers. Few migrants said they have contacted unions for information regarding the conventions concluded between Morocco and African countries. Tozan confirms: "Few migrants said they contacted unions to obtain information regarding the agreements concluded between Morocco and African countries [...] I have already contacted a UMT activist to see the signed agreements. There are signed agreements [...] the agreements we had with Morocco." [MOR_WP5_Agri_6]. Other migrants labour resort to unions to resolve payment disputes, but this intervention is limited to farms that have created a union office. "The union intervenes if a boss refuses to pay the salary, especially the mediator, then we turn to the union to resolve the problem agreeably." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

Collective mobilization

Collective mobilization and contestation is a strategy that IMWs adopt to address problems affecting the interests of all migrant communities, such as insecurity outside of work. It is put into practice only once, not to demand the improvement of working conditions, but to demand that public authorities provide security against criminal attacks against migrants. On Saturday, November 16, 2024 unrest involving Moroccans and sub-Saharans broke out in Leqlia following "the attack on a person of African origin, who was beaten and injured on the head during an attempted robbery by two assailants[41]." Leqlia is transformed by intensive export agriculture into a dormitory town for agricultural workers[42] because of the relatively affordable rental prices. It counted 1,246 foreigners in 2024, the largest number of foreigners among the municipalities in the province of Inzegane-Ait Melloul. Leqlia' s incident is linked to insecurity. Migrants stated that they won' t go to work if there' s no security. The insecurity that characterizes Leqlia poses significant challenges for local authorities. In polemic events like this one, migrants connect via WhatsApp to mobilize and organize a form of collective contestation to make their voice heard to the local authorities. Reactive mobilizations, such as

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[40] CNDH (2013, July, p. 7).

[41] See for example, Tabet (2024, November 17).

[42] Lemaizi (2024, December 19).

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the one organized by the IMWs in Leqlia make migrants feel the strength of their unity on impacting the course of events.

Following the attack against the agricultural migrant worker in Leqlia, Ismail Zitouni, a representative of the prefecture of Inezgane-Ait Melloul and member of parliament of the National Rally of Liberals stressed in a written question addressed to the Minister of Home Affairs the necessity of opening a delegation of national security in the Leqlia. Reactions from the local media have also shed light on the event. Yet, the spread of false information about the event mobilized migrants and provoke social unrest among the people in the region, as evidenced by interviewed IMWs: “What happened in Leqlia: the first information is corrupted; everyone goes out onto the road (...) All the communities came out; the authorities were able to manage the case.” [MOR_WP5_Agri_10]

For some migrant workers in the sector, the mobilization of Moroccan workers must be supported because they experience the same conditions, except for the employment contract. On November 25, 2025, the agricultural workforce submitted its demands in the province of Chtouka Ait Baha, demanding social justice. “Farm workers demanded (...) the provision of a decent working environment and the recognition of their legal rights, including improved wages, which they described as meagre compared to the considerable efforts they are making.[43]“ A sub-Saharan migrant describes this situation as follows: “Migrants and Moroccans have the same conditions, except for Moroccans who have employment contracts. We work with Moroccans who don’t have these contracts, and we live in the same conditions.” [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]

For some migrant workers, changing the laws seems impossible. What is possible is supporting Moroccans’ struggles to achieve something. The demands of Moroccan agricultural workers, concerns wage increases, social protection and health security, which are suitable for improving the conditions of IMWs as well. The following statements confirm this strategy: “Regarding working conditions, we cannot take initiatives, the Moroccans can, we cannot change the laws, we have just arrived, we support the initiatives that come from the Moroccan workers.” [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]

Pressure on embassies of countries of origin

Another proposal of a strategy that has been made by IMWs who are aware of the limitations of the legislation governing the employment of foreigners in Morocco is to put pressure on embassies and governments of countries of origin. In accordance with the provisions of Article 516 of Law 65.99 relating to the Labour Code employers wishing to recruit a foreign employee must obtain authorization in the form of a visa affixed to the employment contract from the government authority responsible for labour. The competent authority exempts certain foreign employees from the activity certificate issued by ANAPEC, in particular nationals of

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[43] Hiba Press (2024, November 25).

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countries with which Morocco has concluded an establishment agreement Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal[44].

Recruiting a foreign employee requires a visa from the authorities, which justifies the scarcity of the job profile recruited. Generally, there are specific profiles of rare jobs that can be recruited internationally. Low-skilled jobs are not covered by this legal labour migration pathway. This constitutes a handicap for the employment of international farm workers. This is the reason why some IMWs, aware of these limitations, ask their countries' governments to develop cooperative relations with Morocco and sign establishment agreements that will allow them to work in the same way as Moroccan nationals. Like Senegal, establishment agreements allow non-nationals to benefit from the legislation of the host country. Under Article 5 of this agreement: "The nationals of each of the contracting parties shall benefit in the territory of the other party from the labour legislation, social laws and social security under the same conditions as the nationals of that party.[45]" This strategy is becoming increasingly necessary, as evidenced by the demands of migrant organizations formed within Moroccan unions, such as the ODT, which focus on strengthening cooperation between African countries and Morocco. But migrants have neither the means nor the skills to implement it.

The strike

The right to strike is a fundamental and constitutional right recognized in the international law and in the Morocco constitution of 1962 and 2011 (Article 29). Yet according to some social actors, such as the National Federation of the Agricultural Sector, the Law 97-15 adopted by the Moroccan Parliament on February 5, 2025 imposes restrictions to collective action, particularly in the agricultural sector where more than 80% of rural workers are employed informally, without employment contracts or social protections. In this context, strikes often remain the only way to denounce work insecurities and working conditions[46].

The Chtouka Ait Baha region is considered a stronghold of export agriculture, in which farmworkers, especially women farmworkers play a leading role, without benefiting from their efforts in terms of productivity growth. Outraged by their employer' s irresponsibility and indifference, female workers held the long sit-ins and protests demanding the regularization of their situation and the fulfilment of their legitimate demands[47]. Their commitment takes the form of noisy but peaceful rallies, aimed at forcing the authorities and employers to respond

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[44] Ministry of Employment (n.d.).

[45] Kingdom of Morocco (1965, December 11, p. 1726). Royal Decree No. 108-65 ratifying the establishment agreement signed in Dakar on March 27, 1964 between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Republic of Senegal, Official Bulletin No. 2773.

[46] Viafnsina (2025, April 7).

[47] Albayane (2019, May 19).

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to their legal demands. The demonstrations are also marked by a persistent determination to assert their rights despite the pressures and difficulties they face, demonstrating a determination to obtain improvements in their working conditions.

