



# ► Promoting Occupational Safety and Health in the Coffee Supply Chain in Brazil through Cooperative Development

May 2025

## ► An overview of research findings

This document presents the findings of an assessment conducted by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Vision Zero Fund (VZF) on the capacity of coffee cooperatives in Minas Gerais, Brazil, to improve Occupational Safety and Health (OSH).

The assessment provides actionable insights and recommendations to help coffee cooperatives - and other key supply chain stakeholders, notably ILO constituents - play a meaningful role in promoting OSH and other Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, such as the elimination of forced labour.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

**Brazil** is the world's largest coffee producer and exporter, accounting for **approximately 38 percent**

**of global coffee production**<sup>2</sup> and generating approximately USD 9.72 billion in export revenue during the 2024/25 season.<sup>3</sup>

The **state of Minas Gerais** accounts for approximately 50 per cent of national production. Coffee is cultivated in over one million hectares across the state, generating an estimated **4.6 million direct and indirect jobs** across more than 600 municipalities.<sup>4</sup>

Despite its economic importance, the coffee sector in Minas Gerais **faces persistent occupational risks**—particularly during the harvest season.<sup>5</sup>

Coffee production involves physically demanding tasks, exposure to extreme weather and agrochemicals, and is often carried out under precarious working conditions.

In recent years, mechanisation has reduced the demand for labour in certain stages of coffee production, particularly in the Cerrado Mineiro and Southern Minas regions. However, tasks such as pruning, weeding, and harvesting on steep terrain still rely on manual labour. These activities often involve **long working hours, exposure to significant occupational risks, and limited access to formal employment**. Graph 1 below illustrates regional differences and their impact on the coffee production process.

<sup>1</sup> This assessment was jointly conducted by the ILO's projects [Vision Zero Fund](#), the [Prevention and Combating of Slave and Child Labour in Minas Gerais](#), [Nossa Voz](#), and the Cooperative, Social and Solidarity Economy Unit. The field research was conducted by a team of researchers led by Ms. Livia Miraglia. The ILO Vision Zero Fund and ILO CO-Brasília extend their sincere thanks to all the organizations and individuals who contributed to the research by sharing their thoughtful insights and experiences—particularly the coffee producers and workers. We are also grateful to those who provided dedicated support to make effective outreach possible, including the Brazilian chapter of the International Women in Coffee Alliance, whose collaboration was instrumental in facilitating local engagement in several of the targeted municipalities.

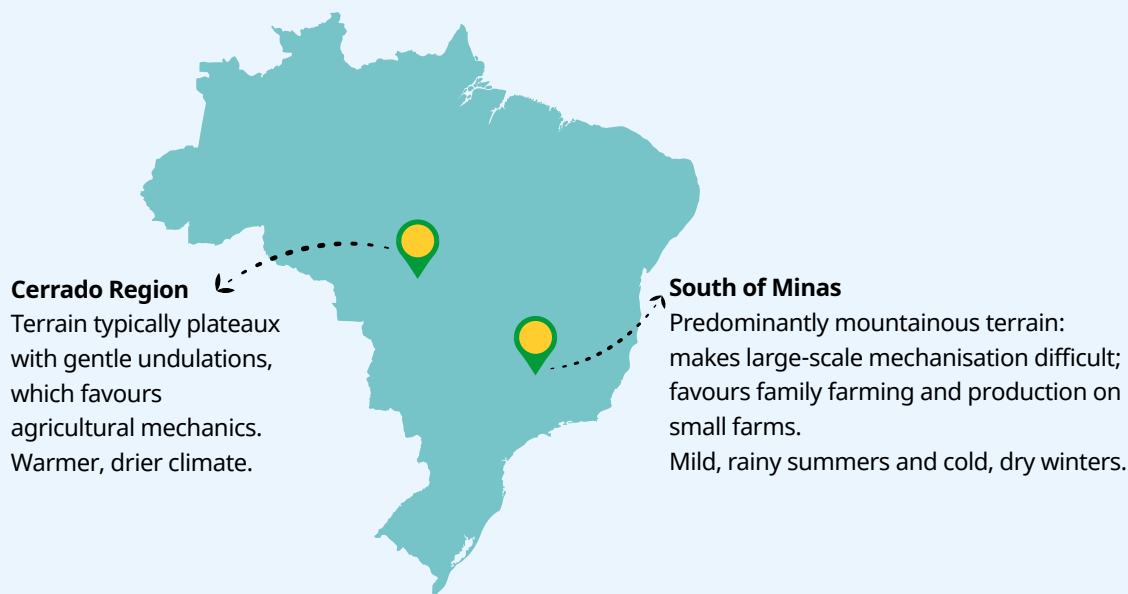
<sup>2</sup> United States and the ILO's Cooperative Department of Agriculture (USDA). *Coffee: World Markets and Trade*. December 2024. Available at: <https://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/circulars/coffee.pdf>. Last accessed: June 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Conselho dos Exportadores de Café do Brasil (CECAFÉ). Relatório Mensal - Fevereiro de 2025. Available at: <https://www.cecfe.com.br/site/wp-content/uploads/graficos/CECAFÉ-Relatorio-Mensal-FEVEREIRO-2025.pdf>. Last accessed: April 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). *Municipal Agricultural Survey (PAM)*. 2022. Multiple studies based on IBGE data confirm that Minas Gerais represents between 50-68% of Brazilian coffee production. See also: IBGE (2022) data cited in Climate risks and vulnerabilities of Arabica coffee in Brazil, ScienceDirect, and PLOS One study "The dynamics of coffee production in Brazil" (2019). Available at: <https://www.ibge.gov.br/>

