LOCAL DYNAMICS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE CASE OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN POLATLI, ANKARA

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ABSTRACT

LOCAL DYNAMICS OF POVERTY ALLEVIATION: THE CASE OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN POLATLI, ANKARA

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This thesis aims to explore local dynamics in the development and implementation of poverty alleviation policies specifically designed for seasonal agricultural workers in Ankara. The fact that seasonal agricultural workers are "on the move" should be considered as one of the most crucial factors of their vulnerability. Over the past decade, many public institutions have assumed the critical responsibility of improving their living and working conditions. This task falls to various government bodies, including ministries, provincial and district governorships, and local governments. However, only a limited number of organizations argue that a more unified effort is to bring about notable change. In that sense, it is crucial to highlight all relevant actors and relationships to trace the coordinated implementation of the deliberate remedial programs. This study draws its analysis from fieldwork conducted in Polatlı district of Ankara. Based on the findings of the fieldwork, it explores the centrality of local governments in implementing and collaborating on poverty reduction policies. By framing the collaborative effort, this research aims to highlight the need for coordination and cooperation between local governments, civil society organizations and private initiatives at the local level. Accordingly, the thesis argues that local actors are essential to empower communities by effectively addressing their specific needs

and concerns. It also discusses poverty reduction strategies that respond to community needs from a local governance perspective. Thus, the thesis aims to contribute to the relevant literature emphasizing the role of local governments in poverty reduction and community development.

Keywords: Seasonal agricultural workers, poverty alleviation policies, local governments, local governance and collaboration, poverty and social exclusion

ÖZ

YOKSULLUĞUN AZALTILMASININ YEREL DİNAMİKLERİ: POLATLI, ANKARA'DA MEVSİMLİK TARIM İŞÇİLERİ ÖRNEĞİ

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Bu tezin temel amacı, Ankara'daki mevsimlik tarım işçileri için özel olarak tasarlanmış yoksulluğu azaltma politikalarının geliştirilmesi ve uygulanmasındaki yerel dinamikleri araştırmaktır. Mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin "hareket halinde" olmaları, kırılganlıklarının en önemli faktörlerinden biri olarak değerlendirilmelidir. Geçtiğimiz on yıl içinde birçok kamu kurumu, mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin yaşam ve çalışma koşullarını denetlemek ve iyileştirmek gibi kritik bir sorumluluk üstlenmiştir. Bu görev bakanlıklar, il ve ilçe valilikleri ve yerel yönetimler de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli hükümet organlarına düşmektedir. Bu kapsamda yoksullukla mücadelede kaydedilen kayda değer artışa rağmen, sınırlı sayıda kuruluş önemli bir değişim yaratmak için daha birleşik bir çaba gösterilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu çağrı, yoksulluğun azaltılmasının bu tür kapsayıcı politikalar yoluyla uygulanmasının doğasında var olan karmaşıklık ve zorluklardan kaynaklanmaktadır. Oysaki amaçlanan çözüm programlarının koordineli bir şekilde uygulanmasının izini sürmek için ilgili tüm aktörleri ve ilişkileri vurgulamak çok önemlidir. Bu çalışma, analizini Ankara'nın Polatlı ilçesinde yürütülen saha çalışmasından almaktadır. Saha çalışmasının bulgularına dayanarak yoksulluğu azaltma politikalarının uygulanmasında ve bu politikalar üzerinde iş birliği yapılmasında yerel yönetimlerin merkeziliğini

araştırmaktadır. Bu araştırma, yoksulluğun azaltılması tartışmasını iş birliğine dayalı bir çaba olarak çerçeveleyerek, yerel yönetimler, sivil toplum kuruluşları ve özel girişimler arasında yerel düzeyde koordinasyon ve iş birliği ihtiyacını vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda tez, yerel aktörlerin, toplulukların özel ihtiyaç ve endişelerini etkin bir şekilde ele alarak onları güçlendirmek için gerekli olduğunu savunmaktadır. Ayrıca, yerel yönetişim perspektifinden topluluk ihtiyaçlarına yanıt veren yoksulluğu azaltma stratejilerini de tartışmaktadır. Böylece tez, yerel yönetimlerin yoksulluğun azaltılması ve toplum kalkınmasındaki rolünü vurgulayan ilgili literatüre katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mevsimlik tarım işçileri, yoksullukla mücadele politikaları, yerel yönetimler, yerel yönetişim ve iş birliği, yoksulluk ve sosyal dışlanma

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
METİP	Project for the Improvement of the Working and Social Lives of Seasonal Migrant Agricultural Workers
TBMM	Turkish Grand National Assembly
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute
İŞKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the context of multiple crises and risks, local governments and public authorities have begun to face ever-expanding problems of vulnerabilities. The problems of exclusion and marginalization have been considered as the social question of the 21st century (Wimmer, 2024). These problems manifest themselves as various forms of poverty. In the face of growing social problems, there has been a secular tendency towards expanding the roles and responsibilities of local governments and public authorities in providing or coordinating social assistance by crafting multidimensional and comprehensive poverty reduction policies. It is important to note that poverty is not just an individual economic matter but rather a multidimensional social justice problem involving housing, health, education services, among others. So, policies addressing poverty necessarily entail the cooperation of multiple actors and agencies for such services.

Since the early 1990s, the concept of governance was presented as a practical solution to coordination problems in and across a wide range of complex and specialized systems. Indeed, governance entails the political activity of coordinating, bargaining and policy making in the context of plurality of interests. The idea of governance put the national scale of development at stake in face of multi-scalar complexity of the social, political, and ecological problems (Archibugi & Held, 1995). Among others, for the context of local poverty too, the concept of governance provides a framework that allows for multidimensional interventions by promoting collaboration and coordination among different actors.

Local poverty and vulnerabilities are essential multi-dimensional caused and conditioned by several reasons. This study focuses on the context of seasonal agricultural work and explores the local dynamics of governance to target local

poverty. Seasonal agricultural work has been prevalent throughout many locations and is a vital income source for many families in Türkiye. Current estimates indicate that the population of seasonal agricultural workers in Türkiye is above one million, while exact data remain unverified. As regards the high numbers of people affected by this type of work, the urgency of the policy interventions is apparent.

In our country, social assistance and solidarity foundations provide social assistance to people experiencing poverty. It covers basic needs such as food, shelter, health, etc. and limited cash transfers. The local government authorities also assist them. Voluntary organizations and foundations are also involved in this process. Each of them is important in poverty alleviation and the prevention of social problems related to poverty. Municipalities play a role that is complementary to other forms of assistance. By providing public services, local governments usually do so in kind. Such assistance improves the situation of people experiencing poverty and addresses their grievances. However, it is not a permanent solution, the goal of local governments should be to sustain welfare. To be responsive to the needs of people experiencing poverty, local governments must prioritize sustainability in their poverty reduction policies.

This study will trace the local dynamics with a particular focus on the role of municipalities in the policy implementation targeting to improve the working and living conditions of the seasonal agricultural workers. The challenges of seasonal agricultural workers in Türkiye have been the focus of increasing attention and a prominent issue on the country's policy agenda, particularly since 2010. That year, the Prime Ministry published the Circular “Improving the Working and Social Life of Seasonal Agricultural Workers" (2010/6). Then, the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs launched a Project on Seasonal Agricultural Workers, hereafter which will referred to as –with its Turkish Acronym- METİP. This four-year project aimed to create a comprehensive policy agenda, focusing on resolving these challenges of seasonal agricultural workers and their families who migrate to high-demand agricultural areas for employment. As part of the project, the General Directorate of Labor of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs allocated funds to thirty-eight provincial governorships to provide accommodation, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential services for seasonal agricultural workers.

Following the first program, Prime Ministry Circular No. 2017/6 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers was published and METİP II was initiated and implemented between 2017-2018. Under METİP II, pilot programs were set to be put in action in several provinces where central government funding was allocated to establish temporary settlements that would fulfill the basic needs of seasonal agricultural workers and provide access to education, health, and social activities, as well as electricity, water, and sewerage infrastructure. According to the data provided by the General Directorate of Labor of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs, this fund has reached 328,39 seasonal agricultural workers (Ulucan Şahin, 2019).

Although there has been a remarkable increase in awareness, interventions, research initiatives, and humanitarian aid to improve seasonal agricultural workers' living conditions since 2010, civil society organizations have been calling for a more concerted effort needed to bring about meaningful change (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2018). The study will explore the challenges and complexities of implementing poverty alleviation through such central policies. Such deep-rooted problems targeted by the national public authorities are the kind of problems that require long-term policy implementation, predictability, and lesser uncertainty (Bayırbağ, 2013). For these reasons, no matter how the problem is defined, it is essential to present the form and nature of the problem to be solved as well as the causes of it in detail to effectively eliminate the uncertainty on the way to the solution (Bayırbağ, 2013). In that sense, highlighting all actors and relationships in understanding the problem is essential to trace the coordinated implementation of intended solution programs.

This thesis aims to investigate the critical role that local governments play in developing and implementing poverty reduction policies specifically designed for seasonal agricultural workers in Ankara. One of the most crucial factors of vulnerability of seasonal agricultural workers should be their being “on the move.” This section of workers often faces extremely specific challenges due to the mobile nature of their residence, and of their work. The study draws its analysis based on a fieldwork conducted in the Polatlı district of Ankara.

Drawing on the fieldwork’s findings, the thesis delves into the vital importance of local governments in the implementation and collaboration of poverty reduction policies.

By framing the discussion around poverty reduction as a collaborative effort, this research aims to highlight the necessity for coordination and collaboration at the local level among local governments, civil society organizations, and private initiations. Accordingly, the thesis argues that all the stakeholders operating at the local level are essential for empowering communities by effectively addressing their specific needs and concerns. In that sense, the thesis will also discuss poverty reduction policies responsive to the community's needs from a local governance perspective. By doing so, the thesis contributes to the relevant literature that points to the role of local governments in poverty reduction and community development.

1.1. The Significance of the Problem

The agricultural sector is known for having a dynamic workforce that changes according to seasonal production cycles. The timing of crop harvests in different regions varies throughout the year in Türkiye, a country with four seasons. Moreover, different crops have different production periods. According to these seasonal patterns, workers leave their hometowns and travel to distant places to perform distinct roles, for harvesting -collecting, picking- the products. After completing their work in one location, they typically move to other regions to continue their work with different crops. This recurrent migration cycle poses many challenges, due to its irregular and unpredictable nature.

Poverty manifests not just as material deprivation but also through socioeconomic problems, such as social exclusion and marginalization. Seasonal agricultural workers and their families often endure challenging living conditions resulting from poor infrastructural circumstances. They move frequently between the fields of different landowners, often changing their temporary shelters such as tents, huts or caravans which are often inadequate for housing large families. The insufficiency of space and overpopulation hinders the maintenance of cleanliness and order within the living environment. Daily life becomes even more complex when essential facilities like power and running water are insufficient or absent. Due to such major inconveniences of accommodation arrangements, seasonal agricultural workers and their families are posed to considerable hygiene and safety issues. Families overcome these hurdles

while struggling to meet their job obligations.

They typically work about 11 hours daily without any holidays with low wages. Furthermore, seasonal agricultural workers are exposed to various hazards from their working conditions such as exposure to chemicals, occupational diseases, and work accidents. Environmental factors such as climate change also negatively affect their living and working conditions. Skin diseases or other climate-related health problems might occur because of exposure to high heat or challenging climatic conditions.

These nomadic employment conditions often require them to be away from their permanent places of residence for up to six months a year. As a result of their constant mobility, access to basic public services has become increasingly difficult for these workers and their families. The assumed link between the place residence and the place to access to services creates inconveniences of different forms. For instance, access to basic health care services can be limited as these workers move away from their assigned family practitioner in their residence. Moreover, workers might lack medical assistance due to transportation problems or lack of nearby facilities. This seasonal mobility brings precarious living conditions and contributes significantly to the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty. Families often find themselves lacking adequate social support networks, exacerbating economic difficulties.

Women are especially susceptible during their seasonal migration, as they are expected to shoulder social reproduction role for their families in addition to being agricultural workers themselves. Besides their work on the farm, they are also tasked with domestic duties and childcare responsibilities. The report of the Parliamentary Research Commission states that most seasonal agricultural workers are women, and they face various risks due to their work conditions (TBMM, 2015). Similarly, the International Labor Organization's "Research Report on Perceptions and Experiences of Violence and Harassment in the Workplace" highlights the high rates of sexual violence experienced by workers in the workplace (ILO, 2024). These threats impact their physical safety, mental health, and overall well-being.

Child labor is a widespread problem, especially in the agricultural sector. Typically, agricultural workers' children also engage in agricultural work (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2018). Even if they are not working full time on the farms, they are anticipated to assist

their families with farming tasks and the upkeep of their dwellings.

Due to such burdens, children often encounter educational obstacles because of their families' adverse living conditions. Consequently, they face the danger of school dropouts. In addition, the employment conditions of temporary agricultural worker families travelling with their children pose due to being on the move impeding their educational continuity. young workers feel that they augment their families' income and choose immediate cash requirements over educational prospects that could result in better employment opportunities. Accordingly, they are motivated to follow their parents' way, in this manner perpetuating the cycle of low-wage employment that sustains their families in poverty. Such a major problem concerning their right to education leads to perpetual poverty trap of the young generations. Since access to quality education is crucial for young individuals to get competent roles in the workforce, particularly in a free-market economy that increasingly prioritizes specialized skills and qualifications, young individuals' deficiency of information and skills restricts their future work prospects. Consequently, engaging in short-term employment instead of pursuing long-term education set up a continuous cycle in which the next generations inherit their parents' financial difficulties. Despite such misperceptions relying upon short term expectations, it is essential to fully access educational services for children affected by seasonal agricultural work to break the cycle of poverty.

It is also pertinent to highlight the distinct backgrounds of the seasonal agricultural workers and their families to comprehensively understand the problem. The existing studies show that many of them are originally from rural regions (TRTHABER, 2022). Not surprisingly, seasonal agricultural workers originate from Türkiye's eastern and southeastern regions, which are distinguished as rural areas with limited job opportunities. It often stems from substantial changes in agricultural policies and the persistent impact of traditional land tenure arrangements (Bayramoğlu & Bozdemir, 2019). Agricultural production patterns have shifted due to technical developments and the demands of a fast-evolving global economy. While at the same time, the unequal land distribution has perpetuated the social structure, obscuring equitable wealth distribution. As a result, many families abandoned their farms because of unsustainability of dependable agricultural production under the challenges of

neoliberal commercialization. Because of these reasons, several families, whether smallholders or entirely landless, have become increasingly dependent on wage labor. In that sense, comprehending inequities at local, regional, national, and global scales is intricate, especially with the structural difficulties in the agricultural sector.

Historically, the demand for agricultural wage labor has been fulfilled by landless or smallholder households, and lately by the irregular migrant families. In recent years, the increasing employment of refugees and asylum seekers in the seasonal agricultural sector has become a significant phenomenon (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016) There are refugees, including those from Afghanistan and Iraq, however predominantly Syrian asylum seekers. Motivated to make a livelihood for themselves and their families with their limited financial means, they engage in seasonal agricultural work, especially during peaks in harvest periods. From a global perspective, supranational regional disparities inherent in 21st-century world affairs have compelled millions of Syrians to abandon their homes. Correspondingly, numerous asylum seekers without essential qualifications have turned to the seasonal employment sector, which makes them more susceptible to exploitation. That is because lacking legal protection stemming from sector-specific issues such as informality and instability of employment in the seasonal agricultural sector have deepened the problem and increased their vulnerability.

Reducing poverty requires various social interventions because of its multidimensional characteristics. Public institutions, civil society organizations, and private initiatives aid by addressing seasonal agricultural workers' fundamental needs, such as nourishment, housing, and healthcare. Municipalities and civil initiatives in Türkiye often support them with social help, including clothing, footwear, and limited monetary aid to alleviate poverty. Every effort to alleviate poverty has the importance of strengthening the communities, even if it is not a definitive remedy. However, unlike a more profound comprehension of poverty reduction policies, short-term expectations without comprehensive planning hinder the potential for discovering sustainable solutions to poverty reduction. In that sense, for several actors, it seems important to alleviate poverty so that it is enduring and not influenced by daily strategies.

Among other things, local public authorities are important to foster a more humane

and equitable environment by proactively addressing the needs of the locality. It involves providing better conditions in the workplace, housing, access to basic services, and ensuring health and safety protocols. While guaranteeing that the workers are compensated with fair salaries corresponding to their labor and contributions to the agricultural industry. Hence, local governments can impact on the lives of seasonal agricultural workers by enacting comprehensive policies and programs that address both immediate relief and long-term remedies. Municipalities with their capacities could target several problems of seasonal agricultural workers from their substandard housing facilities to human rights problems, including gender discrimination and child labor.

Furthermore, the high number of refugees and asylum seekers in the seasonal agricultural sector complicates the way of interventions through poverty alleviation policies. Moreover, the seasonal agricultural sector involves various stakeholders, including landowners, agricultural intermediaries, traders, and companies. Given the complexity of the local dynamics, involving these diverse actors in decision-making processes and implementing relevant policies is essential. In that sense, comprehensive and collaborative policy management is necessary to reduce poverty.

Therefore, improving seasonal agricultural workers' living and working conditions requires a governance-based comprehensive policy framework. This framework is crucial to multidimensional problems affecting marginalized communities. In that sense, supporting the well-being and development of the community is associated with ensuring access to essential services such as health care, housing, transportation, education, and childcare. Focusing on the circumstances of seasonal agricultural workers also necessitates promoting sustainable agricultural practices and ensuring the long-term viability of land and resources. Also, creating social and vocational alternatives is essential for empowering marginalized communities as seasonal agricultural workers. It helps them improve their skills, increase their economic mobility, and have a chance to get better job opportunities. Furthermore, awareness-raising activities are an effective way to inform the public and policymakers about the challenges of seasonal agricultural workers. This contributes to building a more supportive environment that advocates for their rights and welfare. It also supports establishing fair working conditions for seasonal agricultural workers, benefiting the

broader agricultural industry and society.

1.2. The Gap in the Role of Municipalities

The dynamics of capitalist economic systems and traditional agricultural practices in different countries influence seasonal agricultural work significantly. This complex interaction creates different narratives in each country, deeply shaped by cultural heritage, social norms, and specific market conditions. In most cases, seasonal work is associated with poverty, complicates the labor market, and profoundly affects the livelihoods of those involved. The link between agricultural employment and economic struggle has made seasonal agricultural workers a critical area of study, attracting the attention of both academics and policymakers. In Türkiye, the academic discourse on this issue has increased significantly, especially since 2010. Since then, there has been a significant increase in research focusing on seasonal agricultural workers in Türkiye, as evidenced by the considerable number of dissertations and academic studies examining the impact of seasonal agricultural work on social structures, economic development, and workers' lives.

Studies have examined the various challenges faced by seasonal workers, focusing on critical issues such as labor rights violations, poor working conditions, and the wider impact of migration on their lives. These analyses often explore the socio-economic factors that drive individuals to seek seasonal work and highlight the complex relationship between seasonal work and the wider socio-economic landscape. This growing body of research is essential for a better understanding of the complex realities of agricultural labor in Türkiye. It makes important contributions to the global discourse on labor rights and sustainable agricultural practices. For example, Nesrin Erbörü's 2014 study interviewed 122 seasonal workers from different towns in the Polatlı district of Ankara province to assess the prevalence of occupational accidents and their contributing factors. The results showed that although there were not officially recorded occupational accidents, fifty-one workers reported having experienced such incidents. The study highlighted the significant lack of formal employment contracts in the agricultural sector, which raises significant concerns about workers' rights and occupational safety. It also found that the health guarantees

available to these workers were inadequate, exposing them to various risks. It also pointed to a worrying lack of labor and health insurance for seasonal agricultural workers, highlighting their precarious situation.

Although there are important studies on seasonal agricultural workers from an economic perspective, they focus on poverty and social exclusion through a sociological lens. For example, Geçgin's master's thesis examined the problem of social exclusion faced by seasonal agricultural workers in the Polatlı district of Ankara, conducting in-depth interviews with 170 people from different villages (Geçgin, 2009). The findings revealed a striking picture of the living conditions of these workers, most of whom live in extremely primitive and inadequate housing, highlighting their vulnerability to both economic and social exclusion. Celal Altın also conducted a comprehensive study in the Polatlı district of Ankara in 2014, analyzing the complex relationship between seasonal migration and poverty. In his research, he conducted in-depth interviews with 310 seasonal agricultural workers living in rural villages in the district. The findings revealed critical issues: the workers mostly have no formal education and do not own land, which significantly hampers their economic prospects. Altin's research illustrates the challenges in the sector and highlights the fragile communication and interaction between workers and their employers - agricultural intermediaries, landowners, and traders. The studies also highlight a worrying trend: Younger generations are increasingly taking on the role of head of household for their families, pointing to a worrying cycle of perpetuating poverty in seasonal agricultural work. The intergenerational transmission of hardship highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to address the complexity of their circumstances.

