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Towards Decent Work in the Horticulture sector in Senegal

**Qualitative Research
across five horticultural
sub-sectors**

16 October, 2024



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Context of the Qualitative Research

- Senegal is dedicated in enhancing its agricultural production with the goal of ensuring food security, while also fostering economic growth and promoting sustainable development in rural regions.
- Total annual agricultural production, encompassing cereals, fruits, and vegetables, is approximately 3.4 million tonnes. Of this, fruits and vegetables account for 1.5 million tonnes. These quantities remain inadequate to meet domestic demand fully.
- Approximately 90,000 horticultural households and tens of thousands of small enterprises (traders, input suppliers) are engaged in the horticulture sector, offering employment to hundreds of thousands of individuals.
- The overwhelming majority of these farms and enterprises function within the informal sector.
- The average size of a horticultural farm plot in Senegal is less than 5 hectares.
- To promote and implement Decent Work across the horticultural sector, encompassing both formal and informal sectors, the Senegalese government has embraced the Decent Work Agenda as outlined by the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Decent Work is defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and endorsed by the international community as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

Decent work implies employment opportunities that: are productive and provide a fair income; ensure safety at work and social protection for workers and their families; provide opportunities for personal development and promote social integration; give people the freedom to express their concerns, to organise and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and ensure equality of opportunity and treatment for all. (Source: ILO)

Decent Work Promotion Program (PPTD) in Senegal since 2012.

PPTD 1 (2012 – 2016): The objectives of this initial program were articulated in too general manner, lacking a strong link to other national development initiatives in Senegal such as PSE (*Plan Sénégal Emergent*).

PPTD 2 (2018 – 2022): This program, based on lessons learned from PPTD 1, was organized around two priorities:

- **Priority 1:** Promoting the creation of decent work for men and women
- **Priority 2:** Strengthening and extending social protection

Job insecurity: "The employment relationship can terminate at any moment. The working conditions are harsh. A worker may work for more than 10 hours a day, only to receive a mere 2,000 FCFA (3 euro) at the day's end. Regarding social protection, we lack any form of support. Regardless of the severity of an illness, whether affecting the worker or their family, it is the worker who must bear the entire burden."

Quote from an individual worker



At the moment the results of **PPTD 2** are not yet fully known; however, based on the findings of this qualitative research, it seems that significant efforts are still required to advance and establish decent work within the horticultural sector.





Existing legal framework for Decent Work in Senegal

The Labour Code (1997) is applicable to all employers and employees across every sector of the economy.

The legal minimum wage are set for employees in the agricultural (SMAG) and non-agricultural (SMIG) sectors.

SMIG: hourly rate of 370,526 FCFA (€ 0.56) or a monthly rate of 64 223 FCFA (€ 98) and max. 40 hours per week

SMAG: hourly rate 236,865 FCFA (€ 0.36) with a maximum number of working hours set at 2352 hours per year (weekly hours depend on the horticultural season)

The social protection of workers, as regulated by the Labour Code , falls under the technical oversight of the Ministry of Labour. This protection is administered by various institutions, including:

- **The Social Security Fund (CSS)** is tasked with overseeing family benefits, as well as the prevention and compensation of workplace accidents and occupational diseases;
- **The Senegalese Retirement Insurance Institution (IPRES)** administers social benefits for retirement, disability, and death;
- **Health Insurance Institutions (IPM)** provide coverage for a portion of the medical expenses incurred by employees and their families in Senegal.

The horticultural value chain in Senegal



The horticultural value chain in Senegal

Two types of Horticultural producers:

Individual exploitation:

- Small farms: less than 5 hectares (85%)
- Medium-sized farms: ranging from 5 to 20 hectares (13%)
- Large farms: more than 20 hectares (2%)

Exploitation Collective:

- Cooperatives
- Economic Interest Groups (GIE)

They are independent farmers, primarily smallholders, working together

Traders and farm input suppliers:

The overwhelming majority of traders and input suppliers are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) functioning within the informal economy, lacking registration in either the commercial or tax registers.





Objectives of the Qualitative Research



The primary aim of this qualitative research is to perform a comprehensive analysis of the horticultural sector in Senegal. The findings of this research will identify interventions designed to promote decent work within the horticultural value chain.