<sup>5</sup> Coffee production in Minas Gerais follows a seasonal cycle. The off-season (*entressafra*) typically extends from February to mid-May, followed by the harvest season (*safrá*) between May and September. Labour demand intensifies during the harvest months, particularly for temporary and seasonal workers (*safristas*), who are hired to perform tasks such as harvesting, pruning, and weeding.

► Graph 1. Characteristics of the Cerrado Mineiro and the South of Minas regions



Source: Own elaboration.

## 2. The ILO Mandate

As recognized in the [ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work](#), the right to a safe and healthy working environment, the elimination of child labour and forced labour are universal human rights.<sup>6</sup> These principles are essential for human dignity, individual well-being, and the foundation of inclusive and just societies—they are inseparable, interrelated, and mutually reinforcing.

The ILO's strategy for promoting decent work in the agricultural sector highlights the strategic role of cooperatives, which can be defined as *"autonomous associations of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise."*<sup>7</sup>

Cooperatives are recognized as key partners in socioeconomic development, particularly in rural areas where agriculture is predominant and access to public services is often limited. They play a vital role in job creation, resource mobilization, investment promotion, and the stimulation of sustainable local economies.<sup>8</sup>

**Within the coffee supply chain, cooperatives have the potential to act as strategic agents in advancing OSH and preventing decent work deficits.** By linking producers and markets, cooperatives can leverage their organizational structures, economies of scale, and proximity to communities to promote decent work.

## 3. The cooperative movement in Brazil

Brazil's cooperative movement has deep historical roots, dating back to the 19th century, when the first formal cooperative was established during the Imperial Period.<sup>9</sup> Today, the South/Southwest region of Minas Gerais is a prominent hub for cooperatives, largely due to the strong presence of family farmers. This mesoregion, which includes ten micro-regions and 146 municipalities, hosts the highest number of cooperatives in the country and leads the state in coffee production.

These cooperatives play a crucial role in the coffee supply chain, **managing nearly 60 per cent of Minas Gerais' total coffee production.**

As value-based organizations, these cooperatives do more than **purchase, store, and sell coffee**. They also act as **primary financiers for rural producers** by offering cash advances, pre-commercialization support, and facilitating both direct and future sales. In addition, they **provide technical assistance** and **offer favorable terms for purchasing inputs** such as fertilizers and pesticides. Through these services, cooperatives foster strong, supportive relationships with producers **and can play a key role in promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**, including the right to a safe and healthy working environment.

6 The ILO recognises five fundamental principles and rights at work. These consist of freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour, the elimination of discrimination, and a safe and healthy working environment.

7 International Cooperative Alliance. (1995). Statement on the Cooperative Identity. <https://ica.coop/en/cooperatives/cooperative-identity>.

For more information see the [ILC 2022 resolution on the social solidarity economy](#).