The 2012 Progress Report on Seasonal Labor Migration in Agriculture analyses the complexity of Turkish agriculture and patterns of labor migration. The report highlights the prevalence of small- and medium-scale landownership, which affects agricultural practices and working conditions. A critical issue is the reliance on unpaid labor, particularly by women, leading to a gendered division of labor that perpetuates inequality. Women often work in precarious, low-paid, and unrecognized jobs, while men work in long-term seasonal jobs, reinforcing traditional gender roles. Seasonal migration can disrupt family structures and economic stability for women, who have

both domestic and agricultural responsibilities. The report also points out that there are significant wage inequalities among seasonal workers and that women are particularly disadvantaged in terms of wages and job opportunities.

Yılmaz conducted field research in the Sarıoba settlement in the Polatlı district of Ankara for her master's thesis (Yılmaz, 2020). She was looking for a permanent solution to the housing problems of seasonal agricultural workers. The study aims to investigate seasonal agricultural workers' problems and develop sustainable housing solutions that consider eco-design principles. According to the research, the housing conditions of seasonal agricultural workers are mostly unhealthy. In addition, farmworker families have too many children and the level of education of these children is low. Furthermore, the direct source of income of the workers is seasonal agricultural work and their income is insufficient. The study also argues that the Sarıoba settlement provides a healthy housing environment for the workers and their families, facilities to meet their basic needs, and a housing environment that protects their privacy. The study makes pertinent recommendations on housing issues and eco-design and shows that much remains to be done to ensure the sustainability of the estate. There are still problems with waste collection, electricity and power supply, water systems, health, and employment policies. In the study, local governments and their responsibilities concerning the housing problems of seasonal agricultural workers are touched upon in the conclusion section, but not in the evaluations.

In addition, academic studies and NGOs have addressed children's employment and educational problems in seasonal agricultural work. Despite existing legislation and supportive policies to protect children's rights, child labor in agriculture remains widespread. Research highlights the inadequacy of existing detection and monitoring systems and their inability to effectively address the problem, and that many children work in precarious conditions that hinder their academic and personal development. For example, in 2016, Meral Uysal, Fevziye Sayılan, Ahmet Yıldız, Eylem Türk, Nuray Türkmen, and Nurcan Korkmaz produced a paper entitled 'Basic Education Problems of Children of Seasonal Agricultural Workers'. This comprehensive research project was conducted in different provinces, including Ankara, Adana, Manisa, Ordu, Diyarbakır, and Şanlıurfa. The study examined the educational challenges faced by the children of seasonal agricultural workers, and the findings revealed alarming facts. In

addition, international humanitarian organizations such as the ILO, UNICEF, UTZ, and other civil society organizations are working to end child labor and protect children in agriculture. Since 2014, a social initiative, the Development Workshop Cooperative (Kalkınma Atölyesi) has been dedicated to enhancing the working and living conditions of seasonal migrant workers in agriculture, addressing child labor in the sector, and alleviating poverty and deprivation in rural and urban settings. They have published a range of materials focused on interventions for children impacted by seasonal agricultural migration, local capacity building, the roles of stakeholders in the hazelnut harvest, and the experiences of foreign migrant workers.

In parallel, professional organizations have been conducting advocacy campaigns on the working and living conditions of seasonal agricultural workers and the risks they face. For example, the Turkish Medical Association and the Medical Chambers carry out advocacy work to inform stakeholders and the public and to ensure that occupational safety measures are up to date. The Chamber of Agricultural Engineers (ZMO) also raises public awareness of the threats and risks to the health of seasonal agricultural workers. In its 2016 report on the hazelnut sector in Türkiye, the ZMO addressed the challenges faced by hazelnut producers and made recommendations for the sector. The report also highlighted that professional organizations welcomed efforts to improve housing conditions and eliminate child labor. However, persistent problems related to low wages and social security need to be addressed.

Academic institutions and the media are also improving their knowledge and expertise in this area through meetings and publications. Universities can promote examples of research and practice through faculties and other academic units. Social science literature can also address the issue in a multidimensional way, following the changing approaches and their links to public and political interests. The UNFPA-funded Seasonal Agricultural Workers' Health Promotion Program at Harran University between 2011 and 2015 is one example. Unfortunately, such studies are usually conducted with external funding and need to be more sustainable. Similarly, the mass media is also important in terms of making seasonal agricultural workers visible, providing accurate information, and raising public awareness of the issue. However, the media usually puts seasonal agricultural workers on the agenda with road accidents, living conditions, floods, and similar disasters. Similarly, the opening and

closing of schools and children not being able to attend classes are often reported in the media. There are also serious problems of gender discrimination and child labor among seasonal agricultural workers. These serious problems are rarely highlighted by the media. However, the media is powerful enough to make their voices heard. More importantly, the media should encourage seasonal agricultural workers to defend themselves.

In conclusion, there is a need in academic literature for a legal framework for seasonal agricultural workers. It is also important to evaluate the poverty alleviation policies implemented by central and local governments to support these workers. Therefore, there is still a need for academic research to reveal the relationship between seasonal agricultural workers and their living conditions with poverty and exclusion. This research aims to show how local governments have reduced and could reduce poverty in seasonal agriculture. It also aims to demonstrate the importance of local government in reducing poverty among vulnerable or marginalized groups, especially given the increased roles and responsibilities given to local governments in recent years. In this context, it aims to provide comprehensive analysis, practical insights, and strategic recommendations for policymakers at the local level. Thus, this study aims to reveal the necessary knowledge and tools to implement strategies that will improve and support this community.

1.3. Research Design

Within the scope of the Prime Ministry Circular No. 2017/6 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers, Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Eskişehir, Konya, Manisa, Ordu, Giresun, and Düzce were selected as pilot provinces. In those provinces, action plans were submitted to establish temporary settlement areas to be started by the governorships. Governorships were authorized to implement policies under the Circular for seasonal agricultural workers. In that sense, legal regulations assign duties and responsibilities to the responsible public institutions. However, due to a lack of sufficient information for local governments and a lack of encouragement from central governments to local governments, only a few METİP areas have been established. There are METIP areas

in Adana, Ordu, and Ankara provinces, and workers intensively use these areas. Sarıoba METİP Settlement in Polatlı has been recognized as a model initiative by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

The METİP Settlement, located in the Sarıoba neighborhood of the Polatlı district in Ankara province, has been chosen as the field study site for this thesis. This area was selected due to noteworthy progress in project developments and proximity to the researcher, who made visits practical. In determining the study area, the researcher reviewed official social media accounts, institutional websites of local governments in the pilot provinces, news reports from newspapers, television, and other media sources, and NGO reports. The field study included visits to seasonal agricultural workers residing in the Sarıoba METİP Settlement, where direct observations conducted.

The snowball sampling method, a widely utilized technique in social research, was a crucial approach in this thesis. This method begins with identifying a small group of initial participants who meet the specific criteria set for the study. These participants are then encouraged to refer additional individuals who qualify, creating a chain of referrals. As this process unfolds, each new participant can suggest others from their social circles, effectively harnessing personal networks to cultivate a more substantial sample size. Snowball sampling proves especially beneficial when researching populations that are difficult to reach—such as marginalized groups or those who may have reasons to distrust outsiders. The method fosters a sense of familiarity and trust, as participants often feel more comfortable through mutual connections. Moreover, it allows individuals who prefer to remain anonymous to participate without fear of exposure.

The snowball sampling methodology was chosen for the thesis due to its effectiveness in gathering rich data from these hard-to-access populations, ensuring the final sample is meaningful and representative of the targeted demographic. Additionally, before embarking on her field study for this thesis, the researcher dedicated her time to volunteering and gaining professional experience in various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Thanks to this, she took the opportunity to observe firsthand

the living and working conditions of seasonal agricultural worker families across diverse geographical settings, gaining insights into their daily challenges and lifestyles. Through these engagements, she developed a robust network of social connections that proved invaluable when constructing a representative sample.

This study aims to critically evaluate existing legislation designed to improve the housing and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers and their families, specifically from the perspective of local governments. It delves into the essential role that local governments play in poverty alleviation, a responsibility both intrinsic and mandated by legal frameworks. As part of this exploration, the research seeks to assess the practicality of implementing these responsibilities effectively. The discussion centers around identifying potential challenges and legal gaps that could hinder the successful execution of these policies, shedding light on the complexities of ensuring better conditions in the agricultural sector.

The primary purpose of this study is to emphasize the importance of local governments in poverty reduction policies, given the increasing number of responsibilities and roles assigned to local authorities in recent years. In this context, local governments have specific roles to improve seasonal agricultural workers' lives and work conditions. The study's main subject is revealing the local authorities' responsibilities in poverty alleviation through service provision. To make this concrete, METİP Settlement in the Polatlı district of Ankara city was visited and observed.

Over three months, the researcher visited the field multiple times to observe the workers' daily lives. These observations and firsthand experiences will contribute significantly to the thesis. The researcher's observations and field feedback will inform discussions throughout the thesis. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted with multiple local organizations in Polatlı, including the Municipality, the District Governorship, the District Directorate of Labor, and Employment Agency (İŞKUR), and the District Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry in Polatlı. These interviews focused on the implementation of poverty alleviation policies for seasonal agricultural workers.

Table 1 *List of Key Informants*

Key Informants	Position	Type of the Institution
Interviewee 1	Civil Servant in Social Services Department	District Municipality
Interviewee 2	Local Manager in Rural Services and Mukhtar Affairs Department	District Municipality
Interviewee 3	Registry Manager	District Governorship
Interviewee 4	Civil Servant in Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation	District Governorship
Interviewee 5	Civil Servant	District Directorate of Labor and Employment Agency
Interviewee 6	Civil Servant	District Directorate of Agriculture and Forestry
Interviewee 7	Mukhtar	-
Interviewee 8	Social Worker	NGO

1.4. The Structure of the Thesis

Following this chapter presenting the study's aim and scope, chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework of the study to understand the background of seasonal agricultural workers. In the first section, changing agricultural structures will be examined with reference to technological improvements and the development of capitalism in the last century. Second, smallholders or landless farmers will be discussed because of their dominance in seasonal agricultural work. In the third section, rural poverty will be examined as the cause of migration for seasonal agricultural jobs. In the fourth section, migrant workers will be mentioned because of the increasing number of migrants in the seasonal agricultural sector. Finally, the last section discusses the roles of local governments in the fight against poverty in the new period. It also comprises a conceptual framework in which traditional and contemporary perspectives on the relationship between local governments and poverty

alleviation, the study's main subject, will be presented together.

Chapter 3 begins by reviewing the relevant literature to examine the current situation of seasonal agricultural labor in Türkiye. Then, the legal framework and responsible institutions will be mapped out. In order the situate the Turkish context, this chapter will also present the current conditions of seasonal farm labor globally. It will continue with a theoretical as well as historical background of seasonal agricultural workers.

Chapter 4 provides the general information about the Sarıoba METİP settlement as well as Polatlı district to set the ground to discuss the field study findings. The findings of the research entail a discussion about the roles of local governments in poverty alleviation. This discussion will also address the inefficiencies of the institutional framework and policy initiatives.

Chapter 5, Conclusion will first summaries the discussion on the role of the municipalities to target the local poverty especially stemming from the seasonal migration of the workers. This chapter also provides insights into further research agenda.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The complexities of poverty in the seasonal agricultural sector necessitate thoroughly examining its historical realities and underlying factors. In that sense, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that shape the experiences of seasonal agricultural workers, framed within a robust theoretical context. For that aim, this chapter establishes a conceptual framework addressing critical aspects of the industry, beginning with an analysis of changing agricultural structures influenced by technological advancements and the evolution of capitalism over the past century.

It then examines the historical context of smallholders and landless farmers, who have been pivotal in the seasonal agriculture workforce. Additionally, the relationship between rural poverty and migration patterns for seasonal employment is explored, highlighting the socio-economic forces driving individuals to seek opportunities beyond their localities. As the number of migrant workers continues to rise within this sector, it becomes imperative to address the implications of this trend on the workforce and local communities.

Finally, this chapter evaluates the roles of local governments in combating poverty, integrating both traditional and contemporary perspectives on their involvement in poverty alleviation efforts. Finally, the last part discusses the roles of local governments in the fight against poverty in the new period. By weaving together these interconnected themes, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges of seasonal agricultural workers and the local policies addressing their needs.

2.1. Changing Agricultural Structures

Agricultural activity plays a crucial role in shaping life in rural areas. It is a critical

economic driver and an essential aspect of cultural identity. Agriculture provides vital livelihoods, supports local economies, and significantly influences communities' traditions, customs, and social dynamics. Over the past century, the agricultural sector in rural areas has undergone significant changes, primarily due to technological advancements. These changes have transformed farming practices, leading to a shift toward commercial agriculture. The transition from traditional farming methods to modern approaches has altered the social fabric of rural communities, impacting both farming practices and the relationships among community members. Consequently, the evolution of agriculture in these areas highlights the complex relationship between economic growth and cultural continuity, reshaping the agricultural landscape and redefining the essence of rural life.

Animal power and mechanization complemented each other, as agricultural machinery was not widespread at the beginning of the 20th century. This period was characterized by low productivity and efficiency, with labor-intensive agricultural practices that relied heavily on natural and climatic conditions. However, after World War II, agricultural reforms in developed countries transformed the role of agriculture in the economy and society. By the end of the 20th century, farming had integrated into the modern market economy. Even farms or agricultural enterprises that continued to use traditional methods and were family-owned had to sell their products in the open market and adapt to the capitalist economy's demands.

Additionally, integrating agricultural systems into the global economy strengthened the connection between farming and industrial growth. This situation can be traced back to developments in the 17th and 18th centuries, which laid the groundwork for the emergence of early capitalist structures—as a result, the 19th century witnessed the gradual dissolution of tribal land structures and other forms of land ownership. Examining the British development model can provide valuable insights into this integration. The preceding agricultural revolution laid the groundwork for significant industrial development in 18th-century England. The introduction of turnips, which required minimal capital for rotation techniques to boost yields, significantly increased agricultural productivity. As a result, the existing labor force was liberated, enabling capital formation. Consequently, technological advancements in agriculture spurred

industrial growth and the expansion of capitalism.

After World War II, principles such as specialization became crucial for increasing productivity, particularly in agriculture. The focus shifted to producing goods efficiently, specializing in certain crops, and investing labor in agricultural production alongside mechanization and improvements in infrastructure. Increasing productivity led to the establishment of more significant farming regions and the development of commodity chains for marketing purposes. Particularly after the 1950s, agricultural production saw substantial increases, driven by the desire for rapid growth in global markets and rising food demand. These developments, which began in the late 1950s, as commonly called the Green Revolution, characterized by the increased use of fertilizers, chemicals, pesticides, and advanced machinery in farming practices. As a result, agricultural production dramatically increased, improving the potential for crop growth.

The 1960s also marked the introduction of combine harvesters in agriculture, while the first genetically modified crops were planted in 1982. During this time, advancements were made in animal nutrition and breeding, cultivated areas were expanded, and agricultural science progressed. Additionally, new machinery and commercial approaches to agriculture emerged. However, the 1980s experienced an economic crisis due to the overuse of non-renewable energy resources, as the world economy consumed increasingly more oil to fuel industrial growth in the 1950s and 1960s. Dependence on limited natural resources leads the world towards unsustainability over time. As a result, the diminishing availability of oil resources and its effect on prices present considerable challenges to the global economy.

By the late 1990s, innovations such as GPS-controlled sprayers, telematics-monitored fields, and computer programs for processing agricultural data emerged. Unlike previous eras, the drive for higher productivity, efficiency, and sustainability relied on digitalization. This era also saw remarkable achievements in engineering, where knowledge began to overshadow machinery. During these years, agriculture evolved into a crucial component of capital production while serving as a source of raw materials for industry and food for consumers. To ensure the sustainability of agriculture, which played a vital role in the economic system, governments

implemented various interventions, including supportive policies, subsidies, and outright purchases of farm products. Overall, this evolution in production fostered a growing consensus that market orientation and targeted incentives represent the most effective strategies for achieving agricultural economic growth.

As agriculture experiences significant transformations, the relationships surrounding agricultural production have dramatically shifted towards commodification. This change has altered traditional labor dynamics and distanced rural areas from their historical economic and social foundations. Pre-capitalist production models are increasingly yielding to capitalist demands. As a result, land tenure systems, traditional production relationships, and peasant lifestyles are becoming integrated into a broader capitalist framework, reshaping the landscape that was once familiar to pre-capitalist production systems. This shift has severe social and spatial implications for landless peasants. Therefore, these changes in agriculture represent a substantial development in rural areas, fundamentally transforming farming practices and community life.

Integrating peasantry into capitalist systems creates a complex and diverse landscape that varies significantly from one country to another. This arises from the unique characteristics of traditional production systems, social relationships, and land tenure arrangements in different regions worldwide. In nations experiencing late-stage capitalism, such as Türkiye, the effects of these transformations are particularly pronounced. Ongoing social restructuring is evident, with policies aimed at enhancing competitiveness often worsening rural poverty. Smallholder farmers, who have long been rooted in traditional lifestyles, increasingly struggle to survive in a market dominated by multinational corporations focused on profit. As a result, these farmers are compelled to abandon their age-old practices. Many peasants find it challenging to survive on dwindling landholdings, leading to widespread impoverishment, and forcing them to leave their rural homes to search for opportunities in the industrial and service sectors. This marginalization drives many to seek better prospects in urban areas, further intensifying rural poverty and creating a cycle of displacement and economic strain (Öztürk, 2008).

The World Bank also underscores the vital importance of agriculture in the economies of developing countries, highlighting the essential link between agricultural growth

and overall economic prosperity. This connection suggests that the agricultural sector's performance is closely related to broader social and monetary policies impacting the economy. As agricultural productivity rises, it enhances farmers' income and livelihoods while stimulating advancements in various other economic sectors. Key industries such as transportation, business services, and construction heavily rely on thriving agricultural production. For instance, improved agricultural yields create a need for better transportation networks to deliver goods to market, and increased demand for farm products can drive the construction of new facilities for processing and storage.

Recent technological advancements and improved international trade have boosted global agricultural productivity. Farmers utilize precision farming, advanced irrigation, and biotechnology to enhance yields and optimize resources. Furthermore, they enable farmers to access and participate in global markets, expanding their selling opportunities and fostering competition. Agricultural households play a vital role in this complex ecosystem. They typically have diverse consumption patterns that include not only essential food items but also a variety of goods such as textiles, clothing, and construction materials. This broad demand generates a ripple effect throughout the economy, stimulating growth in multiple sectors, including manufacturing, retail, and services, all interconnected with agricultural production.

The main goal of agricultural development initiatives is to effectively integrate smallholder farmers and landless individuals into growing food markets (Byerlee, De Janvry, Klytchnikova, Sadoulet, & Townsend, 2009). These groups often face considerable obstacles that prevent them from entering the farm sector, which in turn hampers their ability to improve their livelihoods. To tackle these challenges, programs focus on several key strategies to empower these communities. One of the top priorities is to enhance access to vital resources such as land, water, seeds, and other agricultural inputs. Also, targeted training programs equip farmers with modern agricultural methods, sustainable farming techniques, and essential financial literacy skills. Smallholder farmers can boost their productivity and income with improved knowledge and capabilities.

Also, creating decent employment opportunities beyond traditional farming roles will

promote the growth of rural non-farm economies, encourage local entrepreneurship and income diversification, and support small businesses, handicrafts, and services that meet community needs. The initiatives also focus on improving agricultural practices and providing comprehensive market information. By offering insights into market trends, prices, and the demand for various crops, farmers can make informed decisions about what to plant and when to sell. Bridging this information gap allows farmers to engage more effectively with food markets, ensuring they receive fair product prices. As farmers gain better access to markets and resources, they can gradually reduce their vulnerability to financial shocks, climate change, and other external pressures. It promotes an inclusive and sustainable rural ecosystem, supporting long-term social and economic growth while empowering vulnerable groups in their communities.

As countries move away from reliance on agriculture, they are increasingly focusing on developing their manufacturing and service sectors. This shift leads to significant transformations in economic interactions and societal relationships. The transition has profound implications for employment patterns as traditional agricultural jobs decline, resulting in new manufacturing, technology, and service opportunities. However, this shift often requires a skilled workforce, prompting investments in education and vocational training to equip individuals with the necessary skills for the new job markets. Consequently, the evolving economic landscape affects social dynamics as communities adapt to these changing employment opportunities and sources of income. This adaptation is evident in urbanization, with individuals migrating from rural areas to cities for better livelihoods, influencing urban development and infrastructure needs.

Governments are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversifying their economies beyond agriculture. This awareness leads to developing and implementing economic policies that promote industrialization, infrastructure development, and investment in technology and innovation. While the initial focus on agricultural development is essential for enhancing food security and stabilizing rural economies, this broader shift toward industrialization can stimulate economic growth, improve living standards, and promote sustainability in rural areas. This comprehensive

transformation addresses immediate financial needs and establishes the foundation for long-term resilience and prosperity in developing economies.