Particular attention is directed towards five horticultural subsectors: onion, tomato, green bean, mango, and cashew nut. This selection was made in consultation with various stakeholders, considering the scale of each subsector (in terms of volume and employment) and their significance for the export of horticultural products to the Netherlands.



The findings of the qualitative research will also assist in selecting local participants with whom CNV Internationaal will collaborate to promote and implement decent work in these five horticultural sub-sectors.

Results horticultural campaigns

Crop	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
(tonnes)							
Vegetable:							
Onion	400 000	434 112	444 871	412 305	435 000	420 000	398 750
Potato	118 783	140 000	158 875	147 985	143 640	140 500	142 500
Industrial tomato	70 000	77 000	73 048	65 850	88 350	84 000	85 500
Cherry tomato	68 000	71 000	78 396	69 560	66 700	67 000	67 600
Melon	28 000	24 532	26 632	24 850	25 308	25 500	26 650
Green bean	18 700	18 815	20 879	19 560	21 122	20 300	19 900
Cabbage	76 116	105 096	105 096	158 412	159 166	155 000	161 500
Gombo	14 500	14 000	22 115	23 112	21 250	21 500	22 300
Sweet potato	72 000	89 397	72 000	89 730	107 670	110 600	111 400
Carrots	16 000	17 085	17 875	22 300	30 000	28 500	30 500
Bissap	1 300	1 500	1 678	1 510	1 500	1 480	1 650
Other vegetables	200 000	209 751	215 875	208 960	205 000	195 500	206 500
Total vegetables	1 083 399	1 202 288	1 237 340	1 244 134	1 304 706	1 269 880	1 274 750
Fruit:							
Mango	132 000	128 450	130 000	121 000	122 905	121 500	123 200
Banana	30 000	31 422	33 110	36 500	35 500	36 000	37 500
Citrus	45 000	48 500	52 580	56 800	58 000	58 400	60 500
Other fruit	30 000	35 700	59 750	61 350	62 550	61 500	62 100
Total fruit	237 000	244 072	275 440	275 650	278 955	277 400	283 300
Production	1 320 399	1 446 360	1 512 780	1 519 784	1 583 661	1 547 280	1 558 050

Source: ANSD, (p) 2022/2023 data are

The criteria for selection of sub-sectors were as follows:

- Ability to sustainably create quality employment opportunities
- Sustainability of distribution channels in relation to fluctuations in overall demand
- Presence of domestic and international corporations (EU and Netherlands)
- Significance of the workforce

The five selected horticultural sub-sectors:

- onion
- industrial tomato
- green bean
- mango
- cashew nut

cashew nut production 20,000 metric tons



Methodology of the qualitative research in the five horticultural sub-sectors

Research objective:

In this qualitative research, the emphasis was placed on the main actors in the horticultural supply chain:

- Farm input suppliers
- Farmers (both small-scale and large-scale)
- Traders
- Exporters
- Importers in the Netherlands

Research Methodology

For this qualitative research, individual workers engaged in both small and large farms, along with traders, input suppliers and farmers, were interviewed by local field team. Primary and secondary data were gathered from June to September 2024.

Primary data were gathered employing two distinct research methodologies:

- Interview (face-to-face)
- Questionnaire (administered by the interviewer)