8 International Labour Organization. (2024). *Cooperatives*. <https://www.ilo.org/topics/cooperatives>

9 <https://www.sulcred.coop.br/a-sulcred/historia-do-cooperativismo>

## OSH and forced labour challenges in the Minas Gerais coffee supply chain

In Brazil, the coffee sector has faced persistent decent work challenges, particularly during harvest periods. Brazilian law defines “conditions analogous to slavery” in Article 149 of the Penal Code as not only involving physical coercion, but also encompassing degrading working conditions, excessive working hours, and restrictions on workers’ freedom of movement.

While significant progress has been made through the efforts of government, employers, workers, and their organizations, these issues continue to require coordinated responses to promote and uphold fundamental principles and rights at work.

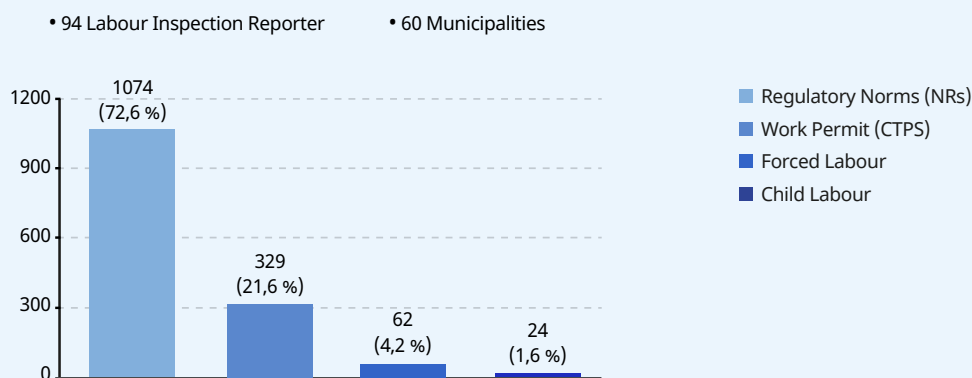
The coffee sector is among the most frequently inspected agricultural industries. Between 1996 and 2024, labour

inspectors in Minas Gerais recorded **1,022 violations of the regulation on safety and health at work in agriculture, livestock farming, forestry, logging and aquaculture (NR-31)**, Brazil’s primary OSH regulation for agriculture. These violations were identified across 60 municipalities, and related to key areas such as worker accommodations, pesticide safety, personal protective equipment, and risk management programmes.<sup>10</sup>

The most recurrent issues were:

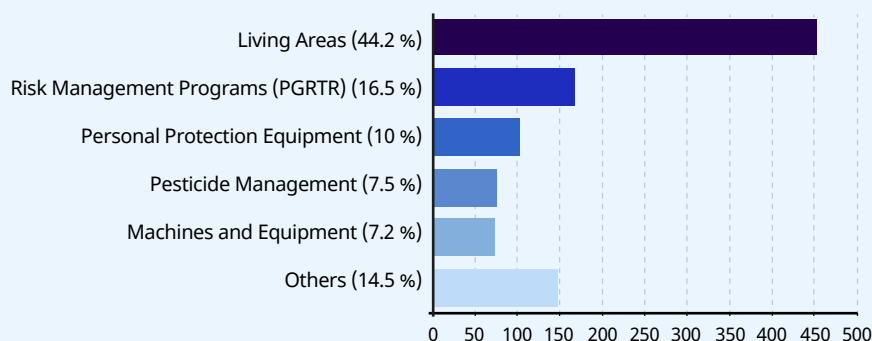
- **worker living areas violations (44.2 per cent)**, including inadequate dormitories and sanitation facilities,
- **failures in risk management programs (16.5 per cent)**, and
- **personal protective equipment deficiencies (10 per cent)**.

► **Graph 2. Types of violations identified in the coffee sector. Minas Gerais (1996 - 2024)**



**Source:** Author’s elaboration based on data from the Brazilian Ministry of Labor and Employment (1996-2024). Based on 94 inspection reports across 60 municipalities.

► **Graph 3. Distribution of OSH violations in the coffee sector. Minas Gerais (1996 – 2024)**  
Total 1,022 violations across 60 municipalities



**70 %**  
of all violations represent the top 3 categories (Living Areas, Risk Management, PPE).

**Source:** Author’s elaboration based on data from the Brazilian Ministry of Labor and Employment (1996-2024). Based on 94 inspection reports across 60 municipalities.