2.1.1. Landless and Smallholder Farmers

Throughout history, agriculture has been essential in meeting human needs and is intricately linked to the changing landscape of economic, social, and political influences. A significant transformation occurred between the 16th and 19th centuries when capitalist social relations began to impact rural areas, extending beyond industrial centers (Bernstein, 2017). This wave of modernization altered agricultural practices and changed the social dynamics within rural communities, leading to significant shifts in how these groups functioned and interacted with one another. As a result, the terms "peasant" and "farmer" were redefined in the twentieth century. They no longer referred solely to traditional farming methods and rural lifestyles; these terms expanded to encompass a broader range of social and economic realities. Today, identifying as a "peasant" or "farmer" involves numerous factors, including the nature of subsistence agriculture and the complex labor relationships within households (Bernstein, 2017).

The opportunities and challenges landless or smallholder farmers face vary depending on agricultural capitalist structures and the internal dynamics of their communities. Smallholder farmers directly produce goods, own their means of production, and rely on their labor for their livelihood, primarily sustaining themselves through subsistence farming (Arslan, 2021). According to Bernstein, a significant trend is the commodification of production and labor relations, which forces landless and smallholder farmers to rely on the market for their income (Bernstein, 2017). Another critical issue is the dispossession of these farmers, driven by class distinctions, which can result in them becoming wage workers. Capitalism encourages the continuous accumulation of capital by integrating labor into agricultural production. Consequently, smallholder farmers who lose their land may become a source of cheap labor for large-scale farm operations.

The evolution of the concept of peasantry is intrinsically linked to the encroachment of capitalist relations in agriculture, leading to profound consequences for farming

workers and their market engagement. A pressing issue arising from this transformation is the increasing detachment of peasants from their ancestral lands, a stark reality resulting from the pervasive influence of capitalism in once-traditional rural domains. This disconnection raises urgent and multifaceted agricultural concerns, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of these changes. The history surrounding the decline of the peasantry is, therefore, not merely a story of economic shifts but a complex narrative intertwined with enduring social transformations. To fully grasp the extent and implications of this transformation, one must delve into the intricate web of social relations that have shaped and continue to influence agricultural practices and rural life.

In developing countries, the gradual decline of land-based livelihoods is primarily due to the erosion of traditional smallholder household production and labor relations in rural areas. This situation triggers processes of land dispossession. As a result, the agricultural labor force must seek alternative means of livelihood, breaking free from pre-capitalist production systems. While some smallholder farmers still depend on their small plots of land, many have migrated to large cities, a trend that is unavoidable for numerous landless farmers. However, the lack of infrastructure in major urban centers to accommodate this influx of workers leads to their concentration on the outskirts, making them vulnerable to various socioeconomic challenges.

The capitalization process in developing countries differs significantly from that in developed nations. Since the late 1960s, many Asian countries have achieved remarkable agricultural growth rates, partly due to the "Green Revolution," which transformed wheat and rice production, turning these nations into food exporters. However, the benefits of this growth have yet to reach most rural areas, and there is little evidence that the vulnerability of the rural poor has diminished. Due to poor ecological conditions and inadequate water supply, regions like India and Pakistan need help to keep pace with technological advancements. As a result, a sizable portion of the labor force has migrated to cities for better job opportunities and income. Additionally, the issue of landlessness in many Asian countries stems from land concentration and the dominance of smallholdings.

In many Asian countries, traditional labor relations continue to play a crucial role in

the market system, often manifesting as a sharecropping system that resembles feudal traditions. Landless sharecroppers work on small plots of land owned by landowners. Consequently, developing countries experience various pathways to market adaptation due to these traditional relationships and cultural and geographical differences. Many landless peasants become sharecroppers or wage workers in Pakistan and India. As a result, the experience of becoming an agricultural laborer can vary widely among developing nations. Furthermore, there has been a notable increase in this phenomenon in some regions; for example, in the southern states of India, the growth rate of landless wage labor in the agricultural sector over the past twenty years has outpaced that of the overall agricultural labor force (Khan, Chaudhry, & Qureshi, 1986). That shows that only a few large farms permanently employ workers in these countries.

In a peasant economy where family labor is pivotal to survival, access to land emerges as a cornerstone for securing a livelihood. This connection between land tenure and essential resources underscores the fundamental right to food and gainful employment for rural communities. With the widespread commercialization of agriculture, the intricate dynamics between job availability, food prices, and wage levels have become increasingly evident. In many rural regions, the scarcity of viable job opportunities, coupled with persistent poverty, has compelled numerous individuals to accept low-wage employment, often in precarious conditions. Consequently, landless populations and smallholder farmers are positioned as potential sources of inexpensive labor, catering to agricultural and urban sectors' demands.

Discussions about land reform are essential for addressing several interrelated issues. The World Bank defines land reform as the regulation of land use and intervention in land tenure systems to alter the framework of land distribution. This definition calls for examining the broader context of production relations in various societies. The primary goals of land reform are to enhance agricultural productivity and maximize the diverse benefits that societies gain from land resources (Burns, 2007). From this perspective, a key objective of land reform is to dismantle long-standing pre-capitalist structures that persist in modern social environments. This process aims to redistribute land in a way that systematically undermines wealthy landowners, who often hold disproportionate power and influence over land resources (Bilir, 2012).

In areas where capitalist production relations are not fully established, land inequality often disproportionately affects the most vulnerable groups, such as landless individuals and smallholder peasants. These communities frequently lack access to land and opportunities for profitable agricultural practices, which traps them in cycles of poverty. Therefore, for land reform to be effective, it is crucial to consider the historical, cultural, and social values of the societies that inhabit these lands. Understanding these communities' unique historical contexts and specific needs will determine the success of land reform initiatives and their ability to create sustainable and equitable agricultural systems. By tailoring reforms to the distinct characteristics of each region, stakeholders can develop strategies that empower marginalized groups while promoting overall productivity and social equity.

Since the early 1950s, rapid population growth in many countries has significantly affected rural households. A notable decrease in mortality rates has contributed to this increase. This population surge has influenced agricultural production and the well-being of these families. In circumstances where small land plots are the primary livelihood source, children become vital assets for peasant families. Larger family sizes are often needed to provide labor, an essential income source. It creates an economic incentive to have more children, as larger families increase the available workforce for farming, allow for the upkeep of more livestock, and provide security for parents in their old age. For example, in countries like Brazil, smallholder farmers have opted to have more children due to the uneven distribution of land ownership. As a result, unplanned population growth has contributed to rural poverty.

The narratives of seasonal agricultural workers vary widely based on individual experiences and backgrounds, but they share a common struggle against poverty. This issue is particularly prominent in many Latin American countries, where seasonal workers have significantly increased employment, often at the expense of permanent positions. Several interconnected factors contribute to this trend, reflecting broader economic and social shifts. Firstly, advancements in mechanization and agricultural technology have transformed farming. Large-scale agricultural enterprises can now meet their seasonal labor needs with machines, reducing the financial burden typically associated with hiring and maintaining a workforce of temporary workers. This shift

lowers operational costs and boosts productivity, enabling farmers to adapt quickly to changing demands.

Secondly, rapid population growth in these regions has resulted in an oversupply of labor. With more people searching for jobs, the reliance on seasonal workers has become increasingly common. The abundance of potential workers allows farms to find seasonal workers without significant training or job security investment, further entrenching the preference for temporary over permanent staff. Lastly, the complexities surrounding labor organization and representation impact this dynamic. By opting for temporary or migrant labor, employers can more easily circumvent regulations regarding labor conditions and minimum wage laws. This approach undermines workers' rights and decreases the likelihood of widespread unionization, as temporary workers often need more stability and solidarity for effective organization.

Many low-income families in rural areas face significant challenges and often rely on seasonal or low-paying jobs. Employment opportunities typically depend on the household's demographics and the condition of the land. In Brazil, numerous landless households fulfill the demand for seasonal labor on large farms near cities. Similarly, in Peru, there is a seasonal migrant labor force that moves between rural and urban areas. In developing countries like India and Pakistan, seasonal agricultural workers mostly consist of landless individuals or smallholder farmers who have migrated from rural regions. Although they have left their rural homes, many struggle to find permanent employment in urban settings, working in temporary or seasonal jobs. In summary, while the individual stories of seasonal agricultural workers vary, they collectively highlight the harsh realities of poverty and the systemic challenges within the agricultural labor market. Interconnected factors such as technological advancement, demographic trends, and the complexities of labor organization continue to shape their experiences and the overall landscape of agricultural employment.

2.2. Rural Poverty and Migration

Poverty is a condition in which individuals lack the essential resources needed to

sustain their livelihoods. In the social sciences, academic literature presents various definitions of poverty based on different criteria. One widely recognized definition is "absolute poverty," defined by the World Bank (Decerf, 2022). This concept refers to an individual's ability to maintain life, particularly the necessity of being adequately nourished for survival. According to this definition, individuals who do not earn enough income to meet their basic needs live below the absolute poverty threshold. The term "absolute" emphasizes the minimum level of nutrition, or calories, required for survival.

In contrast, "subjective poverty" examines the relationship between financial hardship and the minimum standard of living deemed acceptable by society (Ravallion, 2012). This perspective is informed by surveys investigating individuals' perceptions of their living situations. The primary aim of these surveys is to assess whether a person's income is sufficient to support the level of consumption they believe is necessary for a decent quality of life. Researchers can establish a link between income and consumption patterns or overall well-being by analyzing participant responses. This analysis allows for defining a specific welfare level, providing a basis for determining a corresponding income threshold that effectively delineates the poverty line. Subjective poverty thus offers a more nuanced understanding of what it means to live in poverty within society.

Relative poverty on the other hand stresses the importance of viewing individuals as social beings (Decerf, 2022). This perspective emphasizes the need to examine patterns of distribution and income inequality. It shifts the focus from merely meeting basic biological needs to considering the minimum level of consumption or standard of living necessary for individuals to participate meaningfully in society. Poverty is a complex concept that evolves through comparisons among various social entities, such as societies, countries, and individuals. This comparative approach reveals that poverty is not merely about a person's resources; it arises from disparities in how those resources are distributed among distinct groups and regions. Individuals are considered "relatively poor" when their income falls below the minimum acceptable standard of living defined by their social context. Poverty stems from the unequal and inequitable distribution of resources produced by society, impacting individuals,

communities, and nations alike. This perspective encourages an exploration of how societal structures influence individuals' ability to thrive within their communities.

Current methods for assessing poverty are evolving to determine whether individuals genuinely benefit from the opportunities provided by public and social organizations. Poverty should not be viewed solely as a lack of income or material deprivation. Measurements of poverty must extend beyond this narrow perspective to encompass necessities such as nutrition, shelter, clothing, clean drinking water, and access to essential services like sanitation, electricity, healthcare, and education. It should also include sociocultural and political rights, such as the right to political participation, the expansion of fundamental rights and freedoms, and job security. This comprehensive approach leads to a more inclusive framework that effectively addresses poverty and social exclusion.

The classical sociological tradition primarily views poverty as economic hardship, focusing on material deprivation as the sole criterion. This narrow perspective often overlooks the psychological and cultural factors contributing to poverty. Poverty is not just about individual suffering but also a broader social issue. It signifies a lack of access to the routines of everyday life and a failure to meet societal standards. Although poverty has not received significant attention in sociology, its social implications—such as social exclusion, the emergence of an underclass, and marginalization—are critical areas of concern.

George Simmel, a German sociologist and one of the few to study poverty, argues that poverty is recognized as a distinct category only when society acknowledges it and defines specific individuals as poor. He emphasizes that individuals are shaped by their social environments and points out that poverty creates moral obligations for those who do not experience it. According to Simmel, when someone receives assistance, they become part of the low-income group. Thus, the connection among individuals in this group is based not on their interactions but on society's collective attitude toward them. Therefore, Simmel's insights significantly enrich the literature on poverty by recognizing it as a social phenomenon. To fully understand the concept of poverty, we must adopt a multidimensional approach that considers the cultural, economic, and moral factors influencing it.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) has extensively researched rural poverty, particularly employment dynamics. Their studies indicate that rural poverty is marked by visible and hidden unemployment within these communities. This issue is primarily driven by a significant decline in the agricultural sector in developing countries. As job opportunities in agriculture diminish, hidden unemployment becomes more apparent, increasing open unemployment and further compounding rural populations' challenges. Moreover, the ILO's analysis reveals a concerning trend: the growing impoverishment of rural communities, primarily linked to declining income levels. (ILO, 2008). In response to these findings, a comprehensive framework has been developed to clarify the complexities of poverty, beginning with the understanding that it often originates in rural areas. While rural poverty shares some similarities with urban poverty, this framework recognizes it as a distinct aspect of the broader poverty landscape. This distinction is crucial, as rural poverty requires targeted attention due to its unique forms and degrees of deprivation, significantly impacting the lives of those affected (Kartal & Demirhan, 2014).

It is essential to highlight that poverty studies often focus primarily on urban poverty, emphasizing the struggles of those living in cities and slums. However, rural poverty also merits equal attention, as rural residents face severe challenges related to inadequate income and a lack of necessities, such as food and shelter. Additionally, people living in rural areas typically have more limited access to essential public services, including education and healthcare, as well as technology and cultural activities, compared to their urban counterparts (Tekeli, 2000). For these reasons, it is crucial to pay special attention to the causes of rural poverty and to develop practical solutions and strategies for alleviating it. Analyzing the economic sectors in rural areas can provide insight into why individuals in these regions struggle to earn sufficient income, often working for low wages due to a lack of skills. Therefore, addressing poverty requires a primary focus on resolving issues specific to rural areas.

Understanding the intricate relationship between landlessness and rural poverty is a complex endeavor. several factors in communities characterized by agricultural practices may cause the persistence of poverty in rural areas. While some factors are directly tied to farming methods and productivity, it is crucial to recognize that not all

stems from the farming sector. The historical backdrop in which these diverse agricultural systems have evolved plays a significant role in shaping the connection between land ownership and rural poverty. Moreover, it is vital to acknowledge that relying solely on agricultural growth will not suffice to eradicate rural poverty. This challenge is multidimensional, as for many individuals and families residing in rural regions, their access to essential resources such as food and income is deeply intertwined with their ability to own and cultivate land. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is necessary for developing effective strategies to address the root causes of rural poverty.

Rural areas are characterized by intensive agriculture and livestock farming, strong local community ties, and a slower pace of specialization than urban areas. Poor households in these regions often depend on multiple sources of income to sustain their livelihoods. This reliance on diverse occupations is a crucial survival strategy. Many of these activities occur on small, often fragmented plots of land—owned or rented—while others involve selling labor within and outside the agricultural sector. The increasing number of rural households engaging in these activities highlights their significant challenges in improving their living standards within the current agricultural framework. Those lacking access to rural livelihoods are often compelled to migrate to other areas for work.

Increasing demographic pressure on land and stagnant agricultural productivity result in low-income and extreme poverty rates. Rural poverty is influenced not only by agricultural factors but also by non-agricultural growth, employment opportunities within the domestic economy, and changes in the global capitalist economy. Despite significant economic growth, poverty persists in many underdeveloped countries, especially in the agricultural sector. The same growth processes that generate wealth for some may perpetuate poverty for many rural populations. One of the main characteristics of rural poverty is landlessness, which varies across land tenure systems. In countries where non-agricultural sectors cannot absorb an expanding labor force at higher productivity levels, income and employment opportunities are tied to access to agricultural land. The high intensity of land use, the penetration of capital and technology, steady population growth, and the limited expansion of arable land are key factors contributing to landlessness and their dependence on wage labor in

many countries. Unless increased land productivity is accompanied by improved terms of trade or enhanced employment opportunities and wages, these households become increasingly vulnerable to poverty.

The challenges of seasonal agricultural workers are closely tied to the ongoing issue of rural poverty and the demographics of the labor force. They are primarily composed of landless individuals or small-scale farmers, many of whom come from economically disadvantaged rural areas. These workers often migrate in search of better opportunities due to a lack of options in their home communities, heading towards agricultural regions where the demand for labor is much higher. However, this pursuit of improved circumstances frequently exposes them to exploitation, which stems from historical injustices and systemic inequalities.

As mentioned, overcoming rural poverty is the most fundamental way to break the vicious cycle. However, reducing rural poverty is not sufficient. It is also essential to provide facilities such as education and healthcare, meet social and cultural needs, and bring other public services closer to rural communities. The state should strive to alleviate poverty effectively through its public institutions. Additionally, it is the state's responsibility to provide continuous support to those living below a certain standard of living, approached with the sensitivity expected of a social state. However, how is this direct and ongoing social assistance delivered, and what criteria matter? Focusing on direct aid in rural areas is crucial, as the cost of living above a particular standard is much higher in these regions. It is only one facet of the fight against poverty, which requires a comprehensive approach addressing all societal aspects. By addressing the factors contributing to the exploitation of seasonal workers, we may break this cycle and create a more equitable system that benefits all stakeholders.

The production-oriented approach to understanding the relationship between rural poverty and agricultural policy can limit the issue's scope. Nonetheless, many studies demonstrate that increasing production is essential for addressing this problem. Timmer suggests that the first step in breaking the cycle of poverty is to enhance agricultural productivity. The second step involves boosting domestic production, while the third is ensuring that agricultural sector gains are environmentally and economically sustainable (Timmer C. P., 1994). In other words, Timmer argues that

agricultural development is fundamental to reducing poverty. Therefore, managing the benefits derived from this sector should prioritize sustainable economic growth (Timmer C. P., 2002).

Additionally, growth within the agricultural sector is more advantageous for low-income individuals than growth in other sectors, as it employs many low-income workers and has strong linkages to different industries (Doğan, 2009). Although the agricultural sector's contribution to "pro-poor growth" will diminish during the transition from an agriculture-dominated economy to one focused on industry, agriculture still holds significant economic importance. Even as a low-income economy evolves into a middle-income one through structural transformation, agriculture continues to impact GDP due to its external benefits. While the role of agriculture in overall economic growth declines as economies develop, agricultural and rural development remains crucial for alleviating poverty and reducing inequality.

Improving product quality and productivity and enhancing practices in agriculture and livestock should ensure sustainability and alleviate poverty in local communities. This initiative is complex and multifaceted, requiring a comprehensive approach. Support should be provided to individuals in various areas to boost productivity and quality in agricultural production, helping to eradicate rural poverty. Such support includes vocational training, organizational development, agricultural infrastructure, extension services, access to banking and credit, processing and marketing assistance, storage and packaging solutions, production technologies, and entrepreneurship initiatives. Addressing these challenges can significantly reduce rural poverty (Byerlee, De Janvry, Klytchnikova, Sadoulet, & Townsend, 2009).

In conclusion, seasonal workers often face poor working conditions, including long hours, inadequate pay, and limited access to essential services such as healthcare and housing. This precarious situation makes them more vulnerable to working poverty, where individuals have jobs but still struggle to meet their basic needs. This cycle of hardship presents a significant challenge: rural poverty drives people to seek work in more prosperous areas, yet the economic realities they encounter after migrating can prolong their struggle for a better life. Despite economic growth in most developing countries, poverty persists, particularly in the agricultural sector. Landlessness remains

a primary characteristic of the rural people, adversely affecting their income and employment opportunities. To effectively address these issues, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of these dynamics for developing effective poverty alleviation strategies.

2.3. Subnational and Supranational Inequalities

In terms of etymology, the Latin prefix "supra" in compound words should not only be translated as "beyond" but more accurately as "above," serving as the antonym to "sub," which means "under" or "below" (Ruszkowski, 2010). Therefore, "supranational" refers to occurrences above nations or even states. According to Ruszkowski, supranationalism aims to regulate the uncontrollable impulses of national interests at the international level (Ruszkowski, 2010). This perspective does not impose strict limitations on cultural or national influences based on discrimination; instead, it posits that national differences cannot simply be confined to borders set by governments. One of the critical values of the supranational perspective is that it enables non-discrimination among nations, which is significant because it redefines the concept of borders between nations and the distinctions between nations and state, and even within nations themselves.

Inequality is a complex phenomenon that involves more than just differences in income among individuals. It is linked to income or wealth and access to essential services, education, and infrastructure. In the context of regional disparities, inequality can refer to varying levels of socioeconomic development. Consequently, policies addressing these regional disparities encompass various areas, including research, the environment, transportation, employment, social inclusion, education, and institutional capacity building. Therefore, tackling the core issues related to regional disparities is essential to foster a deeper understanding of poverty alleviation. Inequality has gained increasing attention on the public and political agenda, particularly considering political movements advocating for those who feel 'left behind' regarding economic, political, and social opportunities (Widuto, 2019).

In numerous countries, the likelihood of being impoverished or at risk of poverty is predominantly shaped by one's geographic location within the nation (Otero-Bahamon, 2009). Consequently, the subnational dimension of inequality can be more

pronounced in certain countries than others, yet it often needs to be addressed in research. Scholars in political science who examine inequality tend to concentrate primarily on individual income disparities. A persistent debate revolves around whether the current concepts, measures, and theories utilized to analyze income inequality adequately assess subnational disparities. Regional or subnational divides frequently manifest as social stratification, class distinctions, or racial and ethnic differentiation. It is common for individuals of a specific class, race, religion, or ethnicity to be concentrated in distinct regions. For example, in Türkiye, Kurdish and Arab minorities are situated in southeastern provinces such as Şanlıurfa, which also represent some of the most vulnerable populations regarding employment and educational opportunities. Thus, it is little wonder that a sizable percentage of Türkiye's seasonal farm workers hail from these regions. As a result, the likelihood of experiencing poverty or being at risk of poverty is heavily influenced by one's geographical location within the country.

