



Cofinanziato dal Fondo Asilo  
Migrazione e Integrazione  
dell'Unione Europea

# FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

**THE PLAIN OF SIBARI AND  
VULTURE ALTO BRADANO.  
ANALYSIS OF THE  
AGRICULTURAL LABOUR  
MARKET, EMPLOYMENT  
CONDITIONS, AND THE  
ECONOMICALLY  
PROPULSIVE ROLE OF  
MIGRANT  
WORKERS**





## Research team

Prof. Francesco Carchedi	<i>University of Roma La Sapienza, Nova Consortium Expert Scientific Coordination</i>
Prof. Salvatore Strozza	<i>University of Napoli Federico II Head of research on socio-demographic aspects</i>
Federico Benassi	<i>Researcher, National Institute of Statistics</i>
Cinzia Conti	<i>Researcher, National Institute of Statistics</i>
Enrico Tucci	<i>Researcher, National Institute of Statistics</i>
Ugo Melchionda	<i>Freelance researcher, Grei250 Head of research on the regulatory framework and the service system</i>
Prof. Giovanni Devastato	<i>University of Roma La Sapienza</i>
Dante Sabatino	<i>Researcher, Institute for Population Research and Social Policy-CNR</i>
Prof. Delia La Rocca	<i>University of Catania Head of research on the analysis of sources of funding for migrants</i>
Antonio Di Marco	<i>PhD researcher, University of Catania</i>
Prof. Enrico Pugliese	<i>University of Roma La Sapienza, Head of research on the Plain of Sibari and Vulture Alto-Bradano</i>
Prof. Francesco Carchedi	<i>University of Roma La Sapienza</i>
Donato Di Sanzo	<i>Researcher, University of Salerno</i>
Giovanni Ferrarese	<i>Researcher, University of Salerno</i>
Leonardo Mento	<i>PhD researcher, University of Roma La Sapienza</i>
Alessia Pontoriero	<i>PhD researcher, University of Roma La Sapienza</i>
Alessandra Pugliese	<i>Journalist, Freelance Researcher</i>
Rosanna Liotti	<i>Freelance Researcher</i>
Fabio Saliceti	<i>Freelance Researcher</i>
Prof. Gaetano Martino	<i>University of Perugia Head of research on the tomato chain in Vulture Alto-Bradano</i>
Nadia Gastaldin	<i>Researcher, Centre for Policy Research and Bio-economy</i>
Eleonora Mariano	<i>Freelance Researcher</i>
Giulia Pastorelli	<i>Research fellow, Centre for Policy Research and Bio-economy</i>
Luca Turchetti	<i>Researcher, Centre for Policy Research and Bio-economy</i>
Jean Renè Bilongo	<i>Head of the Placido Rizzotto Observatory - Flai Cgil</i>
Tina Bali	<i>National Secretariat, Flai-Cgil Agriculture Department</i>
Andrea Coinu	<i>Flai-Cgil national official, Agricultural Services Sector</i>
Giovanna Basile	<i>Secretary Flai-Cgil, Campania Region</i>
Antonio Gagliardi	<i>Secretary Flai-Cgil, Puglia Region</i>
Vincenzo Esposito	<i>Secretary Cgil, Basilicata Region</i>



## Introduction

The five surveys started in October 2020 and were completed in July 2021. Therefore, the start coincided with the outbreak of the second Covid19 pandemic wave, which led to changes in the research path, especially where the fieldwork, i.e. the direct observation of the territorial context of analysis, on the one hand, and the carrying out of the interviews, on the other, was planned.

Two research projects had to deal with these critical issues. The other three - being second-level research - followed the planned design without any particular problems. The set of the research efforts involved about 25 researchers (5 seniors and 20 juniors, mostly researchers with a well-established research experience) and 6 trade unionists of the Placido Rizzotto Observatory. The research projects were coordinated - from the scientific point of view - by Francesco Carchedi, in close cooperation with the corresponding research managers.