<sup>10</sup> NR-31 (Regulatory Standard 31) establishes occupational safety and health requirements for agriculture, livestock, forestry, and aquaculture activities in Brazil. This analysis is based on 94 labour inspection reports specific to the coffee sector covering 60 municipalities across Minas Gerais (14% of 670 total reports analysed), spanning the period 1996-2024. The inspections were distributed across three main coffee-producing biomes: Cerrado, Atlantic Forest, and Caatinga. Data source: Public records from the Brazilian Ministry of Labor and Employment (<https://www.gov.br/trabalho-e-emprego/pt-br/assuntos/inspecao-do-trabalho/areas-de-atuacao>)



These findings highlight **weaknesses in compliance and enforcement**, reinforcing the importance of Brazil's legislative and institutional frameworks, including regulations on forced labour and OSH and the oversight role of the Ministry of Labour and Employment and the Labour Inspectorate.

Labour infractions were **most frequently reported during the harvest season**, with recurring issues including unregistered employment, inadequate housing conditions, and insufficient hygiene and safety measures.

## 4. Methodology

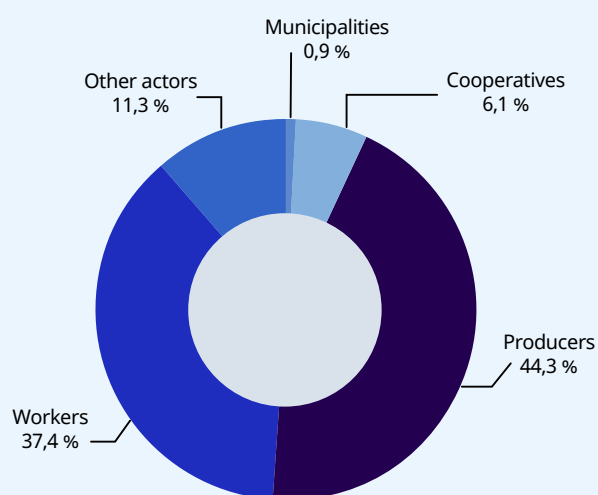
The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to produce a comprehensive assessment of OSH conditions in the coffee supply chain in Minas Gerais.

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, document analysis, and a literature review, enabling effective triangulation of information.



Coffee worker conducting post-harvest activities, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 05/2025.  
© ILO

► Graph 4. Participant Profile Breakdown



**Total: 115 interviewees**

7	Cooperatives
51	Producers
43	Workers
13	Other actors
1	Municipalities

**Source:** Own elaboration.

The study conducted field research in eight municipalities across two key coffee-producing regions, namely: in Cerrado Mineiro, Patrocínio and Araguari; in Southern Minas, in Três Pontas, Nepomuceno, Campos Gerais, Santo Antonio de Amaparo, Campos Altos and Ibiraci.

More than 115 individuals representing government agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, cooperatives, private sector companies, as well as producers and workers, participated in interviews or focus group discussions held between January and May 2025. Collectively, the cooperatives involved in this study represented nearly 30,000 members. Producers involved in this study ranged from smallholders managing 10–15 hectares to large-scale farms exceeding 500 hectares. Many were second - or third-generation coffee farmers, while others had only recently entered the sector. The average age of producers ranged between 30 and 60 years, with some younger individuals increasingly assuming management roles within family-run farms. Nearly all participants were affiliated with cooperatives.

Special efforts were made to ensure that women – both producers and workers– constituted half of the participants. Outreach to women was facilitated through the existing partnership between the ILO and the International Women in Coffee Alliance (IWCA).

Depending on stakeholder type and logistical considerations, interviews were conducted either in person or virtually, enabling comprehensive data collection across various segments of the coffee supply chain.

## 5. Research findings

### General observations

Cooperatives and other key informants identified several **challenges** facing the coffee sector in Brazil. A primary concern expressed by many respondents was the **shortage of labour**, especially during the harvest season. A critical related issue was the **formalization of seasonal (temporary) workers**. Many producers reported difficulties in hiring seasonal workers willing to be formally registered, as temporary formal employment could jeopardize their long-term access to social benefits. Producers widely perceived current labour legislation as “incompatible with the seasonality of agricultural production,” creating legal uncertainty for both employers and workers alike, who often find themselves caught between the demands of formal regulations and the realities of informal practices.<sup>11</sup>

Respondents highlighted the absence of **municipal-level sectoral programmes tailored to the specific needs and dynamics of the coffee supply chain**. A prevailing perception among some local government officials was that the sector is ‘already organized and advanced,’ which has contributed to a disconnect between municipal action and the day-to-day realities faced by workers and producers. This perception, combined with limited engagement at the local level, points to a broader gap in the vision of shared responsibility for addressing structural challenges in the sector.