As previously discussed, seasonal agricultural workers are often landless or part of smallholder households. Factors such as inadequate development plans and limited employment opportunities in their home regions contribute to their migration. Additionally, traditional land structures and socioeconomic conditions further influence this movement. Regional inequalities drive these individuals to seek job opportunities elsewhere. Many people who work in urban areas or migrate for employment also engage in seasonal agriculture. For instance, specific landless households in Brazil have become a vital source of low-wage labor, meeting the seasonal demands of large farms near urban areas. Most seasonal farm workers originate from rural regions, highlighting the disparities caused by differing levels of development across various areas. This situation is not limited to landless and smallholder farmers in Brazil; it also includes refugee populations, such as Mexicans in the USA.

The structural changes in agriculture, influenced by prevailing socioeconomic systems, have significantly impacted the current reality of smallholder farmers. In many rural areas, where tribal systems are dominant, land distribution often favors tribal members, leaving non-tribal individuals at a disadvantage. Historically, the land tenure system in these regions has had a feudal character, with rights and ownership

passed down through generations without meaningful change. This situation results from a combination of traditional practices and historical developments intricately linked to the unique socioeconomic contexts of various regions. These transformations have affected individual livelihoods and shaped the socioeconomic fabric of the communities involved. The ongoing interaction between history, culture, and policy continues to define the landscape of rural agriculture, creating a complex web of challenges and opportunities.

The traditional structure has been merged with the capitalist production system, and the landlords of the past are the representatives of the capital networks of the new conditions (Arslan, 2021). For example, inequality in terms of infrastructure has increased in places where irrigated agriculture has been introduced. However, the rich can become even more prosperous due to the unfair land distribution in the most irrigated areas. The opportunity to benefit more from the income is available to large landowners who own the land. As a result, although agricultural transformation has led to a significant increase in production, regional and international inequalities have continued to affect income distribution. This increase in production has not led to a structural transformation of the relations of production and ownership but rather to a difference in the intensity of commodification. In other words, social and traditional elements ensure that inequalities persist, even though modernization brings about a certain degree of standardization.

Many traditional agricultural societies have a long history of smallholder farming, but there has yet to be a significant distribution of inputs like fertilizers or modern seeds to these households. Most new agricultural technologies require physical input. For example, modern tractors, harvesting machines, or additional storage facilities may be necessary to prevent crop loss. Farmers must invest in resources such as fertilizers, new seeds, and machinery to benefit from these advancements. Smallholder farmers must be able to afford these required inputs and have the necessary resources on their farms. Therefore, formal rural credit systems must be accessible to smallholder households managing half a hectare of land or less. An effective marketing and distribution system is also essential for farmers to purchase these new inputs.

Capitalist market relations, which began to expand globally after the Second World

War, have significantly impacted production relations in rural areas and disrupted traditional social structures. Advancements in communication and transportation have increased economic and social interactions between regions and the rest of the world. It has led to a rise in migration to urban areas as people seek to escape the regional disparities exacerbated by these interactions. Additionally, geographical features, such as mountainous terrain and limited arable land, influence the rate of development in various regions. Regional characteristics, including transportation difficulties and a lack of industrial, commercial, and human resources, have also contributed to these disparities. Economic integration of rural areas with their surrounding regions and the challenges associated with adapting to this integration are significant factors contributing to the regional disparities observed today (Dogruel & Dogruel, 2003).

Subnational and supranational disparities can arise from factors like including the availability of internal resources. These resources encompass land, livestock, technical inputs such as fertilizers and machinery, investments in human capital through education, and differences in farm size. Each of these elements plays a significant role in influencing agricultural productivity, which in turn affects the pace of development in countries. Furthermore, the roots of these inequalities are founded in cultural traditions that shape social interactions, and the differing agricultural policies and development strategies implemented over the years. This discussion briefly examines how variations in the use of technical inputs and investments in human capital—such as education and training—impact productivity. It is noteworthy, especially as the amount of land available per worker continues to decline due to rising population pressure in rural areas.

Furthermore, it is essential to examine supranational inequalities to grasp why migrants engage in seasonal agricultural work. Economic and political factors that foster inequalities and security threats, such as conflict, significantly drive migration. Many migrants secure jobs in unstable sectors, particularly seasonal agriculture (Bayramoğlu & Bozdemir, 2019). Due to its structural characteristics and informal nature, the agricultural production sector offers crucial employment opportunities for migrants, primarily because it presents considerable potential for low-wage labor for producers.

Today, numerous countries rely on migrants to meet the labor demand in seasonal agriculture. For instance, many Syrian asylum seekers are employed in this sector in Türkiye. Following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011-2012, large groups of Syrians began migrating to neighboring countries such as Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. Since 2011, approximately 6.6 million Syrians have been displaced within Syria (UNHCR, 2018). Geographically, Türkiye hosts the most significant Syrian population in the world, and this number continues to grow daily (Oba Erdoğan, 2019). Due to their demographic profile and significant numbers, Syrian migrants represent a source of inexpensive labor across various sectors, particularly in agriculture. They primarily cultivate, harvest, and produce cereals, fruits, and vegetables, making them the largest seasonal migrant agricultural workers in Türkiye (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016).

The increasing number of asylum seekers may worsen the already challenging situation for seasonal migrant agricultural workers. Landowners tend to prefer migrant labor over local workers in the agricultural sector, which can lead to various social and economic issues, including poverty and informal employment. Given the structural problems within the agricultural sector, employing migrant workers will have negative consequences. For instance, landowners often seek to reduce production costs, which encourages reliance on cheap labor and can create long-term economic and social problems. Because migrants demand lower wages and lack access to social security, agricultural producers are inclined to hire them to fulfill their labor needs. Meanwhile, local workers are migrating to urban areas partly due to the competition posed by migrant labor. The influx of Syrians into the seasonal agricultural labor market has resulted in increased competition among low-income individuals, leading to heightened discrimination and potential human rights violations.

To summarize, the challenges and dynamics of smallholder farming in traditional agricultural societies highlight the need for accessible resources, such as modern seeds and machinery, to improve productivity. Since World War II, capitalist market relations have disrupted traditional social structures and worsened regional disparities influenced by geographical features and limited resources. These disparities are further exacerbated by inequalities in education and access to technical inputs, significantly impacting agricultural productivity and development. Also, the role of migrants in

seasonal agriculture is particularly emphasized, especially regarding Syrian migrants in Türkiye, who meet labor demands in an unstable economic sector. Therefore, addressing these systemic challenges is essential to enhance agricultural outcomes and improve the conditions for seasonal agricultural work.

2.4. Local Governments' Poverty Alleviation Policies

The circumstances of poverty cannot be estimated by static determinations as it lies in multidimensional relations. Instead, it is dynamic and continuously affected by several conditions culturally, historically, economically, and environmentally. For example, communities struggle with poverty due to economic instabilities in employment and inflation rates. Besides, fluctuations in labor markets or commodity prices affect local demographics as having significant impacts on livelihoods. Similarly, cultural, and historical values affect access to essential resources like education and healthcare, such as deficiency in girls' schooling. So, considering that poverty does not have a definite uniform, it varies significantly across different geographies and societies. This is because understanding poverty requires engaging deeply with individuals and communities and their life experiences.

However, although the experience of poverty varies from distinct factors, several fundamental principles guide governments in poverty reduction. These principles are decentralization, governance, and subsidiarity in service delivery. Adhering to these principles by enhancing institutional accountability is essential in addressing poverty reduction through policy interventions. In that sense, these principles guide the development of efficient and sustainable policies through the unique needs of local communities (Önen, 2010).

Decentralization is the process of establishing local governments within public administration to improve the delivery of public goods and services. It involves transferring responsibilities such as planning, resource management, and allocation from the central government to its agencies and lower levels. There are two main types of decentralization. The first type is known as deconcentration or delegation. In deconcentration, central institutions delegate certain powers to organizations located away from the central authority, allowing them to perform specific functions on behalf of the central government (Keleş, 2000, p. 19). This practice includes executing

activities by the central government through local institutions and organizations established in the provinces.

The second type of decentralization is local self-government, a system in which local communities are governed by their elected representatives. Local governments empower these elected bodies, established by law, with legal, political, and financial authority. It empowers local governments to perform functions beyond those assigned by law or the central government (Keleş, 2000, p. 19). For this reason, local governments are characterized by their elected decision-making bodies, which grant them the power to manage their affairs without external interference. This level of independence, along with their legal status, gives local governments a distinctly democratic character, and the principles of local autonomy and democracy arise from there (Keleş, 2000, p. 49).

A local authority or administration refers to a government unit that operates under the supervision of a local council. This is authorized to establish and execute rules and obligations within specific limits. In Türkiye, the three primary components of the general administrative system are municipalities, special provincial, and village administrations. Accordingly, local autonomy refers to a community's capacity to manage its local matters independently, utilizing its resources and structures. The relationship between local governments and the central government involves two main aspects; although local governments are expected to operate under the oversight of central authority, local autonomy should not be mistaken for complete independence (Keleş, 2000, p. 50). Hence, the idea that local governments manage their affairs and resources with full authority from the central government is highly debatable.

UNCDF, according to an approach based on each institution's comparative advantages, indicates that the principle of subsidiarity planning and implementation activities should be managed by the level of government closest to the grassroots (Bonfiglioli, 2003). This definition emphasizes the importance of empowering local governments to make decisions about their affairs, ensuring those responsible possess the most relevant knowledge and skills. According to the UNCDF, decentralizing governance structures helps to distribute authority, and fosters shared responsibility among central, regional, and local government institutions. While some interpret this concept as

"bringing services to the feet of the people," Keleş argues that it more accurately means providing localized and decentralized services; however, the central government is primarily responsible for ensuring these services are available (Keleş, 1995, p. 4). Considering Keleş's understanding, local governments, being the closest units to the public, are better suited to deliver local goods and services, particularly in efforts to reduce poverty.

In the past decade, national governments have dedicated limited resources to rural infrastructure (transportation, storage facilities, marketing networks, and social services (education, health, potable water, and sanitation, etc.). Rural development, particularly in agriculture, has been overlooked by economic policy, despite its significant contribution to national productivity. This might be intellectually elucidated by the perception among elites that agriculture embodies tradition and allegiance. Rural communities have lacked political influence in most countries, frequently overshadowed by the demands of metropolitan components. In that sense, engaging local populations in decision-making processes on infrastructure, public services, and valuable natural resources would enhance democratic decentralization.

Furthermore, local governments are essential for allocating resources effectively to align with the objectives and needs of the people affected by poverty (Bonfiglioli, 2003). Enhancing the efficiency of the delivery service is important for reducing costs, increasing savings, and improving the quality of the goods and services. Over the past fifty years, significant migration to urban areas has resulted in a rise in localized poverty (Batal, 2016). Local governments have recognized the importance of engaging in the newly arrived urban poor, who have moved from rural areas in search of better opportunities. This engagement positions local governments as crucial actors in reducing poverty. Proximity enables local governments to implement policies and programs that align with their communities' unique needs and poverty reduction efforts. Hence, localizing service delivery is important since it empowers local governments to lead efforts to reduce poverty.

Developing strategies through urban and rural planning, budgeting, and policy implementation is crucial to reduce poverty. In that sense, local governments can respond more quickly and effectively than central governments when making

decisions about local development. Because local authorities better understand their communities' needs by actively engaging with them. This power of knowledge assists local governments in providing effective and sustainable support to those in need. Accordingly, local governments have the potential to significantly affect the lives of vulnerable or marginalized communities by implementing policies to improve healthcare and educational services and employment opportunities while also advocating for their rights. These strategies are valuable for addressing the communities' challenges and empowering them.

Batal supports local development ideas by providing new job opportunities as a vital strategy to reduce urban poverty (Batal, 2016). In that sense, improving employment opportunities in urban areas through local governments is important to provide communities with essential income to achieve a minimum standard of living. Similarly, local initiatives that increase employment and promote sustainable local development are important to alleviate rural poverty. On the other hand, many low-income rural households demonstrate remarkable resilience and resourcefulness by engaging in diverse income-generating activities to survive. These activities include informal work, part-time work, and seasonal jobs, which relieve their financial risks and uncertainties. Hence, building a thorough understanding of these existing livelihoods to avoid inadvertently undermining them or fostering harmful dependence on external aid by any interventions is important for rural development strategies.

Yeşildal also supports the idea that creating employment opportunities through local development helps reduce rural poverty (Yeşildal, 2020). This requires local governments to raise policy decisions that align with the needs of vulnerable or marginalized communities. Local governments utilize local resources to reduce poverty through implementing local development policies. Also, it is crucial to advocate for rural communities' rights and support their access to public services. This approach contributes to harmonizing economic development and natural resource management with poverty reduction goals.

On the other hand, addressing poverty poses significant challenges for local governments for several reasons. Firstly, higher poverty rates tend to be more pronounced in rural areas, necessitating policy interventions aligned with the unique

needs of these areas. Also, poverty may be less visible to central governments than local governments, primarily focusing on specific geographic areas, such as counties, cities, and metropolitan regions. This difference results in gaps in the broader understanding of poverty's impact on the national level. Moreover, policymakers often prioritize economic growth, inadvertently leading to neglecting marginalized communities' fundamental needs and welfare (Yeşildal, 2020). The effectiveness of local government policies is significantly influenced by the resources at their disposal and the legal frameworks established by central governments regarding utilizing these resources.

In addition, local governments have an important capacity to create vocational training programs and social initiatives for seasonal agricultural workers. These programs allow the workers to acquire various skills related to their agricultural responsibilities, learn modern agricultural practices, and gain knowledge on financial literacy and using agricultural equipment. Several studies report that seasonal agricultural workers have low literacy without educational and vocational skills (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2013). Because of that, it is important to empower them through educational and vocational training. It is also important to manage awareness campaigns to inform seasonal workers about their rights, legal assistance, health care, and social protection. Such training and seminars support social empowerment by providing a platform for agricultural workers to express their problems and share their experiences.

Thus, even actions that may initially appear simple, like organizing informative meetings and awareness raising activities in easily accessible locations, significantly impact the community. These organizations contribute to fostering an inclusive atmosphere by thoughtfully selecting locations convenient for those facing transportation challenges. for example, actively encouraging and facilitating the participation of marginalized people in decision-making processes ensures that their voices are heard and their perspectives valued. This kind of approach not only empowers the community members but also strengthens the fabric of the community by promoting engagement and collaboration. Such efforts can resonate deeply, creating a sense of belonging and ownership among all community members. By incorporating feedback from individuals, it is important to build meaningful connections with these communities, developing more targeted and effective policies

that address their needs and challenges by local governments.

2.4.1. Policy Implementation and Coordination

Implementing local policy involves making and implementing decisions at the closest level of government. Local governments provide services to distinct levels of society in response to social needs and problems (ICMA, 2021). To provide these services effectively and efficiently, the coordination of policies set by local governments as a process carried out in cooperation with the central government becomes increasingly important. Local governments are inherently in harmony with the general policies of the central government in response to the needs of the people, to increase the appropriateness of their policies. As the problems at the local level tend to be more specific and regional in nature, local governments can be more flexible and faster in developing solutions to these problems. Nevertheless, interaction and coordination with the central government are crucial to local policy achievement. In this context, the implementation of policies at the local level and their coordination are of fundamental importance to produce effective solutions to the needs of society (ICMA, 2021).

Local governments coordinate closely with the central government in developing their poverty reduction strategies. Poverty reduction is possible through the effective implementation of policies set by the central government at the local level. While the central government sets a broad policy framework, it provides financial support to the local government in line with these policies. In addition, the central government supports local governments to implement projects more effectively through the provision of training, guidance, and monitoring services. This is because local and central government needs to share information if coordination is to succeed.

Local governments can inform the central government about local needs, existing social problems, and difficulties encountered in implementing. In turn, the central government receives feedback from the local governments to update and improve the policy. Policy implementation at both local and central levels is important to be made more efficient through such a flow of information. Also, reducing poverty through organizations, training and capacity-building programs is important to improve the

technical capacity of local governments. It provides knowledge and skills in public administration, resource management, social services, and project management. This will enable local governments to develop more sustainable projects that involve more people and make more effective use of the resources provided by the central government.

To increase the success of poverty reduction, it is important for central government to monitor and evaluate the policies implemented by local governments. This process aims both to assess how local governments are performing and to determine whether they need to change policies to reduce poverty. Through monitoring and evaluation, local governments can identify their achievements as well as the challenges they face. Furthermore, central government can make strategic changes through feedback on the effectiveness of local government projects. This process ensures that policies are constantly up to date and that improvements are made.

Furthermore, poverty reduction at the local level is a process to which not only local governments but also central governments are contributors. Considering that not only the expectations of the public but also the expectations of other local actors in policy development processes is crucial for local governments. These include business, civil society organizations, education, health, environmental organizations, and other groups that interact with local governments. Local governments need to consider and balance the interests of these different stakeholders to develop effective and sustainable policies.

Local governments seek to understand the needs and expectations of each stakeholder in policy implementation process. This process is usually achieved through meetings, cooperation, and partnerships between the public and private sectors at the local level. Local governments can create more inclusive and sustainable policies by considering the contributions of different stakeholders. This can make the decisions of the local government more acceptable to a wider range of stakeholders. For example, a local government's health policy should consider both the right of local people to a healthy life and the needs of health sector stakeholders. The coordination between stakeholders enables local governments to develop strategies that not only meet the needs of marginalized groups but also improve economic development, the environment, and

the education of the region.

In addition, local governments need to develop multidimensional policies to address poverty, as poverty is a multidimensional problem. By providing services in different areas such as education, health, employment, housing and social welfare, local governments can take important steps to reduce poverty. However, for these efforts to be successful, strong coordination with the central government is required. While the central government undertakes tasks such as providing resources, guidance, and policy coherence to local governments, it is local governments that should implement these policies at the local level, considering the needs of local people. Success in tackling poverty will be increased, and more sustainable solutions will be achieved through strong coordination and cooperation.

Local development initiatives and poverty reduction efforts are deeply intertwined with implementing gender-sensitive policies to protect vulnerable or marginalized communities and promote inclusive planning processes. It is crucial to incorporate a gender perspective into poverty reduction policies' formulation, planning, and management to create a more just and practical framework for development. This approach demands that the communities' unique needs and rights, particularly women, children, and disadvantaged people, be prioritized. Because these communities often struggle with structural barriers and become marginalized, especially when their voices and concerns are overlooked. By tackling their specific challenges—such as access to education, healthcare, and job opportunities, local development strategies are important to help break the cycle of long-term poverty. Consequently, embracing an inclusive approach by policymakers actively engaging with all stakeholders ensures that the development process reflects the community's specific needs.

In that sense, implementing poverty reduction strategies at the local level provides an opportunity to respond directly to the needs of rural communities. Ensuring local governments provide access to public services that respond quickly and effectively to their needs should be recognized as a critical step in reducing poverty (Bonfiglioli, 2003). In that sense, coordination and collaboration at the local level are crucial in providing public services that improve the living conditions of seasonal agricultural workers. As a result, the local government's implementation of poverty reduction

strategies among vulnerable or marginalized communities is directly associated with improving their housing and working conditions, quality of life, and overall well-being.

In summary, local policy implementation is not only a process of local government decision-making. It is also shaped by the demands of the local population, by local conditions and by the contributions of the stakeholders. Approaches that focus on social needs and stakeholders are helpful in our understanding of local government policy-making processes. These theories provide the necessary tools for local governments to develop policies that are sensitive to the needs of society and that are inclusive, flexible, and efficient. Through the application of these theories, local governments can be more effective in the management of society and in the acceleration of local development. Ensuring coordination with central governments, encouraging the participation of civil society and the private sector, and managing resources properly are important for the success of local policy implementation.

2.4.2. Governance and Collaboration

Local governance is becoming increasingly important within the welfare state as it promotes better interaction among local authorities, civil society, and the private sector. This collaboration helps create governance structures that are more inclusive, responsive, accountable, and transparent. Many believe democratic governance is essential for achieving sustainable development and alleviating poverty (Bonfiglioli, 2003). Furthermore, policymakers can develop coherent strategies by examining the interactions among various social services, economic programs, and environmental initiatives. This approach encourages collaboration among stakeholders, including non-profit organizations, businesses, and community groups, fostering a collective effort to build resilient and thriving local economies. Therefore, supporting and strengthening democratically elected local governments and establishing more inclusive, responsive, and accountable institutions is crucial. These efforts ultimately enhance democratic governance at the local level.

However, local governance is vital for promoting sustainable livelihoods and ensuring

the well-being of all community members. It also improves dialogue among local institutions, civil society, and the private sector. In that sense, UNCDF offers practical lessons to national governments and other development partners regarding pro-poor local governance models that align with broader policy initiatives (Bonfiglioli, 2003). In this context, it has developed the Local Development Program (LDP), a flexible strategic tool designed to support local development, decentralized natural resource management, and planning and financing efforts to reduce poverty. It recommends several measures for designing, supporting, and monitoring operational assistance for decentralization, particularly in impoverished rural areas.