Unlike nationals and because of their irregularity, IMWs do not protest against labour conditions. Their only form of protest they used to use when they get tired of farm work is to stay home. Lately, especially after Leqlia' s event, the Migrants made use of a collective mobilisation in the street demanding safety for all migrant communities, as explained by a migrant: "before the incident, the only initiative the IMWs use is to stay at home if he does not want or does not agree to work in this sector (...) I remember when there was a small strike related to insecurity, when a migrant was injured, we refused to go to work. Many bosses lost two days. We are demanding security. The authorities have reassured us about it. This strike is not about improving working conditions, but about providing the necessary security, because migrants are victims of criminal attacks." [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]

Frames

For most migrants, it is difficult to know their real prospects and their acceptance to live in precarious and exploitative conditions without knowing the "philosophy of adventure" they often speak about. IMWs, when they set themselves for the adventure to migrate irregularly for the sake of improving their lives and future, they prepare themselves psychologically to surmount all types of difficulties and risks while they are in their journey for a better future. The following excerpt shows that favourable attitudes toward irregular emigration do not vary significantly by gender. These migrant women left their country to seek adventure. Halima develops an awareness of the migrant's condition and feels a desire to continue the adventure: "Leave here (go where?), go elsewhere, that is to say (is it possible?). For me, I have nothing. If I stop, I have to leave [across the sea, you will risk your life]. You see, sir, I'm going to explain something to you, the migrant, we migrants, we have reached a level of life, we are no longer afraid of anything, that means if you are not in the migrant's place to understand his suffering, a migrant to understand the migrant, what the migrant is going through, that is the most difficult thing, first of all, you are not at home, secondly, you don't expect to live this kind of life, thirdly, you don't even have stability, even if you are sorry there is something to eat, there are days when I slept without eating [...] days I slept without eating so the migrant, he doesn't care if there is a solution for a migrant really if we can really help a migrant let us do it really well". [MOR_WP5_Agri_20]

This explains why most IMWs accept indecent or exploitative work conditions as long as it will allow them to live a better life or a life of their own, without close connection to their families. As disclosed in our interviews, the condition of being a migrant makes migrants' work and productivity even better than their work at home. "Moroccan employers who have farms in sub-Saharan countries say that productivity (of IMW) isn't the same. Migrants there have rituals and social conventions that force workers to stop working without permission. Their presence in another country makes them productive and disciplined. There, they have

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alternatives, but here, they don't."[MOR_WP5_Agri_12]. The alternative for some of these adventurous migrants is to cross the sea; others loose hope in the in the middle of the way and decide to return back home; while others decide to stay and make their living in the middle of the adventure, in the transit country, Morocco. One migrant confirms "We are prepared for everything, for us it is an adventure." [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]. Other IMWs, including women have stated that they have migrated to seek adventure which means they are prepared for anything. "We came looking for adventure" [MOR_WP5_Agri_7].

A majority of migrants wait for an opportunity to cross to Europe. The interviewee stated that migrants "live in deplorable housing conditions with no hygiene. They live overwhelmingly in a small square meter. In one room, you can find three households of 5 to 6 people, because I participated in the general census with the HCP. Hygienic conditions are deplorable. Migrants live in these conditions because they don't earn enough, they don't buy clothes, they don't take care of their hygiene because they save money to pay for crossings." [MOR_WP5_Agri_26]. Yet, the least common alternative sought by migrants is to work to save money, gain skills and then return back to their country with ideas and projects to implement, as observed by a migrant community representative: "The worker has his vision: to work, to save money, perhaps with the aim of crossing or returning to his country to try to set up a project." [MOR_WP5_Agri_6]. For migrants, return to their country of origin is conditioned by two things. The first is to have a residence permit to be able to travel back and forth between Morocco and their country of origin. Women express this desire the most, which implies the connections and responsibilities they still have with their families back home. Aja describes this goal as follows: "If I have a residence permit, I stay; I go back and forth. Now there are visa problems, we are stuck." [MOR_WP5_Agri_8]. The second is to have the skills and enough financial resources necessary to implement a project. One migrant expresses this need: "We have already requested training. If we go back, we can do something. We asked, but there is no follow-up." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]

A significant percentage of interviewed migrants are in the wait of regularizations and want to apply for residence permits to be able to stay and work in Morocco. In addition to regularization, they ask for improved working conditions. The following excerpt illustrates this alternative: "What I' m asking for is regularization, good working conditions, regarding our health situation, at least to pay for medication [...] The salaries we receive can' t do anything." [MOR_WP5_Agri_5]. Regularization can encourage migrants to change their future prospects, as they aim to overcome the impasse in their migratory project. For them, their situation must be regularized to be able to travel back and forth between Morocco and their country of origin. Without this regularization, the only option is to cross the sea.

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4.3 State actors

This section is based on secondary sources as well as interviews with representatives of the rural commune of Sidi Bibi, the agricultural Chamber in the region of Souss Massa, an occupational doctor of a farm in Chtouka, and a representative of Morocco Foodex as well as the perspectives of an expert in labour law[48].

The Moroccan legislation includes measures that regulate the employment of foreign workers, yet these regulations are general not sectoral as they do not distinguish between agricultural and industrial sectors, as noticed by an interviewed expert. *"The labour code, which governs social legislation, addresses the recruitment of foreigners in general and does not distinguish between workers in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. These procedures must be respected, otherwise the workers are considered to be in an irregular status and the employer is considered to be in violation of the law." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]*

The Labour Code requires an authorization of the employment of foreigners by the competent government authority, and an approval of the contract. Employers are required to cover the cost of returning the worker if his or her work permit is not renewed or granted. However, and as explained by the labour law expert is that in reality the recruitment procedure available for legal recruitment of foreigners does not apply for non-qualified workers in the agricultural sector. *"What we find in the agricultural sector is that the nature of the workforce is unskilled, and does not require any diploma or skills. An internship period is enough for the worker to master the nature of the work to be done in the fields. So, the problem that arises is that the Ministry of Labour will not approve these employment contracts. So, we find that the agricultural sector recruits migrant workers informally, except for workers from countries with which Morocco has bilateral cooperation, such as Senegal and Tunisia." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]*

Bilateral agreements with specific countries such as Senegal and Tunisia provide specific guarantees for workers from these countries to enjoy the same employment conditions and rights as Moroccan nationals. These agreements often stipulate the treatment of workers and aim to ensure compliance with international standards, to which Morocco is a signatory. For instance, Morocco signed the international commitments to the United Nations Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families in June 1993 and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration[49] in 2018. Both instruments call for the protection of migrants from human rights violations such as trafficking and measures to promote decent work, access to social security and safety at work. The National

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[48] Our request for interviews with the labour and social inspection (CNSS), and the delegation of the Ministry of agriculture in the region was unproductive. We had an interview with a labour inspector and the interview was conducted in his capacity as a union activist militating for the rights of labour inspectors as well as an expert in matters of labour law. For ethical reasons, we decided to use his perspective in the section of non-state actors and interactions.

[49] OHCHR (2025, April 15).

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labour inspectorate plays a crucial role in monitoring work conditions, ensuring compliance with labour legislation and referring victims of human trafficking and forced labour to the appropriate support services, such as the police, NGOs or health services, in the event of abuse or exploitation[50].

In 2013, the country launched campaigns for the regularization of irregular migrants transiting or living in Morocco and adopted a national migration and asylum strategy in 2014, which contributed to a great extent to the improvement of the professional and economic situation of several migrants by establishing recruitment programs. At the local level, the Souss-Massa region also was engaged in many promising projects for the benefit of migrants in the region under the supervision of the Regional Migration Initiatives Program (PRIM) which aims to support regional actors in the appropriation and implementation of migration policies at the local level[51]. The establishment of Migrant Reception and Orientation Offices (BAOMs), which are considered a local authority of the municipality, in accordance with Organic Law 113-14 on municipalities, which provides a good example of cooperation between civil society and local authorities. Under the signed agreements, the BAOMs officials, who received training in the portability of rights based on cooperation agreements signed by the CNSS with social security funds in third countries[52] provide information and direct migrants to the appropriate services based on their requests and provide the necessary support.

Strategies

State actors (i.e. labour authorities, national security, local authorities, CNSS, CRDH, and Morocco Foodex, etc.) sometimes rely on the inclusive guidelines of the immigration and asylum strategy (SNIA), sometimes on the legal status of migrants and the provisions of the labour code regarding the employment of foreign workers. The labour code adopted in 2004 is considered by these actors as the legal framework for the organization of labour relations, but it does not fully align with the requirements of the new migration and asylum policy adopted by the Kingdom regarding the integration of migrants. In the absence of a thorough reform of the labour code in accordance with to the nature of agricultural work, state actors remain generally indifferent to the informal recruitment of workers including IMWs, in peak agricultural production.