There was consensus among respondents that **labour inspections** were sporadic and were often perceived as primarily punitive rather than preventive or educational. Representatives of the Labour Inspectorate themselves acknowledged the importance of complementing enforcement with a more proactive and promotional approach.

The **coffee cooperatives** interviewed for this study emphasized that their **primary focus** remained on **commercial operations and coffee storage**. Several cooperatives reported having active programmes targeting women, providing spaces for them to meet, share experiences, and learn how to manage coffee farms more effectively. This was confirmed by many **women producers**, who found these initiatives valuable. As one key informant noted, “women’s increasing participation is transforming the coffee sector”. Yet, many women producers mentioned they still find the sector difficult for them to navigate, citing persistent gender imbalances, with men continuing to hold most of the power and decision-making roles.

The cooperatives analysed adopted varying approaches to **quality control and certification**. Some followed a “voluntary adherence” model, allowing members to participate without holding formal certifications. Others required members to obtain recognized certifications but provided limited technical support in doing so. In these cases, producers often sought training independently through programmes offered by institutions such as SEBRAE or SENAR. A few cooperatives distinguished themselves by offering structured technical assistance, including covering audit costs and providing continuous field support, to help producers comply with the requirements of both national (such as “Certifica Minas”) and international certification schemes.

In the absence of government and cooperative support programmes aimed at improving social and labour practices, certification schemes were often cited as the most structured framework available to support producers. Certified producers mentioned that **the main benefit of the certification was improved farm organization**, which helped streamline operations and enhance overall efficiency. However, many of them expressed frustration with pricing, and the **perceived mismatch between the value added by a certification and the actual benefits received**. The high costs of maintaining certifications was not always compensated by commercial premiums, creating financial strain particularly for smaller producers.

#### Informality in the coffee sector

According to data presented by DIEESE at the 2023 CONTAR national seminar, the informality rate in Brazil’s coffee sector is estimated at **85.7% nationally and 79.4% in the six main coffee-producing states**, including Minas Gerais.

Informality increases workers’ vulnerability to occupational risks. Producers noted that formalisation facilitates access to OSH training and improves compliance with safety protocols. Conversely, the absence of a formal contract limits oversight by labour inspectors, weakens monitoring mechanisms, and remains a major barrier to rural workers’ access to social protection. This hinders both the monitoring of labour conditions and workers’ access to essential benefits.

<sup>11</sup> Seasonal workers were not directly interviewed in this research. These perceptions about formalization came primarily from producers/employers’ perspectives, which may not fully capture actual workers’ perceptions.

## OSH within coffee Cooperatives

Across multiple interviews, participants acknowledged that OSH remains a weak aspect of the coffee supply chain, particularly regarding practical enforcement at the farm level. While some producers and cooperatives reported taking proactive steps to improve OSH at the workplace level, these efforts were often inconsistent and lacked external oversight or structured support.

Of the eight coffee cooperatives included in this research, **five reported having adopted internal OSH guidelines and conducting regular monitoring of OSH conditions** that, to some extent, extended to or influenced their affiliated producers. In contrast, two cooperatives indicated that their OSH efforts were limited to internal staff and did not extend to affiliated producers.

The cooperatives demonstrated **varying levels of structure and institutional commitment to OSH**:

- Three of the five cooperatives that reported higher engagement in OSH had implemented structured OSH programmes, including the distribution of informational materials and educational booklets to their members aimed at improving workplace safety.
- In contrast, cooperatives with moderate or minimal engagement described sporadic initiatives with limited reach or confined their OSH activities to internal operations without offering structured support to affiliated producers.

From an OSH perspective, training efforts reported by cooperatives were generally described as sporadic and lacking systematic planning or integration into broader strategies for capacity-development and risk prevention. As a result, their reach and long-term impact appeared limited. In several cases, training materials were not sufficiently adapted to local contexts or to the diverse profiles of rural workers—particularly seasonal workers and smallholders—who faced distinct vulnerabilities and require targeted approaches.