The five research projects - to which two others have been added since the end of July 2021 (one to be carried out in Campania and the other in Sicily, with a methodological approach in part similar to and in part different from the previous ones) - focused on the knowledge needs expressed by the partner-regions during the project, in particular, on the structural aspects giving rise to the phenomena correlated with illegal gangmastering, or forms of labour exploitation detectable in the agro-food sector.

The research work assignments, which the respective researchers have adequately fulfilled, were specifically concerned with:

- Analysis of demographic and immigration dynamics
- Analysis of regional laws, the system of supply to migrants, the rate of use of territorial services
- A reasoned survey of the main sources of funding
- Territorial case study: Piana di Sibari (Calabria), Alto Vulture-Bradano (Basilicata)
- Territorial case study on the value chain related to tomato growing in Alto Vulture Bradano.

The case studies were supported - with reference to the empirical part, i.e. in the phase concerning the identification/involvement of key actors to be interviewed - by the Placido Rizzotto Observatory - FLAI CGIL, coordinated by the Head Jean René Bilongo and Tina Bali of the National Secretariat - Agriculture Department. In particular, a close collaboration was put in place to conduct the case studies: both for the analysis of the tomato value chain conducted by Prof. G. Martino, and for the two case studies about the working conditions of workers of foreign origin carried out by Prof. E. Pugliese



RESEARCH ABSTRACT:

**“The Plain of Sibari and  
Vulture Alto Bradano. Analysis of the  
agricultural labour market, employment  
conditions, and the economically propulsive  
role of migrant workers”**

Prof. Enrico Pugliese	<i>University of Rome La Sapienza, Head of research on the Plain of Sibari and Vulture Alto-Bradano</i>
Prof. Francesco Carchedi	<i>Univeristy of Rome La Sapienza</i>
Donato Di Sanzo	<i>Researcher, University of Salerno</i>
Giovanni Ferrarese	<i>Researcher, University of Salerno</i>
Leonardo Mento	<i>PhD researcher, University of Rome La Sapienza</i>
Alessia Pontoriero	<i>PhD researcher, University of Rome La Sapienza</i>
Alessandra Pugliese	<i>Journalist, Freelance Researcher</i>



## Introduction

The research investigates the general living and working conditions of immigrants in two largely agricultural regions of Southern Italy (i.e., Basilicata and Calabria), focusing on particularly relevant areas for the regional and southern agricultural context. The core issue concerned the agricultural labour market and its criticalities with respect to, on the one hand, forms of intermediation (illegal gangmastering) with the relevant abuses of human and social rights and, on the other hand, the protection initiatives starting from those put in place by trade unions, and the prospects of improvement. The research was based on an analysis of previous documentation and of the literature on the subject at the general and local level and primarily on a direct survey aimed at evaluating the expressions used to describe the processes currently underway in the areas under study. The research report consists of four parts that address the issues investigated at different levels.

The first part is a general overview of the main relevant issues for the research on a theoretical level and based on current literature data. The second part links the broad themes addressed in the previous section with the local research activity, with the aim of framing the issues under study within the regional and provincial levels. The third and fourth part illustrate the methodology used and the main findings of the field research. Two chapters on the analysis of the local context are devoted to each of them.



## Main findings

### First Part

The first chapter of this part illustrates the general trends of immigration, highlighting their repercussions and expressions at the local level. Specifically, it addresses the changes observed in the migration phenomenon at the national level in the last decade, such as the significant reduction of entries for work-related reasons compared with a rise of those for family reunification and – in the second half of the decade – of asylum seekers who have often entered formally and especially informally the agricultural labour market in several areas, including the ones under study. The second chapter gives a general picture of the labour market in Southern Italy, underlining the issues of unemployment and exclusion due to discouragement from the labour market itself. Special emphasis is given to the phenomena of dualism characterizing the regions of the South and the issues arising from the marginalization of the internal areas and the processes of depopulation.