This transition in immigration management is the source of ambivalence among state actors, whose interventions and strategies oscillate between two legal frameworks. Their interventions should either enforce the legal framework of the employment of foreigners by applying the provisions of the labour code governing the employment of foreign workers and qualifying any other form of employment of foreigners as illegal; or managing this transition

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[50] Bouharrou (2018).

[51] PRIM (n.d.).

[52] PRIM (2022, March 18).

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phase by referring to the inclusive and humane governance approach of the new immigration and asylum policy while awaiting the reform of the labour code, and the regularization of the situation of migrants working in the agricultural sector informally. State actors are taking this reality into consideration. They are in the midst of a transition phase with legal risks. This is why they are calling for either changes to the labour code or the regularization of the situation of migrants employed in the agricultural sector. "The expert interviewee explains this situation further by referring to the legal, security and social constraints that Morocco is handling in the management of the IM flows. "the recruitment of migrant labour in the agricultural sector has become an inevitable reality, given the labour shortage and the low productivity of the existing workforce (...) There are other constraints that require these (enforcement) stakeholders to take into consideration all social and security issues. These are migrants in transit who come to Morocco in thousands. If they cannot find work to meet their needs, they will engage in other activities, such as theft, attacks on people, etc., which will affect the security of Moroccan society." *[MOR_WP5_Agri_12]*

The issue of the recruitment of IMW requires a holistic political and legal solution. In this transition phase, local enforcement actors make use of a politics of reality that seeks the management of the situation crisis. The expert states social and security considerations are taken into consideration by inspectors, who in the case of observing a breach of the law in terms of recruiting IMW may either direct an oral observation to the employer to dismiss the IMWs or write a report against the employer in violation of the law. "*If the inspector observes that there are (irregular) migrants (in the farm), he must write a report of violation of the law against the employer, and the fate of these migrants will be the street. Otherwise, the labour inspector makes an oral observation, and the employer dismisses these migrant workers." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12_ Expert].* Other constraints that make the work of labour inspections coverage partial are the limited number of inspectors in the sector and the limited resources available for them to have access to inspection sites. *"[...] the number of inspectors in the agricultural sector is not numerous at the national level. The difficult nature of the roads and access to some farms is especially difficult since labour inspectors do not have company vehicles to get to these places. Therefore, inspection is always very minimal." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12].*

As for occupational health, the interviewed doctor explained the role they have in ensuring the conformity of the labour setting with the requirements of occupational health and security. For an occupational doctor to practice within a farm or a company, he must meet certain conditions set out in Articles 310 and 312 of the Labour Code and have a specialization in occupational health, practice only one specialty at a time, be registered with the National Order of doctors and be linked to the employer or the head of the inter-company medical service by an employment contract respecting the rules of professional ethics. As explained by the interviewee, the occupational doctor acts as a councillor for the employer but at the same time as a health inspector who should report and submits a company file on the health and security risks at the company to the employer first, then it is up to the employer to submit the report to the labour inspector afterwards. The Occupational doctor *"should fill in the*

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enterprise file reporting on the occupational risks and the workers exposed to these risks in the company. There are several risks in farms such as traumatism, plants' treatment, machine noise, the pesticides and products used in plantations." [MOR_WP5_Agri_27].

The interviewee also observed that beside the sanitary role of labour doctors, other state and international actors, such as labour inspectors, social inspectors of the CNSS, as well as international certification and audit organisms, ensure in fact that the companies and firms respects the requirements of occupational health and security, especially for the companies exporting products. *"Products that are exported are audited by a social audit from international organizations and are inspected in terms of the labour conditions in which the products are produced, including the occupational health requirements that should be respected in the farm". [MOR_WP5_Agri_27].* In the same vein, the interviewed expert mentioned that *"Nearly 90% of farms in Chtouka province are structured because the majority of their products are intended for exportation. These companies and farms that export their products have passed a series of controls and inspections by national and international organizations. They must have SMETA certification, which focuses on workers, labour standards, health, and safety." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12].* The Sedex Members Ethical Trade Audit (SMETA) is a specific social audit methodology that *"assesses all aspects of responsible business practice and enables businesses to assess their sites and suppliers based on their standards of labour, health and safety, environment and business ethics*[53]." The certification is based on the ILO conventions as well as relevant national laws and allows for zero toleration of human rights abuses, forced labour, human trafficking, etc.

In addition to private and paid certification organisms, our interview with the representative of Morocco Foodex, which is a public organization tasked for operational monitoring of the agri-food export sector[54] revealed that Morocco Foodex is currently developing in collaboration with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the FAO, and the European Union a reference book for environmental and social sustainability in the agro-food industry. The interviewee explained that *"the guide aims to support Moroccan exporters in their efforts to comply with international standards,* especially because exporting companies are driven by the requirements of destination countries, which require audits in all dimensions." [MOR_WP5_Agri_29].

The Morocco Foodex guide will establish environmental and social sustainability standards which will be used for auditing companies to ensure the compliance of products to be exported with the social and environmental sustainability dimensions. The representative stated that the project is currently in its final set up. Once launched Morocco Foodex will take on more roles in certifying more specifically the companies producing products for exportation

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[53] See the SMETA Audit website for more information, here.

[54] See the website of MOROCCO FOODEX for further information about their mission. https://www.moroccofoodex.org.ma/fr/business-intelligence/veille-strategique-operationnelle.

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according to social standards related to decent labour. Its role will complement the role of other national and international actors mandated to conduct social inspections (National Social Security Fund), labour inspections (labour authorities), private international audit organisms (SMETA) and international auditors mandated by purchasing centres to audit their suppliers. The interviewee clarified that SMETA and SBI are all private and voluntary standards. This means there is no legal obligation to implement them within the company. However, customers, and each one, depending on the destination, require a specific standard on their suppliers. Implicitly, certifications become mandatory, and a criterion for access to the international market.

The free and voluntary certification of exporting companies by a public organism has an added value for operators as well as for Morocco and aims initially to develop an echo and social sustainability label to be affixed to the packaging of exported products and promote the image Morocco as an origin. The interviewee also indicated that the agro-food export sector is under too much scrutiny for economic and competitive reasons and that labour standards in these companies exceed the minimum standards. For him, it is not possible for export companies to be certified under an array of standards and yet have labour law violations. These companies comply with the law and sometimes exceed the legal minimum standards. *"The export sector is highly structured. We've talked about CBI and SMETA, but does the state require these certifications? Please look at the state's decent work requirements and see that export companies exceeds those standards required by national regulations. Why? Because these companies have adopted private standards that exceed the minimum requirements of the state in labour law for example."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_29].

Frames

The Ministry of Agriculture is working on areas such as agricultural workers, women, and rural youth. The actions it supports target all these categories, without distinguishing a migrant subcategory. The representative of the Chamber of Agriculture frames the issue of IM work labour as follows: *"This migration plays an important role. There are several nationalities, and there is a shortage of labour, but the issue is not being addressed acutely. The same goes for the actions adopted; the Ministry is talking about agricultural labour in general."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_16_chambre of agriculture]*. Many employers and farmers have started lately because of the labour shortage to subcontract the recruitment of seasonal workers to service companies, as noted by the same interviewee: "Service companies help farmers with subcontracting work and recruiting seasonal labour. TECTRA in Sidi Bibi, for example, is a company founded in 2002. The company employs temporary workers who are permanent employees, but they perform multiple tasks for several employers."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_16].

