
THE EXPERIENCE OF FOGGIA

Stop undeclared work in agriculture

RAISE UP



Daniele Iacovelli

In the fields of the “capitanata” there are about 50 thousand agricultural workers.

The experience against caporalato is constant and continuous, every day we talk with the workers who attend our offices and that we meet on the workplaces. Then, during summer campaigns we focus on the activity of the “sindacato di strada” and it can last a month or two or three, depending on the modality.

The sindacato di strada, especially the last edition, that involved not only the companions of Foggia, but also many companions from all over Italy, enabled us, during summer time, to get in touch with about 3.000 workers in the rural areas.

Daniele Iacovelli has been in Cgil since 2004 and he currently is Provincial Secretary General of the Flai Cgil of Foggia.

They lack of very basic information on contractual forms, on individual and collective safeguards.

We got their contacts and phone numbers, because you can not stay so long on the workplace, so we called them back later and they came to our offices.

All of that allowed us, in a very short time, to increase the number of members (about 700). As regards the complaints of illegal activity in the field of illegal employment and gray labor, we started with only two complaints and now we are at 50.

This is a great results because Foggia is a very big province with 60 municipalities.

We decided to map the area using Whatsapp sharing the positions in a database and then reporting these positions on Google maps. That allowed us to geo tag all the workplaces of the workers and the places where they live in the countryside but mostly the companies located in the countryside and that we did not always know.



Before starting with the activity of the sindacato di strada we have analyzed the data, the only ones certified in our possession (the lists published by INPS) where you can find the number of days worked by each worker and the list of workers who work in agriculture each year.

Through this analysis we managed to understand the distribution of the phenomenon: how many workers work in the countryside, how many working days they do and above all how they are dislocated.

Thanks to this analysis we then moved on the territory to understand the different types of workers we met. This also helped us to prepare advertising materials because we knew we would meet Romanian workers or Bulgarian workers or African workers.

In the organization of the sindacato di strada we have been helped by our local representatives who are in the Flai leagues. The leagues are nothing more than local offices of the provincial union where you can find our local representatives that meet every day the workers; sometimes they come with us in the countryside because they have a great knowledge of the territory. This also allowed us to reach areas that otherwise we would not have achieved.

“The presence of a cultural mediator it would certainly have helped us in the first approach with the workers”

The local union delegates also helped us. We tried to contact our representatives in every local offices to collect information about the working time because if the workers came back at 5:00 pm and we went to 4:00 pm we would not have met them. These are all valuable information that allowed us to optimize our work. We have designed the activity of sindacato di strada with the help of some gadgets that allowed us to approach the worker easily. We chose the straw hat or the bottle of water with the Flai addresses on the label.

On March 14, 2018, the first Territorial Section of the Quality Agricultural Work Network was established in Foggia. Brokerage, transport, reception area priority areas to attack in order to take power away from caporali. (Photo from La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno).

Human resources are represented by all companions of Flai Foggia, from the territorial office, the heads of local units, the delegates, or, as in the last two editions, from the companions from all over Italy.

The structure is self-sustaining because we have organized everything in order to reduce costs to a minimum: the cost of information leaflets in five languages, (French, English, Bulgarian, Romanian, Italian); the cost of gadgets; the internal cost of the structure, the ordinary management.

Usually the sindacato di strada in our area starts early between 5:00 and 5:30 am.

We have a small meeting to decide which area to go to taking into account the information we recorded and then we start doing workers information for all the morning time until 12-12:30 pm.

During summer, workers tend to detach no later than 3:00 pm. Then we return to the base, the headquarters of the Flai, to discuss what happened during the daily activity and often we have different opinion between each other so the briefing is crucial to make evaluations about the activity to be prepared for the following day.

We have installed many collaborations during the sindacato di strada, mostly during summer time, with inspection bodies, NLI (National Labor Inspectorate) police corps and Carabinieri, members of the Network of agricultural quality work.

The support from the National Labor Inspectorate, was really helpful because during the activity we could denounce episodes of child labor; also the support from police corps was useful because they were ready to intervene during the activity.

We prefer not to involve the press in sindacato di strada because with interviews and the presence of the press workers, especially immigrants, expect an immediate change in their living conditions something that unfortunately does not happen. We do not want to build false hopes among workers. Another reason is that we do not want workers think that we are around to get us publicity at no cost.

During the union activity we have built a database of contacts and a network, with the workers joined spontaneously in ghettos or in workplaces, and also with associations active during summer time, like INTERSOS, that performs medical services.

With them we have established excellent relationships, but not only with them, also with ARCI and CARITAS and through this network we have a better control of the territory.

We can get more information and this is one of the most important results because we can find out what happens, if workers are exploited, also through phone calls or Whatsapp message from the guys who live in those places and who are our members, like they were delegates of local offices.

The presence of a cultural mediator it would certainly have helped us in the first approach with the workers, Romanian, Bulgarian, but also African, immigrants, in fact, many of them did not trust at the beginning, so the presence of the cultural mediator would have been fundamental to improve the quality of work.

It's an adjustment that will be implemented in the next editions.