Among the various forms of dualism is that between rich and poor forms of agriculture in territorially adjacent areas (*See Third Chapter*). The area of greatest interest for our research is the one where immigration of foreign workers is concentrated. This chapter focuses on the contradiction between the prosperity of agriculture and the generally poor and precarious conditions of its workforce, bearing in mind that this phenomenon is not rooted just in Italy or the South. Indeed, similar situations may be found in other Mediterranean contexts and within the “Californian model”, where the precariousness of agricultural workers coexists with modernity and the richness of agriculture. This part introduces a further element, i.e., the relationships between the different stakeholders operating in these specific agricultural contexts. Going more in depth, the study explores the relationship between the agricultural enterprises and, respectively, the workers and the large processing and distribution companies characterized by totally unbalanced power relations. The outcome of this process is an equilibrium based on low wages paid, either formally or informally, to the agricultural workforce composed mainly of immigrants. Finally, this part offers a detailed overview of the role of the illegal gangmastering system in agriculture and its operational and organizational aspects.

### Second Part

The second part connects the general overview of immigration trends with the section based on the direct investigation. A comparative description of the two areas under study is provided. The agricultural area of Alto-Bradano Vulture and that of the Plain of Sibari



show similarities but also significant differences. Both cases are examples of rich agricultural areas with a poor workforce, framed within an unstructured labour market and marked by illegal gangmastering. This common feature is counterbalanced by significant differences. Indeed, the Alto-Bradano Vulture is characterised by monoculture, which restricts the possibility of employment to short periods of the year, leaving the agricultural workforce of the area with no occupational alternative during the rest of the time. This implies either relocation elsewhere or the acceptance of meagre living conditions given the lack of formal employment, such as living in a ghetto. As stated by previous literature, the ghetto - with its function of temporary accommodation - and monoculture farming enhance each other.

Another peculiarity of the Vulture is its affiliation to the regional inland areas and the competitive advantage that it obtains from late agricultural production, given the high-altitude levels. Conversely, the Plain of Sibari is characterized by a rich variety of Mediterranean crops, fruits, and vegetables intended for industrial purposes, providing employment in more extended periods of the year. Perhaps, this may explain the complete lack of ghettos in the Plain, where the chances of creating a more stable settlement are more likely. This would not exclude the presence of extremely precarious situations. Still, a well-established ghetto does not exist in the Plain. The chapter offers a detailed analysis of the labour market variables at the provincial level, with a focus on agricultural employment and its conditions. The following two parts (third and fourth) report the findings of the fieldwork research, which emerged primarily via the relationship with key stakeholders.

The last two parts were carried out by two separate – but still intertwined - research groups, with a continuous comparison of the results. The in-depth studies did not cover the exact same issues but rather those of greatest relevance for each of the two areas.



### Third Part

The third part – concerning the Plain of Sibari – consists of two chapters. The first one gives a broad overview of the social condition of agricultural workers, the employment relationships, the living conditions, and the mobilisations in their favour.

The issue of tackling illegal gangmastering is one of the keystones of the analysis conducted in the first chapter. The second chapter reports the same considerations put forward in the previous one and attempts to deepen the findings through interviews with various subjects, including some immigrant workers. Interviews with trade unionists, who helped to get a better understanding of the local situation and the measures tackling illegal gangmastering, are also included. The chapter ends with two interviews with entrepreneurs (specifically, female entrepreneurs).

### Fourth Part

The last part is structured in three chapters, one of which focuses on the daily living conditions of foreign agricultural workers and the interventions aimed at their protection. This chapter analyses the current and past actions carried out by third sector organisations operating in various fields. The second chapter addresses the housing conditions, providing a detailed analysis and retracing the history of formal and informal settlements with a focus on migrants' accommodation projects as an alternative to informal settlements, i.e., ghettos. It further provides an analysis of the sanitary situation with reference to the measures that took place during the most serious times of the pandemic. Lastly, this part reports various extracts from interviews and talks with key actors, representing different social figures (e.g., operators, entrepreneurs, trade unionists and subjects engaged in local economic activities and committed to tackling the phenomenon of illegal gangmastering).