### ► Emerging good practices in OSH among coffee cooperatives

Although challenges remain, the research identified noteworthy efforts by several coffee cooperatives to promote OSH among their members and affiliated producers. These examples demonstrate the potential of cooperatives to act as key agents in strengthening OSH practices when there is institutional commitment and structured support.

Highlights include:

- Internal OSH guidelines and regular monitoring adopted by some cooperatives, covering topics such as PPE, risk management, and housing conditions.
- Educational materials and awareness campaigns, including the distribution of illustrated manuals and safety brochures tailored to rural contexts.
- Partnerships with technical training institutions (e.g., SENAR) to deliver OSH-related courses and promote professional development in the sector.
- Targeted programmes to support women and youth in the sector, including training on labour rights and safety standards.
- Transparency initiatives, including publicly available codes of conduct and sustainability protocols on cooperative websites.
- Support for certification schemes, with technical assistance and partial coverage of audit costs to facilitate compliance with OSH standards.
- Policies against forced labour, including mechanisms to exclude suppliers engaged in exploitative practices.

These practices—although not yet generalized—showcase how cooperatives can contribute to decent work by integrating OSH into their organizational strategies. Their scale and impact could be further enhanced through stronger institutional partnerships and coordinated public policies.



Coffee farm, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 05/2025. © ILO



## Reported OSH challenges at the workplace level

Most producers and workers who participated in the research reported having **received little to no formal OSH training**. Workers commonly remarked that “OSH is something you learn on the job, from other workers.” Both groups exhibited a low perception of risk, particularly among older and seasonal workers.

When discussing OSH, producers and workers primarily associated it with the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and the handling of agrochemicals. When prompted, some participants also mentioned broader concerns related to workers’ overall well-being, including nutrition, physical activity, and general health. Mental health was occasionally raised as an additional challenge faced by both producers and workers in the coffee sector. Notably, there was **no understanding among participants of OSH as a management system**.<sup>12</sup>

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) was reported to vary significantly across farms. While most producers interviewed stated that PPE is regularly provided to workers ensuring consistent use remains a persistent challenge. Resistance to PPE use was most commonly reported among workers, due to discomfort in hot climates, limited mobility, low risk perception, and, in some cases, cultural beliefs (such as concerns that rubber boots may affect reproductive health). In family farming contexts, some producers also noted difficulties in encouraging proper PPE use among their own family members working on the farm, suggesting that resistance may span across roles.

To address these challenges, some producers have adopted strategies such as offering monthly bonuses for correct use, conducting regular safety talks, and sharing real-life examples of preventable accidents. Despite these efforts, sustained compliance often requires close and continuous supervision. Producers widely recognized that fostering a culture of safety depends on active leadership, routine reinforcement, and engagement from both management and workers.

Women were consistently described as more attentive to OSH procedures, showing greater willingness to wear PPE and stronger interest in training. Nonetheless, they remain underrepresented in most rural work crews, and gender parity is still the exception.



Coffee workers participating in group discussions, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 05/2025.  
© ILO

According to interview and focus group findings, commonly reported OSH risks in the coffee sector included accidents involving:

- tractor use,
- exposure to agrochemicals,
- thermal discomfort—particularly in the Cerrado region; and
- fatigue associated with long working hours, often exceeding 10 hours per day during the harvest season.

While these insights reflect the experiences and perceptions of producers and workers consulted, they underscore the need to triangulate qualitative evidence with available accident statistics to better inform risk prevention strategies across the supply chain.

Several respondents noted that many **workers lack health insurance** and that local **health centres are often unavailable**. Emergency services, such as fire brigades, were frequently located far from the farms. In cases of accidents, assistance was typically provided by neighbouring farms rather than official emergency responders.

<sup>12</sup> An OSH management system is a set of interrelated or interacting elements to establish OSH policy and objectives, and to achieve those objectives. The application of a systems’ approach to the management of OSH in workplace ensures that the level of prevention and protection is continuously evaluated and maintained through appropriate and timely improvements. To create and maintain a safe and healthy working environment and comply with the OSH requirements pursuant to national laws and regulations, employers are encouraged to make appropriate arrangements for the establishment of an OSH management system. Additional information can be found [here](#).