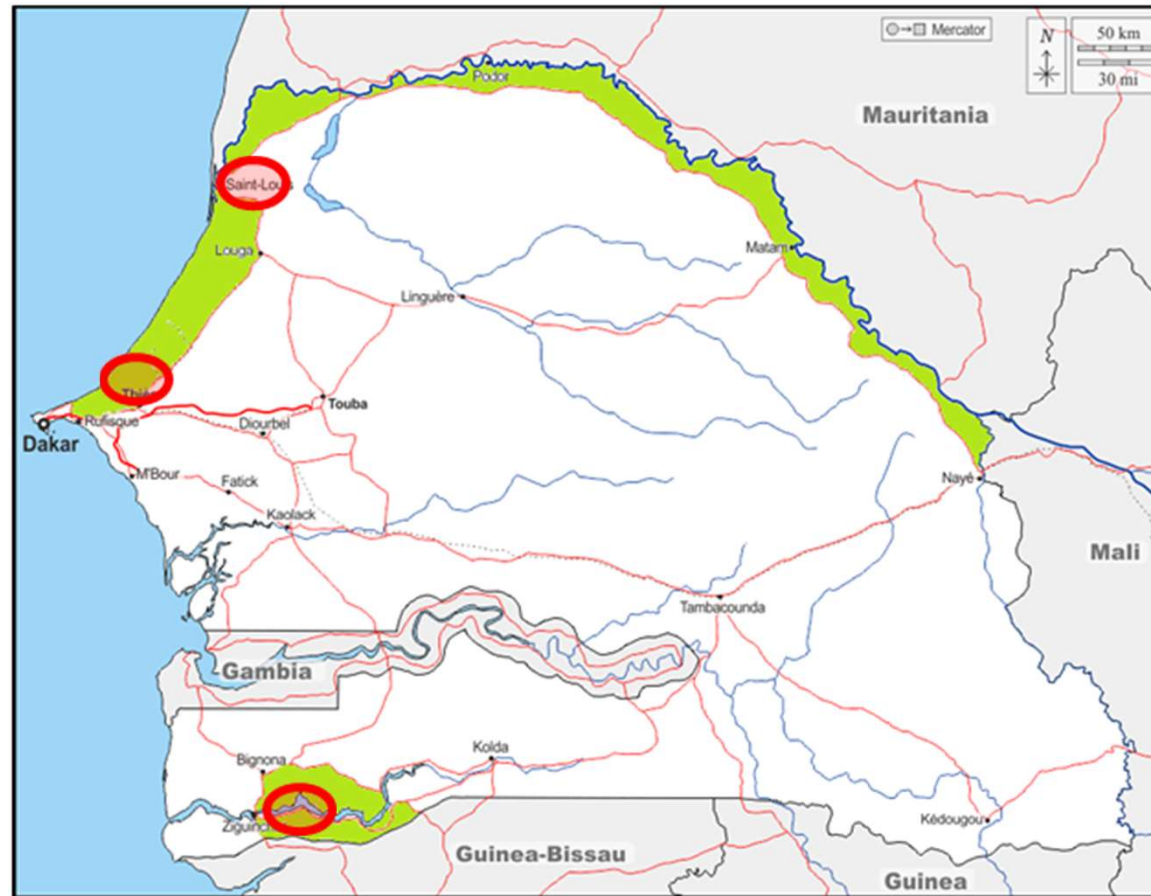
Selection of Respondents

To select respondents the research team used a non-random self-selection sampling method.

Geographic scope of the study

The study concentrated on the three primary horticultural zones of Senegal: Senegal River Valley (VFS), Niayes, and the Casamance.

Geographical context of the study



area designated for qualitative
research

Number of participants in the qualitative research

Horticultural zone	Region	Face-to-face interviews	Questionnaire-based survey				
			Dutch enterprises	Farm input suppliers	Farmers	Traders	Workers
						Small farms & traders	Large scale farms & agro-processing unis
Senegal River Valley (VFS)	Saint-Louis		2	63	31	131	46
Niayes	Thies, Dakar		8	89	36	123	0*
Casamance	Ziguinchor, Sedhiou		8	100	42	120	81
Total		1	16	252	111	374	127

A total of 883 participants were surveyed between June and September 2024.

Note: (*) no responses received from multiple large farms in the Thiès region.

The two main outcomes of the Qualitative Research

- Decent work conditions in the five horticultural sub-sectors (onion, tomato, green bean, cashew nut, mango) in Senegal are nearly non-existent, with the exception of a handful of large producers and traders.
- Union membership among workers in the five horticultural subsectors is limited, with the exception of a few large farms and exporters.

"There is no restriction on expressing opinions or organizing efforts. Regrettably, the owners do not prioritize our concerns. To my knowledge, there is no organization, or at least none that has made an effort to address this issue."

Quote from an individual worker



"There is a lack of equality in opportunity among workers. Farm workers receive compensation based on their conduct towards the employer."