Informal brokers, caporals, recruitment agencies exacerbate workers' labour precariousness. The expert we interviewed mentioned that the sub-contracting of the recruitment of workers remains a loosely regulated area. *"If you go to the mawqef, you won't find Moroccan workers or migrants. What you will find are brokers who work informally (...) They subcontract labour. They have a means of transportation and they transport the workers to the farm. They are a*

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direct recruitment mediator without the right to do so. There is no legal framework governing this subcontracting of labour. This could be one of the regulations which will help create several small and medium-sized businesses that can solve this problem." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]

Aware of labour shortages, the interviewed representative of the Chamber of Agriculture stressed the need for a number of reforms and mechanisms to fully integrate IM workers into the formal agricultural economy. First, there is need for raising awareness among employees and launching an internal debate within the agricultural sector about the social transformations of the labour workforce and the need for formalisation of labour. Second, IMWs should be regularized first, then recruited in accordance with the law and then guaranteed their labour rights by ensuring their social protection and occupational health. This necessitates the overhaul of the current CNSS reporting system by adopting a new system for reporting farm workers to the CNSS even if they work for multiple employers to guarantee their right to social protection. Our interviewee proposed a new flexible formula for CNSS declaration that is adapted to the specificities of the agricultural sector: *"tokens or stamps allowing workers to declare each day of work. There must be a multiple or open system of declaration."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_16]. However, a Moroccan agricultural engineer illustrated that the extension of CNSS declarations to all workers made certain employers dismiss a number of their workers to be able to cover the social costs of some. *"Social protections is good, but when social protection is in effect, the employer starts to evaluate how much money he makes, how many workers he has hired, and whether he gives each of them their full salaries. Therefore, he can't declare because the tax will increase.* [MOR_WP5_Agri_13]

This proposal aims to cater for the inherent fragility and seasonality of agricultural work and at the same time guarantee IMWs access to decent seasonal employment. Our interviewee also enumerated a number of other solutions that seek to make the agricultural sector a level of development and job creation: *"In this situation, there are solutions that can be implemented to ensure production. There are colossal investments, a second desalination station, and considerable efforts are being made at this level. This production requires labour, because there will be an additional area to cultivate, so regularization of the situation of IMWs will be essential. The legal framework is the basis." [MOR_WP5_Agri_16].* With the creation of the new seawater desalination plant, Morocco intends to increase agricultural productivity. This infrastructure represents a genuine technological breakthrough that addresses the water resource deficit affecting the Souss-Massa region. Therefore, the representative of chamber expressed that "The legal perspective is a solution for stabilizing the workforce, promoting the attractiveness of the agricultural sector and improving working conditions in terms of salaries." *[MOR_WP5_Agri_16].* The growing need for labour in the future impels for further reforms at the level of labour migration regulation, namely a third round of regularization, enforcement of labour regulations and an overhaul of the declaration system seem interesting to mobilize the workforce necessary for agricultural production and to make this type of labour decent and attractive.

For other state actors such as local authorities, particularly those who govern the issue of migration, including irregular migration, in the commune of Sidi Bibi and Khmiss Ait Amira in

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the province of Chtouka, the launch of the new immigration and asylum strategy (SNIA) provides a holistic approach about the integration of the migrant population. The charter for local authorities in Africa adopted by the Local and Subnational Governments of Africa[55] which was adopted at the 8th edition of the Africities Summit held in Marrakech in November 20-24 November, 2018 constitutes more specifically a turning point for the recognition of the major contribution of local authorities in migration governance, given that migrants live in cities and towns[56]. Among the specific objectives of this charter is to identify the place and roles of local authorities and to exchange best practices in good migration governance at the local level. Despite these efforts, legality of status and identity documents remain important proof documents for the enjoyment of many of these rights. A migrant interviewee distinguished in this respect between having only a passport and a residence permit. *"No, I don't have a residence permit, I only have a passport. A passport doesn't replace a residence permit. If you only have a passport, you can't get a job, for example, in a Moroccan company. A passport is good, but if you don't have a passport when you go to the hospital, they won't accept you. So, a passport is very important, but a residence permit is better than a passport." [MOR_WP5_Agri_25]*

The strategy of territorialisation of immigration and asylum policy that was adopted by these two communes, (1) created a reception and orientation office for migrants; (2) enabled the participation of migrants in the process of developing the action plan for the municipality of Sidi Bibi, inchaden, Ait Amira employed a participatory approach inclusive of the migrant communities living in the municipality; (3) allowed the registration of migrants in the civil registry; and (4) ensured the inclusion of the children of IMs in the public school system.

This territorialisation allows migrants, even those in an irregular situation, to access rights to education, health, etc., in this case for this category of migrants who choose Morocco as their destination: *"Among the migrants, there are those who have changed their minds. They consider Morocco a country of settlement, they have built families, sent their children to school, and send small sums of money back to their country of origin. In our douar, we have three money transfer agencies. They ask for day care centres, ask for health care, ask for regularization, training, and decent housing at affordable prices."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_1]

The involvement of municipalities in the territorialisation of the SNIA allows migrants to have access to fundamental rights, changes the lives of migrants and guides their migration projects. However, IMs are unable to enter into legal relationships with their employers. Our interviewee representing the local authorities in Sidi Bibi describes these constraints as follows: *"Migrant employment contracts must go through ANAPEC, except for Senegalese migrants. Migrants need a residence permit because the employment contract must be legalized by the relevant authorities."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_1]. Local authorities have been committed to the

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[55] Also called the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG).

[56] UCLG (2018).

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immigration and asylum strategy since 2014. However, alongside this progress, there is a lack of a coherent legal framework to enable this strategy to be implemented at the local level.

According to the interviewed occupational doctor, for a farm to be legally conformant, *"it has to provide the necessary requirements for occupational health, which is true budget-consuming, but employers should understand that the respect of occupational health requirements works for their benefit; it guarantees the durability of their labour force and their production." [MOR_WP5_Agri_1].* On the basis of the report highlighting a specific health risk for workers at the workplace, the labour inspector demands the establishment of a health and safety committee or an inter-company committee even if there is only one employee. This role of these committees is to guarantee the respect of standards security requirements at the workplace. At the same time, when we asked the doctor about the legal power of the company's files as an official document that justifies the labour relationship with the employer of a specific farm, the occupational doctor stated that "*the file can be used by migrants as proof of their employment relationship with their employer. But generally, IMWs are not given these forms." [MOR_WP5_Agri_1].*

Another state actor with the prerogative to advise public local authorities on human rights and monitor the country' s compliance with its international commitments in this area and educate on human rights in the region is the Regional Committee for Human Rights (CRDH). The CRDH initiated a non-profit, multi-stakeholder platform called the Souss-Massa migration committee (CMSM). The committee is led by the CRDH, the Association of Researchers in Migration and Development and the NGO Migrations and Development. It is tasked to monitor the territorial implementation of SNIA, the respect of the rights of MWs in accordance with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the facilitation of IMs' access to basic services[57]. Sub-Saharan migrants, especially representatives of migrant communities in the region, have been actively participating in several meetings and workshops that the commission organize for the sake of promoting access to rights for migrant communities in Morocco[58].

The interview with the representative of the CRDH revealed that they *"have never received a complaint of conflict between a migrant and their employer in the agricultural sector. So, all we have are impressions we form based on other complaints of migrants (...) on mixed marriages, residence permits, civil status, residence permits, education, health, deaths, public freedoms, creation of associations, migrant prisoners, etc." [MOR_WP5_Agri_30*]. The interviewee stated that CRDH has never observed human rights violations such as human trafficking, overexploitation, or organized labour mafias. Their take on the situation is that *"There is rather a general situation related to seasonal work and the so-called attacha (task workers) who all have the same rights at work." [MOR_WP5_Agri_30].* He added that task workers are recruited by mediators. Yet, these mediations should be understood in the normal

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[57] GADEM (2022, August).