The first recommendation is to empower low-income individuals by facilitating dialogue with local leaders and promoting civil society participation in setting development priorities. The second is to provide essential infrastructure to ensure that local investments align with the needs of impoverished populations are efficiently managed and are sustainable. It includes advocating for a decentralized, participatory approach to conserving and managing renewable natural resources.

The other recommendation for reducing poverty is to invest in local public and community initiatives. This approach focuses on creating social and economic infrastructure, developing services, and managing natural resources according to local demand. It is essential to acknowledge the leadership role of local governments in these development efforts and to empower them with control over the local development agenda, which will enhance their effectiveness. The ILO highlights that improving local government capacity should be a policy priority (ILO, 2008). With increased capacity, local governments are better equipped to include vulnerable groups such as women and children.

Over the past two decades, many countries have significantly restructured their governance frameworks by decentralizing authority to local governments. This strategic shift aims to create a more responsive and accountable governance model, allowing local entities to address the complex challenges of poverty in their communities more effectively. Moreover, significant changes in national regimes—such as reforms concerning political participation, freedom of expression, market dynamics, land use, and forestry practices—often occur alongside decentralization

initiatives. This decentralization presents opportunities for local governments to tackle poverty more effectively. As a result, local governments' development and implementation of poverty alleviation initiatives can vary significantly, reflecting rural communities' unique needs and characteristics.

The frameworks established by national governments heavily influence the effectiveness of local governance in shaping and implementing social policies. Understanding the complex dynamics that link local actions to national policies is crucial for developing effective strategies for poverty alleviation. The relationship between local initiatives and national directives can be intricate. Even when local governments act without formal approval from central authorities, maintaining a collaborative relationship with these higher levels of government is essential. Since central authorities establish local governments, they rely on these central entities' political oversight and technical support. These interdependencies emphasize the critical role of overarching governance structures in enabling local authorities to navigate the complexities of social policy development and execution.

However, the issue of local authority capacity is multifaceted. Central governments often need more technical competence to delegate significant authority to local institutions. Furthermore, central governments have faced criticism for overlooking the political needs of locally elected representatives (Bonfiglioli, 2003). Nevertheless, managing natural resources can benefit low-income individuals by ensuring their access to and control over these resources, educating them about their rights, and supporting market development (Jütting, et al., 2004). It is vital to mobilize all available resources to achieve sustainable development. In summary, these recommendations emphasize the need to identify existing and potential resources and improve the management of transfers from central government to local authorities.

Local governance is a management approach based on the principles of participation, transparency and accountability in decision-making and implementing processes. This concept refers to a process in which not only public authorities, but also civil society organizations, the private sector, local people, and other stakeholders are involved in governance, in contrast to the traditional understanding of local governance. Local governance has been developed with the aim of a more effective response to social

needs and an increase in the efficiency of service delivery. It is important that decision-making processes are based on a democratic basis in the local governance approach. By considering the needs and expectations of local people, local governments have the potential to develop more inclusive policies. In this context, the participation of local people in the decision-making process is important for the effectiveness of policies and the public's confidence in government. For example, a municipality can evaluate the success of policies' sustainability by seeking the views of local people and developing policies in line with their views.

Collaboration among the various stakeholders is another key component of local governance. More effective use of information and resources can be achieved through collaboration between local governments and civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector. Such collaboration plays a particularly key role in solving complex social problems. For example, in areas such as poverty alleviation or social service delivery, public-private partnership projects can yield successful results.

The effectiveness of coordination mechanisms is also critical in local governance. The success of local policies depends directly on a healthy flow of information and the sharing of resources between central and local governments. While the central government sets the overall policy framework, local governments are expected to develop and implement projects in accordance with these policies. However, the central government can provide training and financial support to build the capacity of local governments. Basic principles such as participation, transparency and cooperation are the most essential elements that determine the success of local governance processes.

Consequently, the strengthening of co-ordination between local and central governments and the exploitation of opportunities will contribute to the future success of local governance. Such an approach is a contribution to the strengthening of governance mechanisms at the local level. As a result, local governance brings together different segments of society and enables the development of more inclusive and sustainable policies.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS IN TURKEY

In the 1950s, Türkiye underwent a notable demographic shift as a surge in rural-to-urban migration led to the emergence of urban poverty. The development of the transport sector, particularly the construction of motorways after the Marshall Plan in 1948, played a crucial role in enabling peasants and farmers in rural Türkiye to become small producers by selling their products in the urban economy. This transition saw a significant decline in the rural population, with 75 percent residing in villages in 1950, decreasing to 61.5 percent in 1970, and further plummeting to 35.1 percent in villages by the 2000s (Ceylan, 2019). The changing landscape of agriculture resulted in the migration of the rural population to urban areas and a shift of the younger demographic to non-agricultural sectors. Consequently, the agricultural workforce comprised predominantly middle-aged workers with limited education (Özuğurlu, 2013), rendering them low-wage labor. The changes in rural production processes have significantly impacted Türkiye's urbanization and industrialization infrastructure. In that sense, the 1950s and 1960s marked a period of economic growth and social welfare despite continued state protectionism in the economy. Turkish agriculture became integrated into capitalist production processes during this time, facilitated by increased production of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, petrol, machinery, and pesticides.

The shift towards neoliberal policies in the aftermath of 1980 brought about substantial transformations in the global economic landscape. Emphasizing the free market led to the liberalization of international capital movements. It resulted in a notable reduction in the state's involvement in the economy through privatization and the gradual erosion of welfare state provisions and societal practices. Moreover, there was a noticeable

shift towards subjecting seeds and fertilizers to the free market forces. Developed nations commercialized production inputs and wielded major influence over the world's agricultural markets through their multinational corporations. These entities dominated the agricultural process, from seed acquisition to production, processing, and distribution (Aysu, 2008).

The rise of global capitalism following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s led to an increased worldwide influence of transnational corporations. During this period, Türkiye embraced neoliberalism at the institutional and diplomatic levels. The country's foreign policy in agriculture and the formulation of new agricultural policies were shaped by various international projects, including the WTO, the IMF, and the EU Customs Union agreements. As a result, agricultural input prices in Türkiye began to be determined by free market conditions. Additionally, agricultural and food trade underwent liberalization through restructuring agricultural credit and marketing cooperatives, which previously provided farmers with guarantees. (Keyder & Yenal, 2013). Increased interest rates accompanied this shift in agricultural loans, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the reduced minimum prices for agricultural products (Aysu, 2008). These changes represented a significant transformation for Turkish agriculture, introducing new privatization and import liberalization policies.

During the early 2000s, the globalized world saw a significant shift towards market dependency for all production sources while also witnessing the emergence of dominant market forces and global networks. In the international capital and trade environment, large companies monopolized world markets for agricultural inputs like fertilizers and pesticides, impacting the supply of agricultural products. Structural reforms mandated by global markets and their implementation made it increasingly challenging for small agricultural enterprises and workers to thrive (Ceylan, 2019). The Sugar Law, the Tobacco Law, limitations on price and purchase guarantees for farmers, reduced prices to compete globally, and the abolition of trade quotas have heightened farmers' vulnerability. These vulnerabilities exacerbate one another, making it challenging for farmers to sustain production and hastening rural decline. Furthermore, numerous unresolved structural issues in Turkish agricultural and employment policies were further strained by the 2001 economic crisis. This crisis

heavily impacted Türkiye's banking and financial sector, increasing unemployment and poverty. Additionally, the growing commodification of agricultural commodities like land, seeds, and labor challenges the independent production continuity in Turkish agriculture (Keyder & Yenal, 2013).

In Türkiye, thousands of people from the eastern and south-eastern Anatolia regions, where landless peasantry is widespread, are migrating in search of job opportunities. The inadequacy of agricultural sector policies and land distribution disparities are the primary reasons for this migration. The government has implemented various initiatives to boost agriculture and livestock and reduce development gaps between regions, such as the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP) and the Eastern Anatolia Project (DAP). While these efforts have contributed to production and economic growth in the region, unequal land distribution perpetuates a tribal structure, hindering equitable wealth distribution. Consequently, focusing solely on economic considerations in development policies without addressing its dimensions hampers fair income distribution. As a result of the adverse effects of the development projects in the agricultural sector, poverty persists in these regions.

The unequal distribution of land has long been a concern in Türkiye's political landscape. After the establishment of the Republic, the social structure was primarily influenced by a rural population comprised of landless or small-scale farmers. As a result of the agricultural changes, large landowners reaped disproportionate benefits. At the same time, landless or small-holding peasants were forced to work for other landowners or in low-skilled, unstable jobs such as cleaning and portering. The republic's economic progress was needed to integrate this peasantry into the new regime. That is, the advancement of the capitalist economy depended mostly on the liberation of the rural labor force. Consequently, land ownership and redistribution discussions held significant prominence during those years. Since the emerging economy was agrarian and most of the labor force consisted of peasants, various efforts were made to implement land reforms. However, the influence of landowners, who held considerable power in the political realm, resulted in attempts to carry out the process without fundamentally altering the agrarian structure.

The extent to which land reform initiatives transformed the existing land system

continues to be debated. In short, Türkiye enacted the most comprehensive land reform movement in the country's history, the Farmer Landing Law (Çiftçiyi Topraklandırma Kanunu), in 1945. However, this was a late date compared to developed European countries. Nevertheless, considering the political conjuncture of the period in which the law was prepared, the preparation of such a comprehensive law is quite remarkable. However, land reform discussions were primarily set aside with the government procrastinating and the start of World War II. Here, it is essential to remember that the labor force engaged in seasonal agricultural work is, in many ways, a continuation of the significant land reforms. Much of this labor force consists of landless or smallholder peasants who have relocated from the rural areas of eastern and south-eastern Anatolia. Despite bureaucratic attempts to redistribute land, substantial reforms have been lacking to address the underlying land issue. In summary, seasonal labor migration in Türkiye is not solely the result of ineffective agricultural policies. However, it is also deeply rooted in the historical circumstances shaped by traditional land ownership patterns.

It is crucial to consider the extent of seasonal labor participation within Türkiye's refugee and asylum-seeker community. While some migrant workers, such as those from Georgia who come to Turkey for hazelnut harvesting in the Black Sea region, engage in specific agricultural work during certain times of the year, there has been a notable increase in the employment of refugee and asylum-seeker migrants in agriculture in recent years. This rise can be attributed significantly to Türkiye's geopolitical position, which welcomes external migration. Although refugees from various countries reside in Türkiye, most seasonal agricultural workers are Syrian families who fled to Türkiye because of the civil war in Syria that began in 2011. The conflict has led 6.6 million Syrians to seek refuge in neighboring countries such as Türkiye, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq (UNHCR, 2018). As one of the most significant migratory movements of the 21st century, this refugee flow has predominantly been directed towards Türkiye because of its 'open door' policy. Millions of displaced Syrians have migrated to Türkiye due to its proximity and opportunities, including employment and security. While official records state that 5-6 million Syrians have migrated to Türkiye since 2011, academic studies and civil society organizations estimate the number to be closer to 7-8 million.

In terms of geographical distribution, Türkiye is currently home to the most prominent Syrian population in the world, and this number continues to increase. This significant influx of people requires closer attention from economic, social, political, administrative, legal, and urban perspectives. Due to their substantial population and numerical size, Syrian migrants provide affordable labor in various sectors, particularly in agriculture. Among seasonal migrant agricultural workers, Syrians represent a significant potential labor force. The provinces with the highest number of Syrians include Şanlıurfa, İstanbul, Hatay, Gaziantep, and Adana (Göç İdaresi, 2016). Syrian refugees primarily work in agricultural labor in the eastern and southern regions but contribute to non-agricultural production, construction, and service sectors. They cultivate and harvest cereals and produce and cultivate fruit and vegetables.

Many Syrians have turned to seasonal agricultural work as a form of migrant labor for low wages to provide for their families' basic needs. A field study conducted by the Development Workshop revealed that the growing presence of Syrians in seasonal agricultural production in Türkiye due to structural problems in the agricultural sector has negative impacts on the workers (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). According to the study, the influx of Syrians into the seasonal agricultural labor market has resulted in heightened competition among low-income individuals, as well as discrimination and human rights violations (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). They face challenges, including discrimination based on ethnic origin and lifestyle, from authorities, local people, or other migrants. Because of their vulnerability, they accept low-paid jobs. So, in the seasonal agricultural sector, where an increasing number of asylum seekers are employed, it is difficult to meet minimum wage standards.

The increasing influx of asylum seekers into the seasonal agricultural industry exacerbates challenges in establishing fair wages, destabilizing the wage equilibrium. As a result, seasonal agricultural work is gradually transforming into a low-wage sector, perpetuating wage exploitation and deepening poverty within the industry. Seasonal agricultural workers face extreme demands, further contributing to the cycle of poverty. When combined with the adverse effects of migration, these conditions give rise to a range of economic and sociological challenges due to the diverse backgrounds of the workers. Addressing these complex issues requires a comprehensive and multidimensional assessment that delves into the persistent

problems that have plagued the industry for years. Overall, the challenging working conditions and the compounding effects of migration perpetuate a cycle of poverty, affecting workers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and giving rise to various economic and sociological issues. This long-standing situation requires a comprehensive and multidimensional approach to address the underlying problems.

In summary, prior to 2010, activities supporting seasonal agricultural workers in Ankara province primarily focused on research. Since 2010, however, there has been a notable increase in interventions, research, and humanitarian aid to improve living conditions in the tent settlements where these workers reside. Unfortunately, no initiatives have been identified to improve the working conditions for the community's children. Although the situation of seasonal agricultural workers has gained attention in the last decade, interventions and research are not systematically structured around a data-based implementation program. Each institution seems to carry out activities based on its perspective and objectives, leading to localized interventions that are not necessarily aligned with the province's broader needs.

3.1. The Characteristics of Seasonal Agricultural Workers

A seasonal agricultural worker is an individual, whether local or migrant, who participates in agricultural activities on their own or someone else's land at any production stage, including planting, spraying, harvesting, and more, in exchange for wages, daily wages, or in-kind contracts. A seasonal agricultural worker is involved in agricultural production processes to earn income. They may work on a short-term or seasonal basis without a formal contract. A seasonal agricultural worker temporarily leaves their permanent residence (province, district, village, neighborhood) to another location to earn income by participating in agricultural production processes for at least one day but does not engage in this work permanently. As laborer families relocate for a specific period, they also reside there for a particular duration.

The seasonal agricultural sector is marked by dynamic labor movements that change in response to the cyclical nature of agricultural production. In Türkiye, a country with four distinct seasons, the timing of crop harvesting varies across different regions

throughout the year. This seasonal pattern leads workers to leave their hometowns and travel to distant areas for harvesting, where they gather crops. After finishing their work in one location, they often migrate to other regions to continue their agricultural labor. This recurring migration presents numerous challenges, primarily due to its irregular and unpredictable nature. The workers' mobility reflects their pursuit of employment and the complexities and hardships of transient lifestyles. While organizations like the Development Workshop aim to document these migration patterns, creating a comprehensive map of their routes proves complicated. Several factors influence the paths taken by these workers, including climate changes and other elements that affect agricultural production. Also, the lack of official records and data and bureaucratic constraints complicate mapping their routes.

The nomadic lifestyle often requires families to leave their homes for extended periods, particularly in regions like Şanlıurfa. For example, a family from this area might spend four to five months each year in remote settlements, constantly moving between various agricultural locales. This prolonged mobility can harm children's education, leading many to drop out. In addition to educational disruptions, children in these families are sometimes expected to work in the fields to help support their households. Multiple studies conducted by NGOs in Türkiye have highlighted seasonal agricultural work as one of the sectors with the highest child labor rates. Those who begin working at an early age may face significant developmental challenges and are more likely to abandon their education. Even when families migrate and attempt to enroll their children in new schools, the instability of their lifestyle often disrupts regular attendance. This instability hampers the children's immediate educational prospects, negatively impacts their future employment opportunities, and contributes to various social issues. Addressing these challenges is crucial and calls for immediate intervention and focused policy attention.

The mobility of seasonal farm workers poses challenges for the entire family. These families often rely on their own transportation and accommodation resources or use the services of agricultural intermediaries to connect them with landowners. Unfortunately, they often live in unhealthy and unsafe environments, lacking access to basic needs such as clean water, food, energy resources, sanitation, health services, and education. Additionally, they are frequently exposed to environmental health

hazards and do not benefit from environmental regulations, including child-friendly areas. Furthermore, transportation difficulties during migration, including unsafe vehicles and migration routes, can lead to tragic road accidents. This mobility significantly contributes to the challenges these families face and perpetuate poverty. Moreover, this mobility serves as a meeting point for people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds in rural areas, reflecting the integration of urban contradictions into the rural production landscape.

The working conditions for seasonal agricultural workers are particularly challenging and strenuous, reflecting the demanding nature of the agricultural industry. Many of these workers endure long hours, often exceeding 11 hours per day, and are frequently required to work every day of the week without breaks. It is common for extended families, consisting of close relatives, to migrate and work together. Families involved in seasonal agricultural work often have higher birth rates and younger demographics (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). Despite their efforts to work diligently as a family unit, their property rights are often weak. Families that remain engaged in agricultural activities and the agricultural economy—shaped by familial and intergenerational cultural influences—face numerous challenges, including labor exploitation and child labor. Due to limited access to education, social security, stable income, equal opportunities, and necessities, this unique population lives well below general welfare and average living standards

Seasonal farm workers and their families often endure serious health risks due to poor living conditions and exposure to harsh weather. Their primary form of shelter consists of tents, typically made of plastic sheeting that encloses all four sides, offering minimal protection from the elements. On average, seven individuals share a single tent, creating cramped and uncomfortable living situations (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). These workers frequently migrate to distinct locations for employment, exposing them to various health challenges by overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. The lack of proper hygiene facilities makes them more susceptible to infectious diseases and significant health complications. They are at risk of contracting diseases and sustaining injuries. Common health issues among these workers include weakness, fatigue, back pain, diarrhea, respiratory infections, skin diseases, sunstroke, headaches, poisoning, anxiety, and depression.

Furthermore, environmental risks pose significant challenges, particularly from exposure to chemicals and pesticides used in farming. This exposure poses serious health threats to both adults and children, mostly due to a lack of knowledge about the harmful effects of these substances and inadequate safety precautions. Additionally, exposure to sunlight, rain, and cold, along with pesticides, increases their vulnerability to occupational accidents, diseases, illnesses, premature aging, and even death. Furthermore, many of these workers have unregistered employment status, which prevents them from accessing social security and essential health services. Due to the distance of their living quarters from urban centers and the temporary nature of their jobs, their limited access to healthcare facilities makes it challenging to receive preventive healthcare.

In addition to these challenges, workers need first-aid knowledge, resulting in delayed responses to accidents. It is crucial for everyone involved in agricultural production, including both workers and employers, to receive first aid training. Apart from the high rate of workplace accidents, there are also issues related to transportation. To minimize expenses, seasonal agricultural workers often travel in overcrowded and uninspected vehicles, leading to fatalities. For instance, in 2014, at least 309 agricultural workers lost their lives during migration (KEİG, 2015). In 2018, 101 seasonal agricultural workers lost their lives in road accidents, and in 2019, the number was 18 (Simsek OSGB, 2021).

Compensation for seasonal agricultural workers varies widely and depends on different wage systems. Some workers receive daily wages, which fluctuate significantly based on the season and the specific employer. Others may be paid according to the quantity of crops harvested, while some work as independent contractors, complicating the consistency of their earnings. These challenges arise from a combination of factors, including a lack of robust legal regulations, economic instability, and the inherent vulnerability of the workforce. The informal nature of their employment often means they lack access to essential legal protections and employment assurances, making them susceptible to exploitation. Consequently, seasonal agricultural work resembles temporary employment, characterized by limited legal safeguards. This precarious status affects workers' financial security and overall well-being, highlighting the urgent need for improved standards and protections for

this essential yet often overlooked segment of the labor force.

Child labor remains a significant and complex issue in seasonal agriculture. The primary challenge lies in the inadequate socio-economic conditions surrounding child labor in this sector. Many children enter the workforce early to support their families, often leading to their exclusion from educational opportunities. They endure poor living conditions and are deprived of fundamental rights in these challenging circumstances. Furthermore, because seasonal work often coincides with the weeks before and after the school term, many children miss crucial learning experiences. Various academic studies have examined the educational challenges the children of seasonal agricultural workers face. For example, a study in 2019 found that these children typically come from low-income, overcrowded, and socio-economically disadvantaged families (Yavuz, 2019). The study also revealed that they frequently miss school to assist their families with labor-intensive agricultural tasks during school hours. This situation has a significant and negative impact on their educational experiences.

Many workers require more comprehensive information about social security systems, as this knowledge is crucial for effectively understanding and asserting their rights. Without adequate information, workers become vulnerable to exploitation, including unfair labor practices and limited access to benefits. Workers must understand their protection rights, including health insurance, retirement benefits, and unemployment support. It is also essential to grasp their workplace's organizational structures and trade unions' roles. When workers advocate for their rights or voice concerns, this knowledge gap presents significant challenges. Due to this lack of empowerment, workers may face difficulties related to fair treatment, wage disputes, and workplace rights. As a result, their daily work experiences suffer, perpetuating a cycle of disempowerment.