Quote from an individual worker

Profiles of the key participants in the five sub-sectors of the horticultural value chain

Farm input suppliers:

- **The majority** of farm input suppliers are small and medium-sized enterprises, frequently operating as sole proprietorships.
- **80%** of companies are registered in the commercial register and possess a NINEA (fiscal number).
- However, **more than half** are not enrolled in social security funds, such as CSS or IPRES.
- **Most** suppliers sell directly to farmers, their primary customers.
- These companies employ significantly more permanent employees than temporary workers.
- Approximately **50%** of companies offer written labour contracts to their employees, whereas the remaining fifty percent do not.
- **The majority** of employers do not provide any social benefits to their employees.
- **Most** companies encounter little difficulty in recruiting new employees.



Profiles of the key participants in the five sub-sectors of the horticultural value chain

Traders, including exporters:

- **The majority** consists of middle-aged men with limited educational attainment.
- Nearly **three-quarters** of these companies are sole proprietorships.
- Slightly more than half are registered in the commercial register and possess a NINEA.
- **80%** are not registered with social security funds (CSS, IPRES).
- **60%** of the trading companies attain a maximum annual turnover of 5 million FCFA (7 633 euro).
- **Two-thirds** utilize both permanent and temporary or seasonal employees.
- **75%** of employers pay their temporary or seasonal workers below the legal minimum wage (SMIG), while one-third extend this practice to permanent employees as well.
- **90%** of employers do not provide written labour contracts to their employees.
- In addition to food and beverages, most employers do not provide coverage for transportation, medical care, housing, energy, or training expenses for their employees.
- **Four out of five** employers do not provide paid leave on public holidays, do not offer a weekly day off, nor a bonus for work performed on rest days or public holidays, despite these obligations being stipulated in the nation Labour code.
- **75%** of employers encounter no challenges in recruiting or retaining employees.



Profiles of the key participants in the five sub-sectors of the horticultural value chain

Horticultural households:

- **90%** of farm owners are men.
- **One-third** of owners are under 40.
- **The majority** possess minimal or no formal education.
- **85%** are smallholders, managing plots of less than five hectares.
- Although many regard themselves as 'owners' of their land, merely **5%** possess formal land ownership rights.
- **80%** of owners engage paid workers, regardless of whether they are family members.
- **A significant number** of non-family workers are either internal or external migrants, primarily employed as seasonal or casual labourers.
- Seasonal employees typically receive monthly compensation, whereas casual workers are paid on a daily basis.
- **Over 70%** of farm owners pay their workers below the legal minimum agricultural wage (SMAG).
- **Nearly all** owners are unregistered with CSS and fail to provide health insurance for their employees.



Decent Work Individual Workers in the Five Horticultural Sub-Sectors

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as "productive employment for both women and men, characterized by conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity."

Workers at small farms and SME trading companies

A minimal number of workers are associated with a labour union or other representative organization.

Concerning the four essential pillars of decent work, a significant number of workers convey profound dissatisfaction:

- Workers are neither regarded nor treated as fully-fledged professionals.
- Social protection is virtually absent, both during employment and post-retirement.
- Safety measures frequently fall short, leaving workers vulnerable to considerable risks.
- Employees are frequently compensated below the legally mandated minimum wage, and their working hours often surpass the legally allowed limits.
- Moreover, benefits such as bonuses or paid leave are infrequently awarded. Additionally, there exists discrimination between the employer's family members and other employees, both regarding compensation and opportunities for personal development.

Workers at Large farms and agro-processing units

- The majority of workers have been engaged on the farm for more than 5 years.
- Over **70%** of workers are being (totally) dissatisfied with their paid salary.
- The majority of workers do not receive any employer contributions for essential expenses, such as transportation, housing, or food.
- **75%** of workers receive time off on public holidays.
- Approximately **80%** of the workers are compensated for overtime hours worked.
- **49%** of the workers receive paid leave, while forty percent are entitled to sick leave.
- Around **20%** of the workers indicated that an active labour union exists within their organization.
- **33%** of the workers affirm the existence of staff representatives to address workers' grievances.
- The majority of workers on large farms express dissatisfaction with their decent work conditions, primarily citing inadequate compensation and a perceived lack of respect from their employer.

Decent Work for Individual Worker in the five horticultural sub-sectors

What do you believe are the primary improvements that could be implemented in your professional circumstances?



"The remuneration of workers and the safeguarding of their rights are significant concerns."

Quote from an individual worker

"It is essential to enhance the remuneration of workers, adhere to the existing labor legislation in Senegal, and provide greater protection for union representatives."