[58] See the CNDH websites.

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Moroccan context that we know. The employer asks someone who has a means of transport to bring him workers for the day, he brings them the workers and he takes his share of mediation for the service he has provided. In his own words, *"The employer doesn't even know the workers who will be working with him. As soon as he has hectares to harvest, he calls the owners of the pickup trucks to bring him a specific number of day labourers; the employer pays the mediator." [MOR_WP5_Agri_30].*

4.4 Non-state actors

Strategies

Non-state actors such as trade unions and NGOs play a key role in accompanying workers, including IMWs, at risk or victims of exploitative labour conditions. Interviews with non-state activists include actors with various positioning and perspectives. We have interviewed two union representatives, a Moroccan (UMT) and migrant union actor (ODT), a Moroccan civil society activist, and two organizations of migrant communities.

In media reports, the Democratic Union of Agriculture (SDA) plays an active role in organizing protests, highlighting in particular the exploitation of female workers, who suffer from dangerous working conditions, low wages and sexual harassment. Challenges intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which weakened union activities and exacerbated workers' vulnerabilities[59]. NGOs such as ATTAC/CADTM Morocco are also involved in supporting the struggles of agricultural workers and advocating for social justice. These CSOs justify their actions by stressing the need for food sovereignty, fair Labour practices and the protection of workers' rights. Their strategies include raising awareness, organizing demonstrations and forming coalitions with other social justice movements in North Africa[60].

Interviewed actors state that they intervene to facilitate the residence of migrants. Migrants speak of the actions of migrant CSOs in providing medicine, aid, and medical campaigns. The same is true for Moroccan civil society. These two actors represent much more than support networks and allies for IMWs. They ensure their social and cultural integration in the Moroccan society. Still SCOs limit themselves to accompanying IMs and providing humanitarian support that ensure a better access to rights and services. They believe that the state must play its role in integrating these communities socio-economically. One migrant community actor responds as follows: "*I'm not a union, I' m not. You, no, I' m not a union. I' m a researcher. I work on living together, on interculturality, on Africanness. I' m an activist for Africa to start with its children. I campaign for that. But not for anything that has to do with work, that' s far from me.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_21].

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[59] Democratic Union of Agriculture (2018).

[60] Democratic Union of Agriculture (2018).

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Actors within the CSOs intervene within the limits of the missions assigned to civil society, but their means are limited, according to a Morocco CSO actor: "*He (a civil society actor) can' t do anything about civil society. He supports civil society. Civil society is the cure. Sometimes it' s calm. It' s society' s paracetamol. But he has nothing in his hand. Civil society is there. But the decisions are made by the State.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_2]. Our interviewee further explained the role his CSO played to guarantee IMs access to services and to the social integration: "*For us, the most important thing is that there is no xenophobia, that there is no mistreatment, that people live together, access to education, access to health. These are things on which we have achieved a lot. We went to see at the level of the education delegation, the academy. Today, all the children of migrants are in school.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_2]

As for unions, they use two strategies to improve the labour and living conditions of IMWs in the municipality. They seek cooperation with foreign unions to improve the employment conditions of farm workers in general. A union activist claims that, thanks to cooperation with a Dutch union, since 2009, working conditions have been improved in farms run by Dutch investors. This is certainly an interesting initiative, but it was not generalized to all IMWs in the province farms and it was limited in time from 2009 to 2012. Uinons also contest against all forms of exploitation which farm workers can be victims of and defend the rights of migrants regardless of their administrative situation. Unions share this perspective with human rights organizations.

Frames

Unions and CSOs expressed that the strengthening of North-South cooperation would enhance their humanitarian support of IMWs and promote their access to decent labour opportunities. The Moroccan CSO actor we interviewed recommended the need for North-South cooperation to manage the challenges posed by the irregular flows of migrants. He stated: "*My recommendation to Europe is that they take a direct interest in these refugee and IMs camps. And there are other needs that are needed in terms of cooperation. There is the North-South partnership between Morocco and Europe on migration management.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_2]

Another issue raised by the local stakeholders is the absence of decentralization of SNIA at the local level. An NGO actor confirmed that: "*If the SNIA is there, but at the local level, do you find the SNIA? There is no entity (authority) that can follow up SNIA' s measures at the local level.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_2]. The union representative echoed this idea by stating that there is a lack of progress in implementing the actions foreseen by HM the King of Morocco within the framework of SNIA. Drawing on the bilateral relationships with Senegal, the union representative stated that that is need for upgrading the legislative framework and establishing bilateral agreements between Morocco and African countries, to find solutions to problems related to the employment of migrants from sub-Saharan countries.

Besides, unions contribute to promoting public debate on the rights of migrants at work. The representative of the UMT lists a number of actions and strategies they employed to promote

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public debate around conditions of farm work in general. (1) "*Develop the debate with migrants to propose a memorandum. Now, it' s about saying no to exploitation, fighting racism, and wages; the priority is the conventions.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_15]; (2) instigate advocacy campaigns in the form of debate in parliament, dialogue with the relevant government authorities through official channels, encourage research on the issue of IMW; (3) organize training and sensitization campaigns for promoting decent recruitment of IMWs in partnership with other stakeholders, notably the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), which is involved in this matter; (4) lobby for a third regularization campaign to solve first the issue of irregularity and grant residence permits for IMs and facilitate the administrative procedures for renewal of the residence permits. The representative of the union highlighted the urgent need for regularization: "*There will be definitely another regularization campaign to comply with the law. They are asking for this regularization and want to work within the framework of the law.*" [MOR_WP5_Agri_15]. The migrants' grievances fit into this perspective, as they demand through the support of unions and associations the regularization of their situation and the strengthening of agreement partnerships with their countries of origin.

5. Interactions of the main local actors

The interaction between non-state actors, employers, migrant workers and state actors in the agricultural sector of the Souss-Massa region is characterized by a complex mix of confrontation and collaboration. The following are examples of interactions between the various local actors on a number of issues related to migrant workers or their rights in the region.

CRDH, local government authorities, civil society actors and migrant community leaders

In each 18 December, the regional human rights commission (CRDH), the local government authorities and civil society actors along with migrant community leaders in the region come together to commemorate the migrants' day and discuss issues related to IMWs' integration in the Souss-Massa region. Though, it is a day with a festive and celebratory tone, IMWs concerns and demands became visible through the testimonies and speeches that their migrant community leaders give hoping for more integration measures and more rights for migrant communities.

CRDH, labour inspectorate and the prosecutor of Chtouka Ait Baha interactions

The interview with the CRDH representative clarified that the main approach to the governance of the recruitment of migrant labour depends principally on the reform of Law 02.03[61]. The "*constraints go beyond everyone.*" *[MOR_WP5_Agri_30]* since migrants' lack of residence rights obstruct their workers' rights. For that reason, the governance of irregular

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[61] Law O2.03 relating to the entry and stay of foreigners in the Kingdom of Morocco, to irregular emigration and immigration.