## Issues raised and limits of the research

The pandemic created serious practical difficulties also for the research since it was largely based on the direct investigation of a local context and information usually collected through fieldwork. As a result of the pandemic, the fieldwork research activities could only be carried out in part directly, alongside indirect inquiry via literature review and remote interviews. From this viewpoint, great contribution came from various authors – including members of the group of research itself – who conducted research in the two related areas, i.e., Alto Bradano and Plain of Sibari. Further information was collected remotely via interviews with both privileged witnesses and key stakeholders. Of course, this also applied to discussions and comparisons with scholars on the various aspects of the issue addressed.

As paradoxical as it is to speak of field research conducted largely via cell phone or video call and other forms of long-distance connection (with all that is lost compared to direct on-site reporting), the research kept the initial purpose of observing and analysing at the micro level the processes that other scholars – even within this same general research framework – studied at the macro level. The informants were not just experts in one major topic, but people directly involved in activities concerning labour advocacy and services provided via mobile units.



## Final Recommendations

The situation in the areas under study, with respect to the topics covered by the research, is made of light and shadow. Various criticalities arise, which are linked to the mechanisms of employment (such as the phenomena of intermediation), settlement and reception, trade unions' protection and defence measures, and, finally, access to services and respect for rights. For each of these issues, good practices, and activities and actors involved have been identified. In this regard, the measures of intervention enacted by third sector organizations and currently ongoing in both areas are remarkable (e.g., advice and support with administrative procedures, legal assistance, healthcare information and assistance, actions against labour and sexual exploitation) and worthy of further support. Among them, the most effective method of operating is via mobile units.

This same operational solution has inspired trade unions' intervention – i.e., *trade union on the street* – which not only deals with the usual labour disputes but also provides a constant presence on the field to meet the needs of workers without a fixed job and have various individual-specific necessities. In addition to this innovative practice, there are other contract-specific initiatives concerning, for instance, types of employment relationships that may lead to an overcoming of piecework – currently the main type, in fact – by partially incorporating it into contracts based on an hourly wage.

The shortage of workers' housing is severe in both areas and several informal solutions have been detected, including some that have taken on all the characteristics of a ghetto in poor and unhealthy conditions. Immigrants' effort to seek shelter in areas close to their place of work - in abandoned buildings of various kinds or at best in small towns nearby – appears clear. For those who wish to stay in the area, the model of scattered settlement may ensure decent living conditions. Hence, voluntary associations support the implementation of this model by finding cheap and decent housing and providing guidance and guarantees to workers, offering an alternative solution to ghetto life and favouring the settlement of some immigrants. As stated by an interviewee of Palazzo San Gervasio, “It is a matter of regularising widespread reception, which in fact already exists in the territory via the informal settlements that provide undignified living conditions. The aim should be to transform the current widespread reception system and the undignified solutions it offers into something that ensures the respect of human dignity.”



Cofinanziato dal Fondo Asilo  
Migrazione e Integrazione  
dell'Unione Europea

## FINAL RESEARCH REPORT

### THE PLAIN OF SIBARI AND VULTURE ALTO BRADANO. ANALYSIS OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOUR MARKET, EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS, AND THE ECONOMICALLY PROPULSIVE ROLE OF MIGRANT WORKERS

The research report was carried out as a part of Su.Pr.Eme. Italia Programme funded by the AMIF - Emergency Funds (AP2019) of the European Commission - DG Migration and Home Affairs.

The Programme is led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies - DG Migration (Lead partner) assisted by the Puglia Region (Coordinating Partner) and in partnership with the Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, and Sicilia Regions, the National Labour Inspectorate, the IOM, and the NOVA National Consortium.

The object, the contents and any other elements of this research have no commercial or promotional purposes or economic interests. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the European Commission cannot be held responsible in any way for the content.