Quote from an individual worker

The farm worker is unable to access social protection if the employer fails to contribute to the relevant social funds. Employment is contingent solely upon the employer's disposition. Refusal to undertake specific tasks may result in termination. "There is no assurance of employment. The working conditions on the farms are exceedingly challenging."

Quote from an individual worker

Conclusions

- Decent work, as defined by the ILO, remains a priority on Senegal's political agenda; however, its tangible outcomes thus far are primarily confined to the modern non-agricultural formal sector.
- The five horticultural sub-sectors are key to the social and economic development of the rural areas in Senegal.
- Generally, the horticultural value chain functions informally, with employers frequently unregistered in both the commercial and tax registers.
- The majority of farms operate as independent enterprises, with 45% of them belonging to collectives such as cooperatives and GIEs.
- Compliance with the labour code is infrequent among employers; many compensate their workers below the legal minimum wage and provide limited to no social security (CSS, IPRES), along with few or no other social benefits. Furthermore, written labour contracts are rarely provided.
- The majority of horticultural workers are temporary, frequently seasonal or casual employees, lacking adequate social or physical protections during their work activities. Many of these individuals are internal migrants, relocating throughout the country in pursuit of gainful employment.
- High unemployment rates in rural areas, especially among women and young people under 25, diminish their negotiating power with employers in securing decent work conditions.
- Trade union membership in the horticultural sector is notably limited, with only a few large farms exhibiting participation. The unions active include CNTS, FGTS-B, and UDTs. Individual workers frequently navigate negotiations with employers concerning decent work conditions in isolation.
- Overall, workers in the five horticultural subsectors convey a sense of undercompensation in relation to their work efforts, facing minimal or no legal safeguards against arbitrary employer practices. They frequently perceive a lack of recognition and respect as professionals from their employers.

Recommendations

Promoting and implementing Decent Work across the five horticultural sub-sectors of Senegal: **"Formalizing the informal"**

- **Registration in the Commercial and Tax Register:**

For the CNV and its partner union, it is crucial to promote awareness and motivate employers to register officially in both the commercial and tax register (NINEA). This initiative will facilitate the formalization of the horticultural sector and the integration of businesses into the formal economy.

- **Information regarding rights and obligations:**

Employers and employees must be informed by CNV and its partner labour union about their rights and responsibilities as delineated by the Senegalese Labour Code. This initiative will foster the establishment of lawful working practices and enhance working conditions.

- **Mandatory registration with CSS and IPRES:**

Employers must be notified by CNV and its partner union of the legal requirements of companies to register at the Social Security Fund (CSS) and the Senegalese Retirement Fund (IPRES). Employees, in turn, should be informed of their social security rights, especially regarding contributions and benefits.

- **Enhanced visibility of unions:**

CNV and its partner union should enhance their visibility among horticultural workers by clearly articulating their role and the significance of membership in safeguarding workers' rights. Establishing small local offices in key horticultural regions that could facilitate discussions regarding workers' concerns and decent work conditions.

- **Collaboration with horticultural collectives and associations.**

Considering that most farms and businesses within the horticultural sector are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), it would be more advantageous for CNV and its partner union to collaborate with collectives such as agricultural cooperatives, GIEs, and federations. Organizations like the AUMN (Association des Unions Maraîchères des Niayes), the FPMN (Fédération des Producteurs Maraîchers des Niayes), and the APOV (Association des Producteurs d'Oignon de la Vallée) can significantly contribute to the promotion of decent work in the horticultural sector.

- **Verification of adherence to the statutory minimum wage:**

In cooperation with the Senegalese government, CNV and its partner union must ensure that employers adhere to the legal minimum wage for their employees. Conducting regular field visits to engage with both employers and employees will facilitate the enforcement of these standards.

- **Advancing optimal horticultural practices:**

It is essential to illustrate to employers that decent work is advantageous for both employees and companies/organizations. A collaborative strategy with large farms (exceeding 100 hectares) in the Casamance, Niayes, and the Senegal River Valley would enable CNV and its partner union to engage with employers in the implementation of decent work practices at all levels. It is vital to refrain from the "naming and shaming" tactics, as it may prove counterproductive. A constructive approach is more effective in fostering the adoption of decent work throughout the horticultural sector.



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