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migrants working goes beyond the prerogatives of the labour inspectors, employers, and local authorities. Hence the role of local actors is to manage at a daily basis with available means and legal texts the situation. The interactions that the CRDH had previously with the labour inspectorate and the prosecutor of Chtouka Ait Baha on the recruitment of IMWs in the region focussed on migrant workers' recruitment, how migrant employment contracts are drawn up, what constraints limit the implementation of these measures on the ground, and what employers think about migrant recruitment, without limiting the discussion to the agricultural sector. The aim of these interactions and meetings was to *"raise awareness among labour inspectors on the specificity of this category of workers, facilitate the administrative procedures encountered in the employment of migrants, provide facilities for access to justice and litigation procedures and protect migrants in litigation procedures." [MOR_WP5_Agri_30].*

Regarding the interactions of the CRDH with the regional labour inspectorate on the working conditions of migrants, the interviewee maintained that their interaction with them can be called advocacy or awareness-raising about the problems observes and the complaints received in connection with the issue of migration. "*The CRDH uses findings divulged by the national committee working on the topic of migration in the National Council for Human Rights (CNDH), which contains an important section on the working conditions on the working conditions of IMWs in addition to references to the legal texts that apply to agricultural work, its related decrees and implementing texts, legal texts related to migration and self-employment implemented in 2018 and still in force, and the CNSS Decree which is under revision.*" *[MOR_WP5_Agri_30].*

IMWs and local state actors

Another occasion that instigates or requires direct interaction between IMWs and other local state actors happens in the event of conflict between migrants and their employers on the one hand, or in the case of conflict between the local population and the migrant communities. Migrants often seek the help of the local government authorities and the national security to solve cases of conflictual interactions with the employers or with the Moroccan communities by protecting them from crime and aggression. An interview with an IMW illustrates the protective role of local authorities: *"The authorities protect us because they know we' re here for work. When we went on strike, we explained that."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]. According to migrants, the local authority' intervention is beneficial because it resolves situations of conflicts with the other part. For an IMW: *"I think the bosses asked the authorities to meet with us... The community leaders spoke to them about security. They get up in the morning and ask for reassurance about security."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]. Similarly, the authorities intervene also in case of refusal to pay wages. For a migrant: *"The authorities often intervene in conflicts if he refuses to pay money for workers."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_25]

IMW and local authority and civil society

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IMWs' interactions with a number of stakeholders in the locality are possible in a number of occasions. First, during the implementation of the action plan of the territorial municipality of Sidi Bibi, IMWs were brought together with the civil society actors and elected officials to discuss the implementation of the territorial plan of the municipality. A participatory and inclusive approach was used to help diagnose the actions to be taken in the locality with regards to the needs of migrants. The migrant community leaders who attend these meetings have a consultative role as to the best ways various services, needs or interventions should be undertaken for the migrant communities. Their role is to mediate the communication between their respective migrant communities and the local authorities or civil society organizations.

The interactions occurring between migrants and the civil society actors do not concern, though, work-related issues, but rather provide humanitarian support for migrants. Migrants cite the names of organizations that offer them assistance. These are both national and international organizations. Migrants rely on civil society organizations because they offer healthcare services. This migrant' s comment demonstrates this importance: *"There are associations, we rely on associations, there is AMSA LACI, and other associations."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_21]

Migrant workers and Moroccan farmworkers

Other interactions namely between migrant workers and Moroccan farmworkers take place both inside and outside the workplace. At the workplace, these interactions are conditioned by the position occupied in the job: caporal, manager, or technician. Migrants find that it is always the Moroccan who is in the lead. The irregular status of migrants prevents them from occupying a valued position in the farm. IMWs demand training to access some of these favourable positions in the farms, while MWs with residence permits usually abandon the agricultural sector to work in businesses, restaurants, and call centres.

IMWs, unions and labour inspectors

Unions are actively involved in defending improved working conditions and fair wages, which often leads to conflict with employers who prioritize cost minimization. Migrant workers, especially those with no residence permits, are in a particularly vulnerable position. Their ability to defend their rights is considerably hampered by the precariousness of their legal status. Interviews with IMWs disclosed that many of them approach unions to mediate their conflicts with employers who refuse to pay for their wages. IMWs stated that they contact unions to ask about the agreements their countries have with Morocco and whether these agreements facilitate their residence and work in Morocco. *"I have already contacted a UMT activist to see what agreements have been signed; there are agreements signed. What are these agreements? I want to know what agreements we have with Morocco."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_6].

As endorsed by the interviewed expert, migrants are in fact aware of the legal constraints impeding their access to formal employment in Morocco. The only way possible for a

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regulation and organization of the labour market can be done through a controlled and need-based recruitment of migrant workers from their countries of origin via a seasonal labour migration agreement. *"Employers cannot do anything alone. Instead of recruiting irregular migrants, it is better to import workers from exporting countries according to the employers' real needs. They will come under bilateral agreements with seasonal work contracts of three months and six months depending on the nature of the product they will pick and have them return to their countries at the expense of the employers who accept this solution." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]*

Additionally, the interaction between unions and IMWs occur even if migrants are irregular or not affiliated with the union, especially for the resolution of individual conflicts between IMWs and employers. Still, the salience of the issue of IMWs in the agenda Moroccan unions remains marginal given the other primary concerns they have, such as tripartite social dialogue to improve the labour conditions and wages of workers in general. An IMW endorsed this: *"Well, the union intervenes if a boss refuses to pay wages, especially the mediator (caporal or broker). There, we resort to resolving the problem agreeably."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_10].

For another interviewee, the irregularity of migrants limits the interventions of labour unions with regard to the improvement of their labour conditions. Migrants cannot organize collectively and unions do not have a mandate to support workers whose legal status is out of the law. *"Union claims have always focused on the application of the law, in its legal aspect, not on demands* [...] *Regarding migrant workers, sometimes there are individual complaints that are resolved amicably with the employer* [...] *Someone who doesn't have a residence permit doesn't have the right to participate in any activities, protests, or strikes because they don't have legal status. But they can spontaneously protest a specific situation. Most migrants want a sum of money to leave for Europe." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]*

Local government authorities and national government authorities

For their part, beside their day to day governance roles, local state actors are often faced with the legal gaps that leave undocumented MWs outside the scope of state protection measures and thereby have to decide on better ways to protect the rights of all workers, including IMWs. This approach by state actors can exacerbate the gap between those who are legally recognized and those who are not, adding a new layer of complexity and social injustice between these groups. The state' s dual role of enforcing labour law while promoting economic growth creates additional tension, complicating relations and interactions first between the various local government authorities (i.e. labour authorities, agriculture authorities, CNSS, etc.) and second between state actors and other stakeholders involved in the sector of agriculture.

According to the expert interviewed, the reason for the non-policy in addressing the issue of IMW is because of the *reluctance* of political actors in charge to engage in changing a law that requires direct interaction and convergence between the stakeholders of the various concerned state actors. In addition, the political time a *"Labour law must be changed*

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according to the needs of each sector. Or conclude a collective labour agreement in line with this trend. (...) Local actors can do nothing in this situation or correct anything. I think that local authorities always produce daily reports. But there must be convergence between the relevant governance actors between the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, and Employment. The political actor manages political time to leave without doing anything." [MOR_WP5_Agri_12]

Employers, managers, caporals and IMWs

Interviews disclosed that there are indirect interactions linking employers, who are often represented by managers or caporals and IMWs. IMWs are often recruited and paid cash by their caporals who offered them to work without a pay slip. These remarks illustrate this interaction: *"You don' t have the right to speak to the boss, it' s the caporal, it' s the caporal who took you on, who pays you."* [MOR_WP5_Agri_9]. In fact, whether Moroccan or sub-Saharan, employers do not have a direct interaction with agricultural workers.

At the local level, migration governance at the local level takes the form of cooperation projects established between the public entities such as regions, municipalities, communes who have the decisional power to act at lower levels in coordination with and with the help of the civil society organizations and representatives of migrant communities as well as international partner organizations and United Nations agencies, European union, or European member states who provide technical and financial support. The implementation of project-based actions in the field of migration provide ample chances of interaction and complementarity between state and non-state actors. The state and non-state actors are represented on the Souss-Massa region' s PRIM initiative coordination committee, which supports the complementary interactions between the government and national and international organizations and associations in coordinating efforts to enhance the integration of migrants.