## Seasonal migration in the coffee sector in Minas Gerais



Worker sorting coffee cherries, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 05/2025. © ILO

Each year, during the coffee harvest season, a significant number of workers migrate from northern Minas Gerais and the interior of Bahia to the coffee-producing regions in the south and centre of the state. These *safristas* are often hired informally, without written contracts or official registration in the labour system. This temporary and informal employment situation exposes workers to compounded vulnerabilities.

Although these groups were not the primary focus of this study, understanding this migratory dynamic is essential for designing inclusive OSH strategies that reflect the lived realities of these highly vulnerable workers. Further research is needed to better understand their specific occupational risks and the barriers they face to formalisation from their own perspectives.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations

Addressing OSH-related challenges in coffee production in Minas Gerais requires collective action among multiple stakeholders. While cooperatives can play a vital role, meaningful progress to advance fundamental rights at work depends on joint efforts involving federal, state, and municipal governments, as well as employers' and workers' organizations.

The following recommendations are proposed to address the key challenges identified in this research:

### **Recommendation 1: Implement targeted awareness campaigns to improve compliance with OSH regulations, in alignment with NR-31.**

Local governments, employers and workers, and cooperatives should work – both individually and collectively – in the dissemination of targeted messages promoting safe OSH practices. These efforts should focus on key topics such as proper use of PPE usage and the importance of safe working conditions, equipping coffee producers and workers with the knowledge needed to enhance their work practices.

Campaigns should employ creative and accessible communication methods to effectively reach target audiences, particularly temporary workers residing on coffee farms. As suggested by key informants, strategies such as radio soap operas or illustrated short magazines could be particularly effective in contexts with low literacy levels or limited access to printed materials.

To broaden impact and accessibility, OSH content should also be adapted and integrated into digital platforms (such as mobile Apps used in the coffee sectors).

### **Recommendation 2: Develop and implement a comprehensive OSH training strategy to strengthen the role of municipal governments, employers' and workers' organizations, and cooperatives in building OSH capacity among producers and workers.**

Training materials should be **gender-sensitive**, the content tailored to respond to the distinct characteristics of coffee production in Minas Gerais' diverse coffee-producing regions. For instance, workers in mechanized farms in the Cerrado are exposed to different OSH risks than workers in smallholder operations in the mountainous areas of Southern Minas Gerais, where manual labour predominates and ergonomic risks are more common. Training materials should also consider specific worker profiles—including seasonal and temporary workers, women, and older workers—and incorporate illustrated and accessible resources appropriate for audiences with limited literacy. These materials should also address behavioural and cultural barriers to OSH compliance, such as low-risk perception or misconceptions about PPE.

The implementation of a "training of trainers" (ToT) approach is recommended to strengthen or complement existing training initiatives, such as those offered by Educampo (SEBRAE) and SENAR. Developing officially certificated training programmes, ideally recognized by a federal agency, would add legitimacy and value to the training, helping to professionalize the sector and providing cooperatives and producers



with credentials that could support recruitment. ToTs for municipal authorities, employers' and workers' organizations, and cooperatives could be delivered in a "hybrid" format (combining online and in-person sessions), while training for producers and workers should be delivered face-to-face to ensure effective engagement and practical application.

Special emphasis should be placed on empowering sectoral employers' organizations and cooperatives as key actors in the dissemination of OSH practices. Cooperatives direct access to producers and workers across more than 200 coffee-producing municipalities, along with their capacity to translate technical knowledge into practical, locally adapted solutions, positions them well to lead this effort.

**Recommendation 3: Conduct additional research on OSH conditions among vulnerable groups, particularly temporary and seasonal workers.**

As seasonal workers were not directly interviewed in this study, there is an urgent need for dedicated research to better understand the realities faced by these groups. Such studies are essential to identify their specific occupational risks, barriers to formalization, and unique needs.

Particular attention could be given to workers who migrate from regions such as Northern Minas Gerais and Bahia, as they may face compounded vulnerabilities related to mobility, housing, and limited access to services. A deeper understanding of these factors is critical for designing more inclusive and effective OSH policies and interventions.