3.2. Legal Framework

This section presents an overview of the legislation and policy documents tailored explicitly for the protection and welfare of seasonal agricultural workers, outlining the

specific responsibilities outlined in these documents. The situation of seasonal agricultural workers in Türkiye has garnered increasing attention, particularly since 2010, and has become a prominent topic on the country's political agenda. Consequently, there has been a notable surge in interventions, research initiatives, and humanitarian aid to enhance the workers' living conditions and tent settlements. Despite the heightened awareness surrounding the plight of seasonal agricultural workers, it is evident that more concerted efforts are necessary to effect meaningful change. Currently, interventions and research are not being executed within the framework of a comprehensive, data-driven implementation program. Furthermore, the distribution of roles and responsibilities among relevant institutions and organizations stipulated in the legislation is not sufficiently comprehensive, resulting in legal gaps. Central governments also need to do more to raise awareness among local governments and pertinent civil society and professional organizations. Therefore, a meticulous legal framework analysis is imperative to address these complex challenges effectively.

Prior to 2010, research on seasonal agricultural workers was primarily academic. However, significant legislative efforts have been made on this issue since then. The Prime Ministry released the "Circular on Improving the Working and Social Life of Seasonal Agricultural Workers" (2010/6) in the Official Gazette on March 24, 2010. Subsequently, the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs launched the "Project for Improving the Working and Social Life of Seasonal Agricultural Workers" (METİP I) to address the needs of seasonal agricultural workers. This four-year project aimed to establish a comprehensive policy agenda, focusing on resolving the challenges faced by seasonal agricultural workers and their families who migrate to high-demand agricultural areas for employment (2010/6). As part of the project, the General Directorate of Labor of the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs allocated funds to thirty-eight provincial governorships to provide accommodation, infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential services for seasonal agricultural workers.

After recent developments, the issue of seasonal agricultural work remained a priority. Prime Ministry Circular No. 2017/6 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers was officially published in the Official Gazette on 19 April 2017. The circular outlined the

requirement for governorates to establish temporary settlements in areas with high concentrations of seasonal agricultural workers. These settlements were to provide for the basic needs of the workers in safe, cost-effective, spacious, climate-friendly areas with access to education, social activities, and shared facilities equipped with electricity, water, and sewage infrastructure. METİP II was initiated as a follow-up to METİP I, active between 2017-2018. Under METİP II, pilot programs were set to take place in nine provinces with vast numbers of seasonal agricultural workers: Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Eskişehir, Konya, Manisa, Ordu, Giresun, and Düzce. In these provinces, central government funding was allocated to establish temporary settlements that would fulfill the basic needs of seasonal agricultural workers and provide access to education, health, and social activities, as well as electricity, water, and sewerage infrastructure.

Circular No. 2017/6 delineates the authorities and responsibilities of public institutions, including provisions for identifying the families of agricultural workers. The establishment of the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Information System (e-METIP) aims to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of services rendered by institutions to seasonal agricultural workers and their families. According to the circular, information about identified family members will be transmitted to e-METIP. Additionally, there are plans to collaborate and exchange data with the Ministry of National Education to monitor children's school attendance. Data sharing with the Ministry of Health, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, has been initiated, and these sharing activities are anticipated to become routine.

3.3. Key Actors and Responsibilities

The key actors in seasonal agricultural work can be categorized into three distinct categories, each with specific roles and responsibilities. Each group plays a vital part in ensuring the success of the agricultural season, from planting and harvesting to distribution and policy development. Understanding the contributions and interactions of these actors is essential for enhancing productivity and sustainability within the agricultural sector.

Table 2 *The Key Actors in Seasonal Agricultural Work*

Civil Society Actors	Public/Managerial Actors	Market Actors[1]
- Civil Society Organizations - Cooperatives - Associations[2] and Chambers[3] - Academic Institutions - Print and Visual Media - Trade Unions	- Ministries and Public Institutions • Municipalities • Governorships • Provincial/District Directorates - Turkish Statistical Institute - Development Agencies - Agricultural Lending Banks	- Agricultural intermediaries, entrepreneurs, traders - Industrialists and brands - Certification, Accreditation, and Inspection bodies - Consumers

Agricultural intermediaries are crucial in shaping working relationships in the seasonal agricultural sector. They are a vital link between farm owners and workers, often being the only point of contact for seasonal workers seeking job opportunities. They make important decisions on behalf of workers regarding various aspects of their employment, such as job placements, wage negotiations, and working conditions. However, this dynamic can create a patronage relationship, where agricultural intermediaries wield significant power over the workers. Many workers rely heavily on these intermediaries for employment and a steady income, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation. Unfortunately, there are often no formal mechanisms to protect their rights or ensure fair treatment. As a result, workers' dependence on intermediaries becomes more pronounced, leaving them with few options to challenge unfair practices or advocate for better working conditions.

[1] Those involved in the production-consumption chain

[2] Agricultural producers' associations, the Turkish Medical Association, the Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB), and various associations

[3] The medical chambers, the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB), the Union of Chambers of Agriculture of Turkey (TZOB), the Chamber of Agricultural Engineers

Overall, the relationship between farm intermediaries and workers highlights the precarious nature of seasonal agricultural work and reveals the systemic issues within the industry that perpetuate labor exploitation and undermine workers' rights.

Civil society organizations are crucial in raising social awareness and organizing public responses. Their primary tasks involve informing the community about prevailing issues and necessary actions and mobilizing individuals interested in contributing to these efforts. While consumer associations also operate in Türkiye, there is a notable lack of studies addressing agricultural production and efforts to bolster the role of consumers in promoting fair labor relations within this sector. Nonetheless, consumer associations have the potential to enhance consumer awareness regarding equitable working conditions and the prevention of child labor in agriculture, thereby generating demand and exerting pressure for improvements in this area.

Furthermore, prominent agricultural trade unions, including Tariş, Çukobirlik, Antbirlik, Fiskobirlik, Karadenizbirlik, and agricultural producer associations like cooperatives, play a crucial role in implementing effective seasonal agricultural policies. They provide technical and economic support to their members, helping them to share and reduce costs. Additionally, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk-İş) and Tarım-İş are also committed to advocating for improved working and living conditions for agricultural workers. Trade unions make significant contributions by establishing minimum standards for these conditions, informing workers of their rights, and creating suitable organizational structures within the sector.

Academic institutions and the media are also essential advocacy actors. Universities have an opportunity to support the field with practical examples and research through faculties and other academic units. It is the responsibility of academia to address social science literature in a multidimensional way, such as its links with public and political interests, and to increase the accumulation of knowledge and experience in this field through meetings and publications, following changing approaches. On the other hand, the media is essential in making the families of seasonal agricultural workers visible and the conditions in which they live, ensuring that the public is adequately informed and raises awareness of the issue.

There are also international organizations that advocate seasonal agricultural workers' rights, such as The European Union, The United Nations, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Committee of Social Rights, UNICEF, ILO, WFP, UNFPA, WHO, FAO, UNDP, UNHCR, IOM.

A significant part of the founding objectives of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, and of the commitments made by Member States in the conventions to which they are a party, relates to protecting human rights, including labor rights and the protection of children. Member States of these organizations assume responsibility for protecting human rights in their countries and worldwide. Similarly, in the first documents produced by the International Labor Organization between 1919 and 1939, the legislative work that began with determining the minimum working age in industry and the prohibition of night work for children continues within the same framework today. Considering the principles developed by the ILO in the period after 1985, which has been described as the period of social response to globalization, national legislation should be revised. Accordingly, four fundamental principles are proposed: Freedom, Justice, Security, and Dignity. To ensure that everyone can work humanely and productively according to these principles, the following goals have been established.

- The development and implementation of fundamental principles and rights at work.
- Decent work and income for women and men.
- Mainstreaming and enhancing the effectiveness of social protection for all.
- Strengthening social dialogue (collective bargaining, enterprise democracy, participation at the national level).

National legislation to increase seasonal agricultural workers' social rights and freedoms and reduce poverty must align with international objectives. The goals of protecting labor rights and increasing social participation, promoted by the ILO and many international organizations, should be adopted nationally. In addition, national standards and norms should be set considering international standards and norms on issues such as determining the working age. The prevention of child labor in seasonal agricultural production must be in line with international conventions, national laws, and policy documents.

In Türkiye, several institutions, organizations, and policy committees under the Presidency oversee matters related to seasonal agriculture. Following the 2017 referendum on constitutional amendments, significant structural changes were made to shift towards a presidential governance system in the Republic of Türkiye. This study refers to documents established before 2018 to delineate the responsibilities of ministries in this domain while also recognizing the pertinent developments introduced by the last amendments. According to the legal framework, key areas of responsibilities of public institutions can be listed as above,

- Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Environmental Health: The municipality manages this critical function, ensuring that residents have access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation facilities, which are vital for public health and well-being.

- Establishment of Temporary Settlements: The Governorates play a pivotal role in creating and managing temporary housing solutions for those in need, particularly during emergencies or natural disasters.

- Water and Electricity Services: The Provincial Directorates for Investment Supervision and Coordination oversee the efficient delivery and maintenance of essential water and electricity services, ensuring reliable access for all residents.

- Mobile Health Teams: Formed by the Provincial Public Health Directorates, these teams provide essential healthcare services to communities, particularly in remote or underserved areas, enhancing overall public health outcomes.

- Social Services for Vulnerable Populations: The Provincial Directorates of the Ministry of Family and Social Policy are responsible for delivering targeted social services aimed at women, children, people with disabilities, and older adults, helping to meet their unique needs and promoting inclusion.

- Education Services: Managed by the Provincial Directorates of National Education, these services deliver quality education and resources to students of all ages, fostering lifelong learning opportunities.

- Religious Services: Provincial Mufti Offices coordinate religious activities and provide spiritual guidance, ensuring the community's faith-based needs are met inclusively.

- Transport Services: The Ministry of the Interior's General Directorate of Security and the Gendarmerie General Command handle transport services, ensuring safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the region.

- Adult Education Initiatives: The Provincial Directorates of the Labor and Employment Agency, Public Education Centers, and Vocational Training Centers offer adult education programs. These initiatives aim to enhance workforce skills and combat child labor, contributing to a more educated and equitable society.

In addition, there are duties assigned to the governorates by Prime Ministry Circular No. 2017/6 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers. These duties are as follows Establishing temporary settlements, announcing the measures to be taken at the provincial level, preparing an action plan, conducting a needs assessment, establishing a Seasonal Agricultural Workers Office and providing staff to work, conducting an independent external audit, supporting projects, and ensuring the effective use of allowances, providing water and electricity to temporary settlements (the cost of which will be covered by funds transferred from the abolished Ministry of Labor and Social Security), submitting implementation reports to the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, monitoring and inspecting activities at the provincial level, carrying out the necessary procedures to impose administrative and criminal sanctions on those who violate the measures.

3.3.1. Governorships

Governorships function as local representative offices of the central government, ensuring the effective implementation of initiatives across relevant ministries within the provinces. To promote a clear understanding and execution of measures, they organize information and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at seasonal agricultural workers, employers, landowners and processors, and the local communities hosting migrants.

The responsibilities of the governorships include designing projects, establishing monitoring committees at both central and provincial levels, and preparing evaluation reports. They are also charged with identifying collective accommodation zones for seasonal agricultural workers and providing tents where landowners or processors do not meet minimum social accommodation standards. Additionally, they must adapt the infrastructure and facilities of these collective areas to ensure readiness for each season, including the provision of mobile amenities. Efforts include raising awareness among seasonal agricultural workers on the proper use of accommodation areas, the significance of maintaining environmental cleanliness, safeguarding local vegetation and trees, and preventing forest fires.

The Provincial Special Administrations are responsible for regularly treating temporary settlements to control pests, managing waste removal, and ensuring access to clean drinking water. These administrations also coordinate efforts related to child labor within the provinces and oversee the activities of Provincial Action Committees in each region. They also establish mobile comfort facilities within collective tent settlements.

3.3.2. Municipalities

Municipalities, considering seasonal agricultural workers, are crucial in public institutions to provide public services to alleviate poverty by providing services. According to the Municipalities Act, municipalities are obliged to provide the following services,

- Infrastructure such as zoning, water, and sewage
- Geographical and urban information systems
- Environmental health, sanitation, and solid waste
- Police, fire, emergency, rescue, and ambulance services
- Transportation
- Funerals and cemeteries
- Afforestation, parks, and green areas
- Housing
- Culture and arts
- Social services and assistance, marriage, vocational, and skills training
- Economic and trade development activities

The Prime Minister's circulars on seasonal agricultural workers impose various responsibilities on the municipalities. These include spraying settlements for various pests, effective waste management and access to clean drinking water. Furthermore, collective housing areas that meet minimum social standards for seasonal agricultural workers. It is also a priority for communities to provide tents where workers can stay with their families. It is essential that seasonal farm workers are sensitized about keeping the environment clean, protecting the vegetation and trees, and preventing fire. Ensuring access to clean water collection and regular garbage disposal in designated areas under appropriate conditions are among the main responsibilities of municipalities. Local authorities also have a duty to maintain school buildings, to meet equipment needs as far as their budgets allow, and to provide necessary materials and assistance to students and recreational sports clubs.

Municipalities have also been given important responsibilities under the National Program for Combating Child Labor. To prevent child labor, municipal police or specially assigned officers are expected to take necessary measures to prevent children from working on the streets. A major step in this regard is the establishment of rehabilitation and support centers for children working on the streets, in industry, trade, agriculture, and the service sector. In addition, the organization of vocational training courses and the inclusion of child labor in the curriculum are among the educational responsibilities of the municipalities. Another important task to be carried out in

cooperation with the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs is the implementation of protection measures for children at risk. Municipalities can develop various social and cultural services for youth and children through the establishment of special social institutions. These services include running or facilitating vocational and learning courses. Building partnerships with universities, colleges, vocational schools, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations to provide these services will enable municipalities to work effectively. All these tasks highlight the social responsibilities of municipalities, both in improving the living conditions of seasonal agricultural workers and taking effective steps to combat child labor. It is possible to carry out these tasks successfully through effective cooperation and resource management.

Political parties in the TBMM actively participate in legislative and oversight functions through their deputies. They prepare and submit bills and proposals, establish parliamentary research and investigation commissions, engage in existing committees, and express their viewpoints. Additionally, these parties are responsible for researching various national issues, sharing their findings with the public, and encouraging public discourse. They fulfill multiple roles, including raising awareness about the challenges and solutions related to seasonal agricultural labor through advocacy, conducting research and policy development through their organizational structures, and ensuring that these concerns are addressed through legislative actions by Members of Parliament.

Supporting anticipated improvements in labor rights and the working and living conditions within the agricultural sector entails substantial costs, particularly for small enterprises. Banks that provide loans for agriculture play a vital role in this support. For instance, Ziraat Bank was explicitly established to address the credit needs of farmers. Additionally, private banks such as QNB Finansbank, Deniz Bank, Vakıf Bank, Garanti Bank, and Yapı ve Kredi Bank offer loans to farmers registered in the Farmer Registration System (ÇKS).

The Credit Bureau (KKB) and the Agricultural Credit Assessment System (TARDIS) are crucial in organizing agricultural credit. Established in 1995 through a collaborative effort of nine banks, the KKB facilitates the sharing of credit information

among its member institutions and conducts risk assessments. TARDIS is a credit application evaluation system developed by KKB, which provides a data-sharing framework and a pre-established credit evaluation infrastructure for banks and financial institutions looking to extend credit in the agricultural sector. This system utilizes data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Farmer Registration System.

Development Agencies are responsible for providing technical support to the plans, activities, and projects of local administrations through regional plans and programs, monitoring their implementation, and contributing to the development of the capacity of the region in which they operate concerning rural and local development and supporting projects in this area. Within this framework, the agencies can contribute directly to solving the problem through activities such as providing resources for local projects related to seasonal agricultural labor and monitoring their effective implementation.

CHAPTER 4

FIELD STUDY

4.1. General Information about Polatlı

The Polatlı district, located west of central Ankara, is surrounded by several other districts, including Beypazarı, Ayaş, Sincan, Yenimahalle, Gölbaşı, and Haymana. Its geographical position on a plateau significantly impacts the local economy, with agriculture playing a vital role. Polatlı is known for its expansive plains, fertile soil, and essential water resources. Historically, the district has prioritized agricultural activities, making farming the primary source of livelihood for its residents. Given its substantial agricultural potential, Polatlı's economy largely depends on this sector.

The district encompasses 328,272.70 hectares, with 224,058.70 hectares (68%) designated for agricultural use. Of the 217,658 hectares allocated for farming, 34,291 hectares are utilized for irrigated agriculture, 152,042 hectares for dry farming, and 31,325 hectares remain fallow (Koçak, 2019). Cereals dominate the agricultural landscape, occupying 80% of the cultivated area, while the remaining 20% is devoted to other crops such as onions, sugar beets, and sunflowers (Koçak, 2019). The district's irrigated farmland is strategically located near rivers, which enhances agricultural productivity.

According to 2012 data, the district's total population was 119,349, including 18,337 rural residents and 101,012 individuals living in the county center. Notably, approximately 84% of the population resided in urban areas, while 15% were classified as rural, based on statistics from TÜİK. In 2012, the implementation of Law No. 6360 led to the reclassification of villages within metropolitan areas as neighborhoods within districts. This change resulted in the termination of data collection on the rural population starting in 2013. As of the 2021 census, the total population of all

neighborhoods in the Polatlı district stands at 127,521, reflecting the impact of this classification adjustment.

Since 1965, the urban population of Polatlı has experienced a consistent and substantial increase, primarily driven by the growth of various industries along the Ankara-Eskişehir Motorway, which traverses the district. This vital transportation strategy enhances connectivity and facilitates the movement of goods and people, bolstering regional economic activities. The establishment of the Polatlı Farmers' Association in 1949 marked a significant milestone, promoting cooperative agricultural practices and enhancing the livelihoods of local farmers. Furthermore, the founding of the Polatlı Flourmill Taş in 1995 served to consolidate the district's status as a center for agriculture, trade, and industry, providing both employment opportunities and valuable resources for the agricultural sector (Özdemir & Yasak, 2017). Moreover, the opening of the Artillery and Missile School attracted a steady influx of residents seeking employment and educational opportunities. Historically, Polatlı has functioned as a critical hub for migration; the construction of the Polatlı railway station was instrumental in initiating early migration patterns, connecting the district to larger urban centers, and facilitating the movement of people seeking better prospects.

As urbanization has progressed, migration patterns within the Polatlı district reveal a pronounced trend of individuals moving from rural areas to the urban core. This shift underscores the city's inherent appeal, characterized by improved access to diverse employment opportunities, educational facilities, and enhanced infrastructure. Moreover, many residents choose to relocate from the bustling city center to the more tranquil outskirts and surrounding neighborhoods in search of quieter living environments or more affordable housing solutions. The urban center of Polatlı not only attracts migrants from the local rural population but also draws individuals from neighboring regions and beyond the district's borders, contributing to a rich and diverse demographic landscape that reflects broader national urbanization trends. Consequently, the population in the center of Polatlı continues to swell, while rural areas are witnessing a gradual and troubling decline in their resident numbers.

Despite this decline in the rural population, the seasonal return of farmers to their

villages for agricultural work underscores a notable shift in residency patterns. Enhanced transportation options linking the city center to rural neighborhoods facilitate quick access for these producers, allowing them to manage their agricultural activities effectively. Typically, local farmers will inhabit rural areas during the summer months to cultivate their crops while choosing to reside in the urban center during the colder winter months. This cyclical residency enables the agriculture-dependent population to remain vital in the urban landscape.

During summer, producers return to their neighborhoods to cultivate essential crops like vegetables and cereals in small garden plots. This practice supports their livelihoods and contributes to local food production. Throughout the academic year, from September to June, families residing in the city often return to their rural neighborhoods on weekends to continue their agricultural work, ensuring a sustained connection to their roots. Additionally, residents employed in various sectors, including manufacturing, trade, and services, frequently return to their neighborhoods on weekends, particularly during critical planting and harvesting periods when agricultural labor demands peak. Each year, the arrival of hundreds of seasonal agricultural workers from southeastern regions of Türkiye around April and May results in periodic population surges in Polatlı, further emphasizing the district's reliance on agricultural labor and the importance of seasonal migration in the local economy.

There is humanitarian assistance to migrant families and their children engaged in seasonal agricultural work in Ankara. A comprehensive health screening study was conducted in the Beypazarı district in 2008. A mobile team organized by the Beypazarı Health Group Presidency screened approximately 4,000 seasonal agricultural workers employed in the district's fields. In 2015, Ankara University and the Ankara Chamber of Industry provided food aid to seasonal agricultural workers. The Çubuk District Municipality aimed to assist Syrian refugees and agricultural workers whose tents were flooded in 2015, 2017, 2018, and 2019 by providing food, clothes, shoes, and toys. The Çubuk branch of the Turkish Red Crescent also distributed blankets and dry food to those in need. Also in 2016, food packages from a feed factory in Ankara's Şereflikoçhisar district were distributed to people in need at the IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation's tents in the Ebemönü Plateau.