6. Corporate social responsibility in Chtouka

Participants stated that the majority of exporting farmers consider corporate social responsibility to be essential. For them, this responsibility refers to "good working conditions." They cite the following reasons:

The institutionalization of social dialogue

According to the unions, the demands made since 2007, accompanied by negotiations with the authorities and employers, have led to the institutionalization of social dialogue within companies and the respect of labour rights. For a regional union representative, "respect for labour rights in companies is not a problem. The challenge that persists is that of the seasonality of work, even this problem is beginning to be mastered with the production of cherry tomatoes. The unions, especially in the Souss-Massa region, have participated heavily in the upgrading of the agricultural sector, as evidenced by the fact that "in 2004 there was no

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labour inspection in Chtouka, nor an agency of the CNSS or ANAPEC. Now, all these institutions are established in this province".

Labour market competition

In order to retain the workforce necessary for production, especially in a context characterized by the scarcity of this workforce, agricultural workers boycott companies that do not respect these standards. The regional director of ANAPEC confirms that when they have job vacancies, workers ask for the name of the company and, in some cases, they refuse to work for some companies that they say do not respect workers' rights. As explained by the representative of agricultural producers, there is an increasing pressure on producers to comply with social labour standards, as workers are beginning to claim their rights on Facebook pages, denouncing companies that exploit labour through comments on job vacancy calls in social networks. He confirms that social media has tainted the image of the agricultural sector and contributed to the idea that Moroccans do not want to work. It also increased competition on attracting the labour necessary for production, which has become as the representative of agricultural producers confirms, both internal between agricultural companies and external between provinces, involving Moroccan and foreign workers. Thanks to the social benefits offered, such as transportation, childcare, etc., the region stands out as an attractive pull factor for national and non-national labour from across the country.

Social audits and traceability system

Exporting producers of agricultural products must comply with social audits, they are obliged to respect labour rights and invest in corporate social responsibility in order to obtain certificates. For these producers, corporate social responsibility becomes necessary to be able to produce and export. As indicated by the representative of FIFEL (Moroccan Interprofessional Federation of Production and Export of Fruits and Vegetables), the traceability system requires providing the same working conditions as those in force in Europe, employers in Morocco are adapting to these requirements via a certification system of social audits. For the representative of this professional association, Morocco is moving quickly, the number of certificates exceeds that of some European countries. For him, "the only sector that remained resilient in Morocco during the health crisis is agriculture, but we have not communicated about it".

State of play of corporate responsibility

Participants outline the current state of corporate responsibility, highlighting concrete commitments that illustrate this responsibility. They mention the following forms of corporate social responsibility:

- Literacy and academic support courses;

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- Childcare. The president of ANAPEC stated that companies offer social services to attract migrant workers. They must do so, given that these workers seek out socially responsible companies and are attentive to the workers' demands. There are even companies that struggle to recruit workers;

- End-of-study scholarship for children of agricultural workers, whether Moroccan or foreign workers;

- 4-hour shifts arranged for breastfeeding women; although the law only allows them one hour

- Quality professional transportation. Employers and the Ministry of the Interior (the provincial governor) pay particular attention to this issue. The province has a large fleet of minibuses at the service of farm workers.

- Housing, however, is not regulated. The representative of agricultural producers explained that Construction in agricultural zones, including for workers, is restricted. Given that, the representative of FIFEL, observed that the permission to build houses for workers is subject to specific guidelines established by local urban planning plans and necessitates a specific urban planning authorization.

Focus group participants noted that these measures are limited, as this union representative pointed that some companies offer services for workers, tutoring, scholarships, but this remains insufficient. They pointed out that migrant workers with legal status benefit from these privileges in the same way as Moroccans, without any discrimination.

Proposals for promoting corporate social responsibility

Focus group speakers agreed that there are various challenges to overcome in encouraging companies to invest in corporate social responsibility.

- Regularization of the situation of migrants;

- Some focus group speakers stressed the importance of developing communication strategies for employers,

- Making the agricultural sector more attractive through commitment to corporate social responsibility, creating social projects to improve the living and working conditions of workers;

- Strengthening South-South cooperation on labour migration

- Migrant workers are advocating for the regularization of their administrative status and the improvement of women's health, which has become an urgent priority.

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- Organizing meetings between employees and migrant workers. For migrant workers. “They’ve never had the opportunity to meet an employer, since recruitment is done through the corporal system, which needs to be changed.
- Financial support for projects to expand daycare centers, provide professional transport, and provide social housing for agricultural workers.

7. The living together in Chtouka

The establishment of the new migration policy, the hosting of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD) Summit, as well as the South-South cooperation initiative launched by Morocco, are initiatives aimed at promoting good migration governance. However, despite the various forms of living together observed, several challenges remain according to the focus group participants, which requires the implementation of socio-cultural activity programs.

The factor of promoting the living together

In the Souss Massa region, living together is promoted by different factors:

- Presence of employment opportunities. Agriculture in the chtouka region represents the sector offering the most employment opportunities, and has become a hotbed for migrants seeking employment to emigrate to Europe;
- Presence of a dynamic associative network, working in the field of immigration, such as AMSD among others, which approach the authorities to help the migrants living in Chtouka to get their children born in Morocco to get their civil registration, benefit from schooling for their children, have access to health care, etc.
- Implementation of cooperation projects aimed at deploying migration policy at the regional level.

A real living together, migrants and Moroccans in Chtouka

Focus group participants mentioned the following activities as manifestations of community life. They emphasized that there are exemplary initiatives of living together. The president of the Territorial Municipality of Inchaden and representative of civil society mentioned two types of initiatives.

- Incentives from local municipalities to the local civil society actors to organize socio-cultural events, such as organizing football tournament for friendship between the Moroccan and foreign residents of the Ait Amira and Belfaa communes;

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- Involvement of migrant workers in the diagnosis and consultation sessions for the creation of the municipal plan of the three municipalities of Sidi Bibi, Belfaa, and Inchaden supported by the European Union and associations such as Migration and Development, GTZ, Expertise France, Enabel in addition to the improvement of relations with the South, for example through twinning agreements.

Challenges of living together

- Negative representations of sub-Saharans that arise from time to time, especially in the case of local incidents or events of violence involving migrants., as in the case of the violence against a migrant worker heading to a farm in early morning and theft of his mobile by a Moroccan stealer in the commune of Belfaa.

- Limited legal framework, law 02.03, labour code, that does not take into consideration the regularization of the status of migrant workers and the formalization of their employment status so as to be able to benefit from all work-related social and health benefits.

- Limited financial support for the local associations working in the field of migration.

Proposals for building a living together

- Adapting laws to reality. The local dynamics for the integration of migrants seem to be more advanced and inclusive than the legal and policy frameworks that govern irregular migration in Morocco. Symbiosis between the regulations of residence status and labour law need to take into consideration employment as a legal pathway to regularization.

- Promote "innovative practices" in the management and governance of migration in a way that responds to the agricultural sector' labour demands and the migrant workers' needs and migration aspirations on the ground.

- Creation of orientation and support centers for migrants that follows closely migrants' trajectories and provides an adapted support to their needs;

- Involve migrants in the development of action plans for local authorities so as to have better local responses to their needs;

- Drawing on the experience of civil society to design programs related to migration in general and migrant workers in particular;

- Strengthening cooperation between Morocco, Europe and sub-Saharan countries in terms of migration governance;

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- While waiting for a new regularization campaign, the irregular administrative situation must not constitute an obstacle to the construction of living together; As the President of AMSA, a migrant association, emphasizes that thanks to the positive approach of migration governance in Morocco, community leaders can organize various socio-cultural activities for the benefit migrants even those without a residence permit.