**Recommendation 4: Strategic leverage existing programmes, networks and platforms to promote good OSH practices across the sector.**

Several initiatives such as the government-led programme "[Trabalho Sustentável](#)", already promote social dialogue and intersectoral coordination to address labour violations and advance decent work. These efforts represent valuable entry points for strengthening OSH prevention in coffee production.

Enhancing connections between such programmes and key sectoral stakeholders at the municipal level can help to build a more cohesive and coordinated network of action. This, in turn, would support the broader dissemination of good OSH practices, improve collaboration among actors, and enhance the overall effectiveness of reach of interventions across different regions.

**Recommendation 5: Strengthen labour inspection through integrated approaches that include a more proactive role in relation to prevention and education.**

Reinforce the structure and capacity of the labour inspection to ensure its ability to carry out effective

enforcement actions, especially in high-risk areas. While continuing to play a crucial role in ensuring workplaces comply with labour laws, efforts could be complemented by the promotion of proactive inspection models that include prevention and education.

Inspection strategies should encourage guidance and training to supply technical information and advice to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with the legal provision. This approach is essential to promoting long-term behavioural change in the sector and a key function of labour inspectorates.<sup>13</sup>

These efforts could be aligned with and supported by programmes, such as the above-mentioned, Programa Trabalho Sustentável, ensuring a balanced strategy that addresses both immediate risks and structural vulnerabilities.

**Recommendation 6: Strengthen inclusive sectoral dialogue platforms, such as the National Pact and its roundtables, to ensure rural voices are reflected in labour and OSH policy development.**

ILO constituents and sectoral stakeholders, including cooperatives, should continue to engage in the sectoral spaces for dialogue at the national, state and municipal levels, that ensure rural voices inform labour decisions.

**Recommendation 7: Strengthen employers' and workers' organizations' capacity to support coffee workers at municipal level.**

Enhancing the presence and effectiveness of employers' organisations and trade unions in coffee growing municipalities is key for advancing decent work by ensuring employers and workers have access to information and advice about their rights, duties and obligations related to OSH, and the benefits of formalization.

Promoting the establishment and use of effective grievance mechanisms - that are accessible, trusted, and aligned with international standards—including the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the [ILO's Examination of Grievances Recommendation, 1967 \(No. 130\)](#) - can enable the early identification and resolution of workplace issues, including on OSH, thereby supporting constructive dialogue between workers and employers, and preventing the escalation of disputes.

Investing in the capacity of local institutions, unions, and producer organizations to engage with or help operate such mechanisms can foster inclusive, transparent, and responsive labour relations at the municipal level.

<sup>13</sup> ILO C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81) stipulates that a key function of labour inspectorates is "to supply technical information and advice to employers and workers concerning the most effective means of complying with the legal provisions (article 3-1). Brazil ratified C081 on 11 October 1989.

## The Nossa Voz Initiative – A participatory mechanism for rural workers' voices



Coffee workers participating in ILO activities, Minas Gerais, Brazil, 11/ 2024. © ILO

**Nossa Voz** (“Our Voice”) is a multistakeholder grievance and dialogue mechanism that aims to facilitate early identification and resolution of labour-related concerns in Brazil’s coffee supply chain and other rural sectors.

Administered by the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**, Nossa Voz encourages dispute resolution through dialogue and direct negotiation between employers and workers. For workers, the mechanism ensures a safe channel to be heard. For employers, it creates opportunities to build trust, engage proactively with concerns, and strengthen social dialogue—a cornerstone of the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda.

Workers can report to Nossa Voz concerns confidentially through WhatsApp or a toll-free phone line. Each case is received and managed by trained professionals from the **National Confederation of Rural Workers (CONTAR)**,

following structured protocols that ensure impartiality, confidentiality, and fairness. No case is closed until a resolution is agreed by all parties, reinforcing procedural integrity and mutual respect.

*Nossa Voz* fulfills key effectiveness criteria for grievance mechanisms: legitimacy, accessibility, predictability, transparency, rights-compatibility, and dialogue-based resolution. It offers companies a practical, field-tested tool to support **Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD)** and identify risks early complementing compliance strategies while promoting better workplace relations.

*Nossa Voz* also contributes to continuous improvement across supply chains. Anonymized data on the nature and frequency of grievances is shared with participating companies, offering insights that help inform preventive measures, guide improvements to OSH and labour practices, and reduce reputational, legal, and operational risks.



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