4.1.1. Sarıoba METİP Settlement

Sarıoba Neighborhood is in the northwest region of the Polatlı district, near the Ankara Stream and 39 km from the district center. As of 2023, the population of Sarıoba is 635 residents. The area primarily engages in cattle fattening and dry and irrigated agriculture. Various crops are grown and marketed commercially, including wheat, chickpeas, cumin, lentils, onions, beetroots, sunflowers, tomatoes, peppers, beans, and eggplants.

In 2010, a significant development occurred for seasonal agricultural workers in Ankara province with the publication of the Prime Minister's Circular on Improving the Working and Social Life of Seasonal Agricultural Workers, commonly known as the METİP Circular. This circular facilitated the transfer of funds from the general budget to provincial areas, primarily providing humanitarian assistance to families involved in seasonal agricultural work. That same year, Hasan Çetin, a primary school teacher, initiated a project to support seasonal agricultural workers residing in the Polatlı district of Ankara. This initiative was recognized as an exemplary project under the METİP program and was subsequently implemented.

A designated METİP area was established near Sarıoba Neighborhood in Polatlı to house the families of seasonal agricultural workers. In 2018, another METİP area was created, where the District Directorate of National Education opened a tent school for the children living there. Furthermore, the District Health Directorate provided health information to these families. The decision to establish Sarıoba as a settlement site stems from the region's extensive land, particularly well-suited for onion farming. This agricultural potential attracts many seasonal agricultural workers who migrate to Sarıoba in search of employment opportunities during the farming season.

The METİP Sarıoba Campus is about 1 km from the Sarıoba Neighborhood and spans twenty-two acres. It was established in 2010 and designed to meet the housing needs of agricultural workers. The project includes living tents, bathrooms, a kitchen, and social facilities, all tailored to accommodate the needs of agricultural workers and their

families.

The settlement in Sarıoba serves as a pilot project for tent cities and consists of 320 tents, providing shelter for up to 2,500 people (Yılmaz, 2020). Made of tarpaulin, the tents are designed to withstand various weather conditions and feature fireproof and waterproof properties. Each tent provides a living space of thirty square meters.

The tent areas are organized on solid concrete floors, providing a stable foundation. Each tent area is equipped with hygienic toilets, showers, and kitchens, ensuring residents have access to essential sanitation facilities in a safe and enclosed environment. Additionally, each tent area has hot water systems to facilitate both cooking and bathing for the residents.

Three interviews revealed that workers are reluctant to use the kitchens since they are located outside tents. This situation creates a specific challenge for women, who usually stay inside the tents, making it difficult for them to access the kitchens. Additionally, the absence of a heating system in the kitchens can lead to uncomfortably freezing conditions.

The settlement features infrastructure developments aimed at improving living conditions and supporting the daily activities of residents in Sarıoba. It includes dedicated spaces for children and families, featuring a well-equipped kindergarten that prioritizes early childhood education. The kindergarten has multiple classrooms for different age groups, each with appropriate learning materials and resources tailored to their developmental needs. It includes two spacious classrooms for age-appropriate activities, a teacher staff room, a kitchen for meal preparation, a storage room for supplies, and restrooms specifically designed for young children. Adjacent to the kindergarten are several educational spaces that foster creativity and facilitate learning across various subjects and activities.

A health center is also available within the community, offering essential medical services to support the well-being of both children and adults. This center is staffed by healthcare professionals once a week. The nursery includes a health unit featuring a doctor's office for consultations, an examination room for thorough check-ups, and

healthcare services. This comprehensive layout creates a nurturing and supportive environment for children and their families, promoting healthy development and

enhancing their overall quality of life.

In addition to educational and health facilities, a multipurpose meeting room serves as a community hub for events and activities, promoting social interaction and cohesion among residents. The social facility also includes a mosque, providing a space for spiritual practices and community gatherings.

4.2. Assessment of the Legal Framework

This section evaluates the legislation and policy documents related to seasonal agricultural workers, emphasizing the responsibilities outlined in these materials. It also provides a more detailed discussion of the interview questions and explains the insights gathered from the interviewees.

The Council of Ministers is crucial in planning and legislation for poverty reduction policies. Meanwhile, the TBMM stands as a critical authority in addressing issues within seasonal agriculture, given its legislative and supervisory duties concerning social matters. In 2014, the Parliament formed a Parliamentary Investigation Commission to examine the challenges faced by seasonal agricultural workers and identify potential measures to improve their life standards. Consequently, the Commission's findings were published in 2015 (TBMM, 2015). The report identified the following needs in this area: studying the obstacles to coordination and collaboration among institutions and developing practical solutions to the problems identified. Also, a necessity for collaboration among service providers in terms of policy, planning, monitoring, standards, and norms is emphasized in the report. In that sense, coordination between government, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society organizations, the private sector, and local government is important to implement policies consistently and coherently. The report also stated that the roles and responsibilities of institutions implementing poverty reduction policies should be clearly defined, and stakeholders involved in seasonal agriculture should establish

adequate information sharing among themselves. So, establishing a monitoring and referral system is essential for all relevant stakeholders.

However, researchers have noted that the desired outcomes have not been achieved (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). For instance, the METİP circular indicates that many services, including those legally required of employers, are instead managed by public institutions and resources. This means that public entities are addressing issues related to the labor relationship of seasonal agricultural workers despite a sizable part of these responsibilities lying with landowner employers. Consequently, it is crucial to thoroughly evaluate the market dynamics surrounding the causes and effects of seasonal agricultural labor. Market participants, such as agricultural intermediaries and traders, should also be encouraged to support policies to alleviate poverty.

This study will not elaborate on market-based actors and their allocation of responsibilities, but this topic is valuable for future research. To summarize, law-making and implementation efforts should consider the need for restructuring in seasonal agriculture in a way that will increase safeguards in favor of workers in a wide range of areas, from employment and labor relations to relations in the marketing process of the product, and from the wages and living conditions of workers, while also protecting small farmers. Domestic law should be reviewed in line with these principles, and necessary legal amendments should be made. The arrangements should include fair sharing of the costs and responsibilities of monitoring and controlling the supply chain among the relevant parties. The actors of the production process - intermediaries, traders, industrialists, firms, brands, certification, inspection, accreditation bodies, and consumers should be included in the law-making and enforcement process as responsible persons and institutions. It is also necessary to ensure the participation of organized segments of society in implementing and supervising activities. The system of agricultural labor intermediaries and workers should be formalized. Internal and external audit institutions need to be established functionally.

In the initial phases of the METİP project, the government invested significantly in

infrastructure development to improve living conditions in temporary settlements occupied by seasonal agricultural workers. In some urban centers, local governorships constructed well-organized tent cities to accommodate these workers, while in others, the focus was on providing essential restroom facilities. These initiatives targeted regions where workers temporarily settled, highlighting the stark contrast to their

permanent residences, which are often underserved and lack resources. Unfortunately, the urgent need for better living and working conditions for seasonal agricultural workers in their permanent settlements has been overlooked.

Addressing the challenges faced in both their temporary and permanent locations is vital. Host municipalities where these workers establish their long-term homes must implement proactive measures to reduce emigration. Creating sustainable job opportunities in these areas is crucial for achieving this goal. By expanding employment options for adults and ensuring that children have access to quality education locally, families may find it less necessary to migrate for seasonal agricultural work. For example, municipalities could offer alternative income sources tailored to families' needs and generate job prospects for adults within their communities, fostering a stronger incentive for families to remain in their permanent residences.

Recent policy documents have highlighted two pressing issues affecting seasonal farm workers: the conditions of their permanent homes and the environments of their temporary workplaces. A cohesive strategy thoughtfully integrating these two critical aspects is required to tackle these challenges effectively. However, more evidence is needed regarding initiatives to support workers in their permanent homes, prompting an important question: Are there any ongoing efforts by host municipalities to facilitate the stable settlement of seasonal farm workers?

During insightful interviews on this topic, two street-level bureaucrats from the Polatlı Municipality and one representative from the Polatlı District Governorship expressed their concerns regarding the lack of plans in host municipalities to address the migration trends among their residents. One bureaucrat from the municipality pointed out that their support for seasonal agricultural workers significantly surpasses the

assistance provided by these host municipalities.

He stated, "We supply them with clothing, shoes, dry food, and educational resources for their children. For example, in certain districts of Şanlıurfa, a primary origin area for many workers, support for their children's education is alarmingly limited. The municipalities in those regions make minimal efforts to retain their residents by

creating job opportunities or providing educational facilities. As a result, we provide more assistance than the municipalities in Şanlıurfa."

This observation underscores a critical gap in communication and coordination among the different authorities tasked with meeting seasonal agricultural workers' diverse needs in both their temporary and permanent living situations. It is essential for municipalities to not only be aware of the initiatives they have implemented but also to foster a genuine and collaborative relationship between their efforts in these two distinct contexts. It means integrating policies and programs so that the support provided to workers in temporary accommodations aligns seamlessly with the resources and services available to them in their permanent residences. By doing so, municipalities can create a holistic approach that better addresses the challenges faced by the workers, leading to improved outcomes for both groups.

Many aspects of seasonal agricultural work put children at risk of neglect and abuse. Even if they are not directly employed, children in families engaged in this work often do not enjoy the same fundamental rights to health and education as their peers. These children are vulnerable to neglect and abuse due to a lack of safe care during the hours when their families are working in the fields.

The National Program for Combating Child Labor (2017-2023), prepared by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, identifies several causes of child labor, including poverty, lack of access to education, irregular migration, unemployment among adult family members, traditional attitudes, inadequate enforcement of protective laws, and the demand for child labor by employers. However, the current implementation of policies needs to address these causes adequately. The current policy documents were specifically created to address the challenges and concerns

during their development. These documents were shaped not only by the pressing issues of the day but also by the prevailing political climate and societal attitudes at the time. As such, they reflect the priorities and perspectives of the stakeholders involved, highlighting how external factors, including government leadership and public opinion, played a significant role in their development.

It is essential to recognize that, despite ongoing discussions about poverty, inadequate

and ineffective measures have been taken to break the persistent cycle of poverty affecting children in vulnerable families. To effectively address the critical issue of child labor in agriculture, there must be a thorough assessment of these families' needs and a consistent alignment of policies that respond to those identified needs. The educational infrastructure, healthcare facilities, and support services available for children in these communities must be improved. Poverty not only acts as a primary driver for children to engage in seasonal agricultural labor but also perpetuates their impoverished circumstances. For example, establishing a legal minimum wage could serve as a pivotal step in reducing the economic dependency of these families on child labor, allowing children to remain in school rather than being compelled to work.

It is crucial to emphasize initiatives designed to combat and prevent child labor in vulnerable communities. This goal can be effectively pursued by allocating essential resources and services that foster the ongoing education of school-aged children. Ensuring these children receive a quality education empowers them to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for a brighter future. Moreover, establishing kindergartens for younger children would significantly enhance access to early childhood education, laying a robust foundation for their lifelong learning journey. Such educational frameworks can be vital in nurturing young minds and preparing them for academic success as they grow.

National legislation emphasizes the critical importance of poverty alleviation as a fundamental strategy in combating child labor and addressing its underlying causes. Instead of viewing poverty as a secondary issue, it should be prioritized as a central focus of our efforts. These essential goals are to break the persistent cycle of poverty that affects so many families, particularly in agricultural communities where the need

is most urgent. This multifaceted approach not only aims to protect the rights and well-being of children but also fosters an environment where they can thrive and realize their full potential. Ensuring that children are shielded from the harsh realities of labor exploitation creates conditions necessary for them to grow into healthy, educated, and empowered individuals who can positively contribute to society. In doing so, not only safeguard these children's futures but also work towards building more robust, more resilient communities that can uplift all their members.

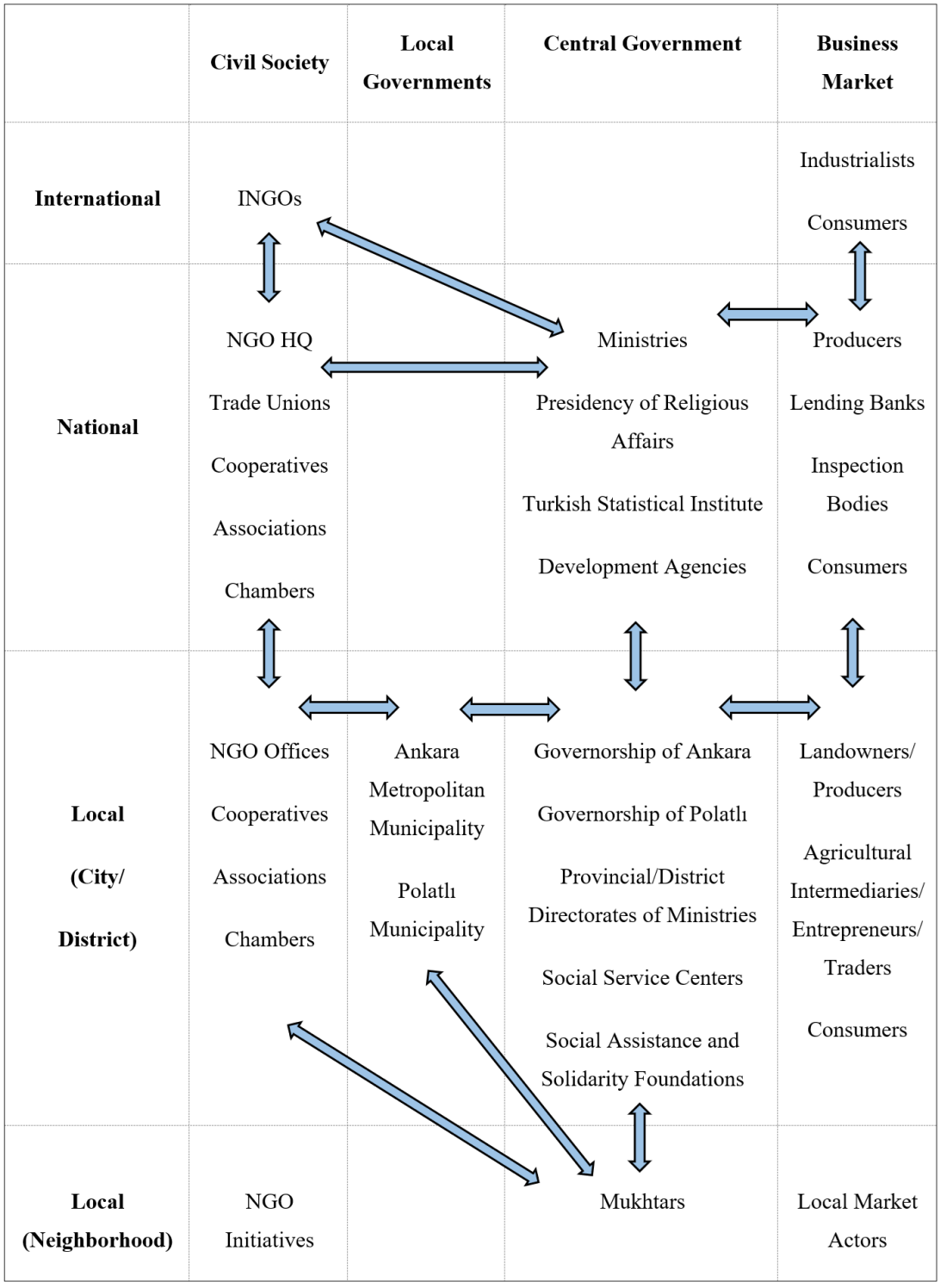
Circular 2024 has expanded its scope to include cultural and sports services. Collaborative initiatives will be established with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to facilitate the operation of services such as mobile libraries and museums provided by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in temporary settlement areas. Additionally, the Ministry of Youth and Sports will organize social and sports activities for the children of seasonal agricultural workers.

Furthermore, the Provincial Directorates of National Education are responsible for setting up education centers for educational and social activities in temporary settlements and implementing incentive measures such as conditional cash transfers to support children of compulsory school age. They also ensure that children with special needs can access educational opportunities through the Directorates of Guidance and Research Centers. Additionally, they oversee the provision of children's school clothing and materials through social assistance and solidarity foundations in the governorates. Furthermore, they establish and monitor guidelines for the opening and closing of student hostels and similar facilities run by institutions and other legal entities. Lastly, they are responsible for transferring the records of children of seasonal agricultural workers to the School Management Information System (e-School) used by the Ministry of National Education to e-METIP.

METİP project objectives include setting up preschool education facilities in METİP settlements and utilizing the nearest schools and transportation systems for school-age children. Furthermore, the Ministry has announced plans to implement a child labor monitoring system through this project. Although there is an emphasis on engaging various stakeholders involved in child labor protection, such as agricultural intermediaries, systematic action has not yet been implemented.

4.2.1. Institutional Mapping of Key Actors

Table 3 *Institutional Mapping of Key Actors*



4.3. Findings on Poverty

This section explores seasonal agricultural workers' challenges and experiences, drawing upon feedback and insights gathered from interviews conducted with public employees in the field. Additionally, it incorporates observational data collected during visits to various agricultural sites, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the factors impacting their daily lives. It aims to highlight the systemic issues, and the individual narratives workers share, enriching the discussion around their socio-economic conditions and well-being.

In Sarıoba, seasonal agricultural workers often live in tents at the METİP Settlement. Each tent typically accommodates seven to eight family members, leading to a crowded environment. Each tent is divided by a concrete partition, separating it into two distinct sections to create privacy and organization within these limited spaces. This divider is particularly helpful in establishing separate sleeping areas for children, allowing them to have their own space away from their parents. However, these living conditions come with several challenges. Kitchens and bathrooms are located outside the tents, which poses significant difficulties, especially for women who often take on cooking and managing household chores. During recent field visits, several women expressed their frustrations and concerns about the inconvenience of going outside to access these essential facilities, particularly during adverse weather conditions or at night. This separation disrupts daily routines and raises safety concerns, highlighting the urgent need for improved living arrangements to ensure these workers' and their family's comfort and well-being.

During field visits, it became evident that many workers preferred not to live in the METİP tents. This reluctance stemmed from several crucial factors that influenced their housing choices. In discussions with an employee involved in the settlement's operations, it was mentioned that the location of the METİP settlement might be inconvenient for certain families because it is far from their workplaces. The Sarıoba METİP settlement was initially established to provide housing for all workers in the Polatlı area, with plans to relocate residents from nearby neighborhoods to this centralized settlement. However, despite these efforts, many workers still find the location unsuitable. Being closer to their jobs, especially in industries with demanding

or unpredictable hours, is crucial for many workers' daily lives. Accessibility to work is a significant concern, and the METİP settlement's location may not effectively address these needs.

Another reason for their reluctance is that many workers prefer to live in affordable village houses instead of the METİP tents. Village houses are typically more budget-friendly, allowing families to allocate their financial resources more effectively. Additionally, these houses often come with small gardens, which provide a source of fresh produce and align well with their traditional lifestyle. Cultivating vegetables and fruits at home promotes sustainability and food security within their households. In contrast, the METİP tents are constructed on concrete floors, primarily for thermal insulation. While this design serves its intended purpose, it offers little communal garden space, a significant drawback for families accustomed to tending to their gardens. The lack of outdoor cultivation opportunities does not cater to their ingrained habits and rural backgrounds, where having a small garden for growing food and raising animals is the norm.

Moreover, workers have expressed discomfort with the chilly concrete floors. Many prefer the warmth of the soil, which is more comfortable and creates a more inviting living environment. This preference further heightens their desire for traditional housing over the modern but impersonal facilities provided at the METİP settlement. In summary, uncomfortable living conditions, inconvenient distances from their gardens and workplaces, and deeply rooted cultural habits all contribute to the workers' reluctance to reside in the Sarıoba METİP settlement.

The METIP project has faced several challenges but has made considerable progress in improving housing conditions for seasonal agricultural workers. Enhancing their working environments is equally important. Despite the advancements, there is still a pressing need for better occupational protection. Many workers endure long hours under harsh conditions, including extreme weather, without sufficient safety measures. To address these issues effectively, the government and local municipalities must proactively improve working conditions and tackle urgent concerns. This includes conducting thorough field visits to various workplaces to assess conditions firsthand, identify areas for improvement, and engage with workers to understand their

challenges better. Additionally, these visits can help businesses comply with legal regulations and safety standards. By prioritizing workers' health and safety, we can adopt a more comprehensive approach focusing on housing and creating healthier, more sustainable working environments.

Households that rely on seasonal agricultural work face numerous challenges that significantly hinder their ability to achieve economic stability and improve their quality of life. These families often find themselves trapped in a cycle of uncertainty, struggling with limited access to essential resources that could lead to financial security and self-sufficiency. One of the primary obstacles they encounter is the lack of critical skills that are increasingly necessary in today's job market. The demand for skilled labor is rising across various sectors. Access to training programs or educational resources is necessary for many seasonal agricultural workers to stay in low-paying, stable jobs with little opportunity for advancement. Networking can be a valuable tool for career development; however, these individuals often need more connections that could lead to better job prospects, mentorship, or information about available opportunities.