8. Conclusion

Driven by the Green Morocco Plan, the Generation Green 2020-2030 strategy, and the construction of two desalination plants, the province of Chtouka Ait Baha is experiencing an expansion of agriculture, creating a need for agricultural labour, which is insufficiently available in the region. Migrant workers accessing employment in the agricultural sector find themselves in conditions of legal irregularities that affects their professional security, i.e. working without a contract and social and health protection. The irregular administrative situation poses a problem both for migrants claiming their labour rights and for employers, who are not legally authorized to employ foreign labour without going through the procedures established by the Moroccan Labour Code. Migrants have a short-term perspective, according to which work in this sector, which provides job opportunities irrespective of migrants' status, allows them to at least meet their daily needs. An agricultural engineer we interviewed observed in this respect that the new agricultural policy has a positive impact on labour conditions. "Now, workers cannot work informally. They should work and have their AMO, labour-related documents, holidays, one day off during the week, and eight hours at work. This is beneficial for him but not for employers." [MOR_WP5_Agri_13]

IMWs, civil society organizations and unions are aware that everything must go through the regularization of their situation. This is why they prefer to adopt a strategy of adaptation to this reality. They also highlighted the importance of cooperation between their countries of origin and Morocco as an essential step for improving their access to social protection.

In a context characterized by a labour shortage, employers, who are much more focused on performance, view migrant workers as a response to the needs identified in this area and are demanding the regularization of their situation. For them, improving working conditions becomes a necessity in order to mobilize the necessary workforce for production. Compliance with legal wages and improving working conditions or labour rights become essential to ensure performance and comply with the demands of the global market. Most employers use this migrant workforce to ensure production without being able to guarantee their legal security. They believe the government must intervene to resolve this situation.

Faced with this reality, which is ahead of the law, state actors are managing this situation as if it is a transitional phase. They act within the limit of powers and functions assigned to them by the law or directives of a higher level of government ready to move from the current situation to a future one that will undergo the overhaul of the legal framework regulating labour and

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the strengthening of labour migration governance mechanisms, especially in the sector of agriculture. Legal reform is the common thread between migrants, employers, and state and non-state actors.

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Annex 1 – The Interviews conducted in the agricultural sector in Chtouka

Interviewee code/ mode	Type of interviewees/ organizations	Date of the intervie
[MOR_WP5_Agri_1] Formal interview (recorded)	Abdellah, official in the rural commune of Sidi Bibi and elected representative	January 2, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_2] Formal interview (recorded)	Khalid, President of Taousna Center for Studies and Research in Sidi Bibi	January 9, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_3] Formal interview (recorded)	Wags, President of the Congolese community in Sidi Bibi and president of an informal association, Male, Congolese, 33 years old, University level	December 31, 2024
[MOR_WP5_Agri_4] Formal interview (recorded)	Dakoury, General Caporal of in a tomato firm, Male, Ivorian	January 8, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_5] Formal interview (recorded)	Kamano, IMW, Guinean, Male, 30 years old	January 8, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_6] Formal interview (recorded)	Tozan, migrant community representative in Belfaa Ait Amira, Male, Ivorian, 45 years old, Bac	January 8, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_7] Formal interview (recorded)	Ange, IMW in a raspberry firm, female, Ivorian, 35 years old, Secondary School	January 9, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_8] Formal interview (recorded)	Aja, IMW in a raspberry firm, female, Ivorian, 36 years old, Secondary School	January 9, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_9] Formal interview (recorded)	Ousman, IMW in a tomato firm, Guinean, 36 years old, Bac+3	January 15, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_10] Formal interview (recorded)	Sano, IMW, Malian , 28 years old, Bac	January 15, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_11] Formal interview (recorded)	Moroccan employer, owner of a farm and a packaging unit	February 4, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_12] Formal interview (recorded)	Expert and union activist in the Association of Labour inspectors	February 4, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_13] Formal interview (recorded)	Moroccan agricultural engineer, 37 years old, female, Bac+5	January 23, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_14] formal interview (recorded)	Moroccan employer, owner of farms	January 22, 2025

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[MOR_WP5_Agri_15] Formal interview (recorded)	Representative of the Moroccan Union of workers (UMT) in the region of Souss Massa	January 20, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_16] informal discussion	Representative of the chamber of agriculture in the region of Souss Massa	January 21, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_17] Formal interview (recorded)	Representative of the Moroccan Interprofessional Federation for the Production and Export of Fruits and Vegetables (FIFEL)	April 22, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_19] Formal interview (recorded)	Doumbia, male Ivorian, 26 years old	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_20] Formal interview (recorded)	Halima, female Cameroonian, 35 years old, Bac	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_21] Formal interview (recorded)	Marco, male Cameroonian, 44 years old, secondary school	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_22] Formal interview (recorded)	Claris , female Ivorian , 27 years old, no education	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_23] Formal interview (recorded)	Osman, male Guinean, 25 years old, university degree	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_24] Formal interview (recorded)	Mariatou, Ivorian	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_25] Formal interview (recorded)	Soulayman, Senegalese	May 1, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_26] Formal interview (recorded)	Gauthier, Focal point of the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco (ODTI), a trade union in Agadir	April 28, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_27] Formal interview (not recorded)	Occupational doctor in a farm in Chtouka	April 26, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_28] Formal interview (not recorded)	A lawyer, a researcher and a civil society activist	14 May, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_29] Formal Online Formal interview (not recorded)	Representative of Morocco Foodex	15 May, 2025
[MOR_WP5_Agri_30] Formal interview (not recorded)	Representative of the CRDH in the Souss-Massa	16 May, 2025

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Annex 2 – Group discussions

Two goup discussions were held on Tuesday 15 July 2025 at the Faculty of Languages, Arts and Human Sciences in Ait Melloul around the issue of corporate social responsibility and the integration and the living together of migrants and Moroccan farm workers in the locality of Chtouka

Interviewee code	Type of organisation
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_1]	Consultant on human resources and social arbitrator in the sector of agriculture (expert)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_2]	Civil society activist and Expert in migration issues (local activist for migrants' rights)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_3]	Professor of Public Law, FSJES Agadir (researcher)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_4]	Lawyer and Member of the Human Rights Council, Souss Massa (non-state actor)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_5]	Migrant worker, advisor for the ODTI (representative of a union and a local migrant organization)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_6]	Community Relay, Association of Migrants in Solidarity with Africa (local migrant organization)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_7]	President of an Association of Agricultural Producers (employers' organization)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_8]	Program Manager, Social Development Agency in Souss Massa (state actor)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_9]	Provincial Director of ANAPEC in Chtouka Ait Baha (state actor)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_10]	Regional Secretary General of the UMT, Souss Massa (union)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_11]	Member of the Local Union of UMT Trade Unions in Chtouka Ait Baha (union)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_12]	Director of FIFEL in Agadir (professional agricultural association)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_13]	Member of the territorial municipality of Inshaden and Researcher in Migration Issues (local state actor)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_14]	Representative of the CRDH in Agadir (state actor)
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_15]	Ph.D. student on Migration Studies from the University of Sousse and Osnabrück

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[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_16]	Master student researcher on migration issues
[FG_WP5_MOR_Agri_17]	Director of ACPA (non-state actor)

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Deliverable information

Schedule Information	
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DignityFIRM – Working Paper WP5

The working and living conditions of migrant workers in the agricultural sector

Chtouka as a case study

ABOUT DignityFIRM

Towards becoming sustainable and resilient societies we must address the structural contradictions between our societies' exclusion of migrant workers and their substantive role in producing our food.

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