Capital is another significant barrier for these households. Many workers need more financial resources to invest in better equipment to enhance productivity or training that could unlock more lucrative employment options. This lack of investment limits their immediate earning potential and contributes to long-term economic stagnation. Additionally, restrictions on their freedom of movement can pose formidable challenges. Many seasonal agricultural workers face legal barriers and issues related to immigration status, preventing them from seeking work in different regions or industries. This geo-economic immobility often forces them to accept the only jobs available, even if those positions do not provide a living wage. As a result, they frequently work in conditions that undervalue their skills and efforts, making it exceedingly difficult to adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of the labor market.

Many workers rely on seasonal employment, where unpredictable income can fluctuate based on market demands and weather conditions. This volatility creates immediate financial strain and hinders their capacity to plan or pursue pathways for upward mobility. For instance, they might struggle to save for emergencies, invest in

further education, or even afford necessities, leading to a vicious cycle of economic insecurity. Because of that, it is crucial to acknowledge and address these daunting challenges. Advocating comprehensive support systems—such as access to affordable housing, childcare services, healthcare, and job training programs—can empower these hardworking families.

Seasonal agricultural workers encounter significant challenges that severely impact their rights and livelihoods, primarily revolving around a need for more awareness and adequate organizational capacity. A predominant issue is that many of these workers need to be more informed about their social security rights, which leaves them in a vulnerable position where they lack essential protection. This ignorance not only exposes them to exploitation but also prevents them from effectively addressing critical issues such as labor informality, which can result in job instability, inadequate wages that fail to meet even their basic needs, and a pervasive sense of social insecurity. The lack of awareness regarding their rights significantly hampers seasonal agricultural workers' ability to organize collectively and form unions, which are essential for advocating fair treatment and improved working conditions. Instead of coming together to address shared challenges, many workers feel isolated, which only heightens their sense of helplessness.

The role of agricultural intermediaries further complicates the situation. These intermediaries, crucial to the employment of seasonal workers, often prioritize their profit margins over the well-being of their workers. This profit-driven approach leads to exploitative practices, with workers often being underpaid or subjected to poor working conditions. As a result, seasonal agricultural workers frequently depend on these intermediaries for their livelihoods, fostering a culture of obedience and resignation. Rather than feeling empowered to negotiate for better terms or speak out against injustices, many accept unfavorable conditions due to their reliance on these intermediaries. This dependency weakens their negotiating power and creates widespread complacency regarding their difficult circumstances, making it challenging for them to envision or enact change.

An urgent need is for enhanced organizational support designed explicitly for seasonal agricultural workers. This support would empower these workers to effectively

advocate for their rights and interests, addressing the negative impacts of their current situations, which are likely to worsen without intervention. While occasional reports of organized actions have been featured in local media, these instances are rare and need more sustained momentum for collective efforts. The absence of robust and large-scale mobilization highlights the critical need for strategies that promote awareness, unity, and proactive advocacy. Such initiatives are essential for empowering seasonal agricultural workers in their ongoing struggle for better working conditions and protecting their rights. By fostering a sense of community and shared purpose, these strategies could significantly enhance their ability to confront systemic issues and advocate for their rightful place within the agricultural workforce.

Seasonal agricultural work provides a widespread employment opportunity for many individuals striving to improve their living conditions and escape poverty. This type of work is attractive to landowners and farm operators for several reasons, primarily due to the flexibility that temporary workers provide during peak harvest seasons. This flexibility allows farm operators to adjust the size of their labor force according to changing demands, enabling them to align their workforce with current needs without the long-term financial commitments associated with permanent staff. Additionally, employers benefit from being relieved of responsibilities such as providing employee benefits—like health insurance, retirement plans, and paid leave—and the higher wage obligations often required for permanent employees. As a result, hiring seasonal workers is desirable for many in the agricultural sector who aim to maximize efficiency and profitability.

When examining poverty from an economic perspective, exploring the various interconnected factors influencing individuals' living conditions and overall quality of life is essential. One significant aspect is income levels, which vary widely across populations and regions. Understanding the sources and stability of income—whether from employment, social welfare, or informal activities, provides insight into financial security. In addition to income, individuals' spending habits are crucial in assessing poverty. Analyzing how households allocate their limited financial resources reveals consumption patterns prioritizing immediate survival over long-term investments. This can lead to choices that sacrifice quality for affordability, affecting overall health and well-being. For example, seasonal agricultural families may compromise on their

children's education quality to contribute to the family budget.

Consumption practices are also vital, encompassing not only what is purchased but also the availability and accessibility of goods and services. Clean water, adequate sanitation, reliable energy sources, safe housing, and nutritious food must be readily accessible to ensure a sustainable and healthy lifestyle. The lack of access to these fundamental needs can severely hinder a person's thriving ability. Furthermore, significant assets such as health and education should be considered integral components in the analysis of poverty. Health status can influence employability and productivity, while education serves as a powerful tool for breaking the cycle of poverty by enabling individuals to obtain higher-paying jobs and improve their socio-economic standing. According to Hulme and Shepherd, the interplay between financial resources and these assets can create systemic barriers that inhibit advancement and perpetuate cycles of poverty (Hulme & Shepherd, 2011).

In the specific context of seasonal farm workers in Polatlı, Ankara, Geçgin's case study provides valuable insights into their living conditions. The study found that 61.4% of these workers possess Green Cards, which may grant them some legal status or access to essential services (Geçgin, 2009). However, 38.6% of this workforce lacks social security coverage, making them vulnerable to economic shocks and unexpected health crises that could disrupt their precarious livelihoods (Geçgin, 2009). Additionally, educational challenges among seasonal workers, particularly among women, are notably significant. A 2020 study by Bağış highlighted that the educational attainment of most female seasonal farm workers in the region is limited to primary school education, with approximately 10% being illiterate (Bağış, 2020). This lack of education critically hampers their ability to access necessary health services, perpetuating a cycle of poverty that restricts their employment opportunities and undermines their overall empowerment in society.

Children's involvement in seasonal agricultural labor significantly exacerbates various socio-economic challenges. These young individuals often miss essential educational opportunities, which hampers their immediate development and negatively impacts their cognitive, social, and emotional growth. The lack of formal education restricts their ability to acquire vital skills and knowledge necessary for securing better job

prospects in the future. Consequently, these children frequently find themselves trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty that is hard to escape. The immediate demands of seasonal work overshadow their potential for learning and personal growth, making it exceedingly difficult for them to envision a brighter future. This cycle perpetuates limited access to educational resources and contributes to a broader societal issue affecting entire communities.

They also have no access to the public services of the welfare state, such as education and health care. Given that most children working in seasonal agriculture are also deprived of education, deprivation of public services has become a significant problem in the lives of these workers. They are also excluded from bureaucratic relations. They have limited opportunities to participate in decision-making processes in public institutions. They do not have the opportunity to be part of the decision-making process about their wages, which are set by the authorities by law. Daily wages are the responsibility of the governorates, which have no control over wages. Workers do not have any participation in the decision-making mechanism that determines these prices.

Furthermore, seasonal agricultural workers are excluded from fundamental types of social relations. According to Reimer, social exclusion arises from three fundamental types of social relations: market, bureaucratic, associative, and communal (Reimer, 2004). A clear connection exists between their exclusion from these three types of relations and their overall living standards. Seasonal farm workers' living conditions, inability to engage in business and civic life, and difficulties adapting to social circumstances contribute to their social exclusion. In that sense, the exclusion of seasonal farm workers is intricately linked to informal and vulnerable employment, characterized by job insecurity, long hours, and poor working conditions in the agricultural sector.

Often, these workers find themselves in precarious situations that lead to significant job instability. They work long hours under substandard conditions that compromise their physical health and well-being. Many of these households, heavily reliant on seasonal labor, often need more essential skills and social connections, which can severely limit their employment opportunities. Similarly, workers cannot participate in decision-making processes regarding their wages, which are determined by

authorities. Daily wages are set by governors and farm intermediaries, excluding workers from the decision-making mechanisms that establish these rates.

Considering the exclusionary and inclusionary consequences of organization and social relations among seasonal agricultural workers, it can be said that there are strong social relations among the workers. In this respect, social networks and kinship relations with local people are essential factors for seasonal agricultural workers. For example, most people from Şanlıurfa are involved in agriculture through family and friends. In other words, after someone from Şanlıurfa starts doing this work, the number of Şanlıurfa workers gradually increases through personal relationships and social networks. Recruitment through these social networks is the basis of most seasonal agricultural work. More specifically, agricultural intermediaries often ask existing workers to recommend friends and relatives who can do the work to fill vacancies. Recruitment through networks saves the landowner the cost of hiring and training new workers, as existing workers only refer and train those who can do the work (Martin, 2016).

Seasonal agricultural workers often need more access to capital, investing in ventures that could lead to better economic outcomes challenging. Their limited freedom of movement further restricts their ability to seek improved market opportunities or alternative economic options that could enhance their quality of life. Due to perpetually low incomes, these workers engage minimally with the broader market economy, exacerbating their difficulties adapting to changing economic conditions, especially given their restricted purchasing power. As a result, their exclusion from market relations and alternative economic opportunities is almost inevitable, as households and their members often need more skills, contacts, capital, or freedom of movement.

The denial of access to public services, such as education and healthcare, is a pressing issue that requires immediate attention. This problem affects not only the current generation but also the future potential of the communities. Additionally, the living conditions of seasonal workers significantly contribute to their marginalization. These workers often endure substandard housing, which can worsen health issues and highlight their precarious situation. The lack of adequate shelter, sanitation, and basic

amenities further isolates them from the broader community and increases their vulnerability. This environment presents yet another layer of challenges that these workers must overcome as they strive to break the cycle of poverty and achieve a more stable life. Thus, it is essential to address these systemic challenges to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment for seasonal agricultural workers and the communities in which they reside.

It is essential to closely examine the implications of employing seasonal workers at the community level. The relationships among seasonal farm workers, their social networks, and their kinship ties with the local community play a significant role in the seasonal agricultural sector. For instance, many individuals from Şanlıurfa find employment in this area due to their family and friendship connections. Once someone from Şanlıurfa starts working in this field, the number of workers from that area tends to increase because of these personal relationships and social networks. A substantial portion of seasonal farm employment relies on network recruitment. Farm intermediaries often ask current workers to refer friends and relatives capable of performing the work to fill vacant positions. This practice benefits landowners by reducing the costs of recruiting and training new workers. Existing workers will recommend only competent individuals who can take responsibility for their training (Martin, 2016).

The influx of temporary workers can significantly impact local labor market dynamics. Reimer points out that social exclusion operates on multiple levels; individuals may feel included within a small group while still excluded from the broader community. As competition for available jobs increases, it can unintentionally disadvantage long-term residents. Seasonal workers often occupy positions locals typically seek, leading to fewer job opportunities for those seeking employment. Additionally, lower-wage seasonal roles can put downward pressure on wages, making it harder for residents to achieve the economic stability and security necessary for a decent quality of life. This competitive labor environment can foster a sense of social exclusion among established residents, who may view seasonal workers as encroaching on their economic opportunities. Such perceptions can breed animosity and hostility, further isolating seasonal workers from the local community and complicating interactions between these groups. This divisive dynamic extends beyond economic competition;

it affects the broader social fabric, straining interpersonal relationships and creating a climate of division and tension.

Thus, it is crucial to formulate comprehensive strategies to break the poverty cycle and address the interconnected challenges of poverty in seasonal agricultural labor. This includes advocating for policies that protect children's rights, ensuring access to quality education, and providing support services that tackle the root causes of poverty. Additionally, ensuring that every child and family has access to essential resources—such as adequate nutrition, healthcare, and educational services—is critical. By addressing these needs, it is possible to create conditions in which children can improve academically and enhance their overall quality of life, potentially allowing them to escape the cycle of poverty.

4.3.1. Women and Children

The 2012 Türkiye Situation Summary Report on Seasonal Labor Migration in Agriculture provides a thorough analysis of the complexities within Turkish agriculture and the patterns of labor migration in the sector. The report emphasizes key characteristics of agriculture, particularly the prevalence of small and medium-sized landownership, which significantly influences farming practices and labor conditions. A crucial point highlighted in the report is the heavy reliance on unpaid labor, especially from women. There exists a gender-based division of labor that is deeply rooted in the agricultural landscape; this division not only defines the roles of adults but also perpetuates inequality in the labor market. Women often occupy precarious, low-paying jobs without formal recognition or compensation for their contributions.

Additionally, the report notes that men seek long-term seasonal work and often migrate to meet labor demands over extended periods. This trend reinforces traditional gender roles within families and communities. Moreover, seasonal migration can disrupt family structures and economic stability, particularly for women left behind, juggling domestic responsibilities alongside agricultural tasks. Wage disparities among seasonal agricultural workers are another significant issue discussed in the report. It

reveals that individuals performing the same tasks may receive vastly different pay. This inconsistency often results in discrimination that primarily affects women, who are frequently undervalued in wage negotiations and job opportunities.

Women actively engage in the same agricultural tasks as their male counterparts, demonstrating their capability and essential role within the sector. However, they typically shoulder additional responsibilities beyond these tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Often considered part of traditional household duties, these tasks can significantly increase their overall workload and limit their opportunities for rest and personal development. Unfortunately, female agricultural workers face severe risks and dangers in their working environments. Reports indicate that many experience harassment, sexual assault, and various forms of violence while working in the fields and during migration for employment. These threats impact their physical safety, mental health, and overall well-being (ILO, 2024).

Seasonal female agricultural workers often lack access to essential health insurance and social security benefits. This lack of support means that many do not receive necessary birth-related leave or medical care during pregnancy and childbirth. The combination of challenging working conditions and limited access to healthcare increases the risks faced by women in agriculture. Additionally, factors such as poor hygiene practices, low socioeconomic status, and cultural influences like early marriages significantly contribute to health challenges. Early marriages can lead to adolescent pregnancies, which pose further health risks for both young mothers and their infants. Unfortunately, these circumstances may result in serious health complications or even fatalities for mothers and their children. This situation highlights the urgent need for improved protections and support systems for women in the agricultural workforce.

In interviews with district administrations, officials emphasized that the Ministry promotes public health by offering hygiene training programs for families. One municipal worker stated, "The Ministry has programs to educate families on essential practices contributing to better health and sanitation. Additionally, the Ministry conducts specialized training sessions focused on birth control and reproductive health, specifically tailored for women." This statement underscores the government's

commitment to empowering women with the knowledge and resources necessary to make informed decisions about their reproductive health. The administrator also noted a cultural practice within the community where some workers maintain multiple marriages, often having two wives. This aspect of local customs reflects traditional family structures and prevalent social dynamics.

A closer examination of women's experiences in the Tarım-İş study on Women Seasonal Farmworkers in Türkiye reveals that their working conditions are shaped by male figures such as employers, mediators, husbands, or fathers (Yıldırak, Gülçubuk, Gün, & Olhan, 2003). This patriarchal framework limits women's agencies and exacerbates their social exclusion within the agricultural sector. Therefore, it is essential to consider the multifaceted factors affecting women's daily lives, including societal norms, economic pressures, and access to resources, to fully understand their challenges in seasonal agricultural work.

In her study, Yılmaz highlights a significant demographic trend among the seasonal agricultural workforce in Sarıoba, noting that women represent half of all seasonal agricultural workers in the area, as reported by an agricultural mediator (Yılmaz, 2020). This mediator also indicates that many of these women are joined by their children, particularly those aged twelve and older, who contribute labor on the farms. This situation is particularly striking because intermediaries—individuals or entities facilitate the connection between farm owners and workers—maintain close relationships with these families.

Furthermore, academic research shows that children of seasonal agricultural workers who are involved in agricultural activities are quite common. For example, in 2014, DW conducted a field study on seasonal migrant farmworker families and their children (aged 6-14) affected by seasonal agricultural migration to work in the hazelnut harvest in the Western Black Sea region. The survey showed that 72.9 percent (329 out of 451 children) of household members under eighteen participated in the hazelnut harvest. Field studies conducted in subsequent years also showed that the numbers decreased after 2010, but the problem persisted despite all the efforts.

Many children in these families face challenges that hinder their ability to attend school consistently. The lack of nearby, easily accessible educational facilities at their

workplaces exacerbates this issue. When schools are far away or difficult to reach, families are less likely to prioritize education, which leads to decreased enrollment and attendance rates. Even those who manage to enroll often drop out before completing their education. This instability can arise from several factors, such as families needing to move frequently to different agricultural locations in search of work and disrupting their education. The implications of not attending school are profound, as access to education is necessary for children to develop the skills and knowledge that can lead to better job prospects in the future. This lack of educational attainment perpetuates a cycle in which families remain impoverished, unable to secure stable, well-paid employment. Consequently, children and their families may need more motivation regarding school attendance.

This complex interplay between economic necessity and educational access highlights a critical area requiring targeted intervention and thoughtful policy consideration in the region. Strategies that support these families, such as access to childcare services, educational programs tailored for working children, and policies addressing the financial instability faced by seasonal workers, are vital for promoting economic security and the educational advancement of the next generation. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to reevaluate and reform existing structures to promote equity and improve the livelihoods of all agricultural workers, particularly women and children.

It is essential to provide services that enable children to exercise their rights to education, play, and other activities while their families work. Ensuring access to education and maintaining educational continuity for all children is crucial for alleviating poverty. The connection between the children of seasonal agricultural workers and their education is deeply intertwined, reflecting a cyclical pattern that mirrors the ongoing cycle of poverty. Many of these families face economic hardships and mobility challenges due to their seasonal work. As a result, children from these families often encounter significant barriers that hinder their ability to engage in the educational process fully.

The nature of seasonal agricultural work often requires families to collaborate, which can lead to children neglecting their education from an early age. Many children feel

obligated to contribute to their family's income, negatively impacting their academic success. Geçgin, in his research on seasonal agricultural labor in various districts of Ankara, emphasizes that many workers come from families where both parents and grandparents have previously worked in agriculture (Geçgin, 2009). For these families, seasonal agricultural work is a traditional practice passed down through generations due to structural conditions and economic necessity. Consequently, seasonal agricultural families perpetuate poverty and social exclusion across generations. As a result, they frequently enter the labor market as unskilled workers, earning wages that keep them trapped in a cycle of poverty.

The Action Plan for Seasonal Agricultural Workers, prepared by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs in 2010, aimed to improve the current situation of these workers and develop them into a long-term, qualified workforce by addressing issues related to transportation, housing, education, health, and working conditions. The plan also included ensuring access to educational services for children of compulsory school age, raising awareness about seasonal migrant workers and their families, addressing child labor, and combating poverty.

Furthermore, it ensures that families, women, children, and individuals with disadvantages, such as disabilities, can access support services without difficulties. The METİP Sarıoba Settlement is a positive example by establishing an educational space for children in collaboration with civil society. However, this educational space is available to children for a limited time each day. Additionally, the tent settlement lacks a playground or child-friendly area where children can spend most of their time. Despite these limitations, the Sarıoba METİP settlement has the potential to serve as a valuable resource for the community.

4.4. Findings on Local Governments & Poverty Alleviation Policies

This section provides an in-depth discussion of the interview questions and presents the findings of the interviewees. It also evaluates legislation and policy documents related to seasonal agricultural workers, highlighting the responsibilities of local governments as outlined in these materials. The interviews aim to assess the role of

local governments in alleviating poverty among seasonal agricultural workers considering current challenges, compare these conditions to those in the past, and develop recommendations for future improvements.

The challenges related to the working conditions and living arrangements of seasonal agricultural workers are significant issues that have garnered attention in Türkiye and around the globe for many years. These deeply rooted problems require a thoughtful, long-term approach for effective resolution. To genuinely improve seasonal agricultural workers' living and working conditions, it is essential to implement comprehensive and well-planned policies that address their basic needs and enhance their overall well-being. Achieving this goal necessitates carefully allocating resources and personnel, creating detailed local action plans, and evaluating their success. Additionally, fostering robust collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, including governmental institutions, civil society organizations, and the business market, will significantly enhance the execution of poverty alleviation initiatives. By promoting open communication and sharing resources and expertise, these entities work together more efficiently and finally lead to improved outcomes and a more impactful implementation of policies.

Furthermore, gathering dependable data and carefully monitoring results are essential for evaluating their effectiveness. This process involves collecting quantitative and qualitative information and ensuring the data is precise and comprehensive. Moreover, there is an urgent need for a practical and innovative approach to collecting data that reflects the agricultural labor market's fluid and rapidly evolving landscape. This understanding is critical to assessing the extent of additional support required to assist these workers and their families adequately.

Local governments play a vital role in addressing various community needs, and their advantages include a high degree of flexibility and the capability to act quickly in response to local challenges. This responsiveness enables them to tailor their programs and services to the diverse needs of their constituents, particularly those who are vulnerable and facing economic hardships. However, it is crucial to understand that the local government's effectiveness heavily depends on strong coordination and harmonization with central government authorities. One of the primary responsibilities

of local governments in the context of poverty reduction is to facilitate communication and coordination among the various stakeholders involved with seasonal agricultural workers. It involves advocating for these workers' rights and interests and ensuring their needs are met through comprehensive support services. The consequences can be detrimental when there are gaps or disruptions in service delivery. They can lead to the loss of limited resources and render it increasingly difficult for individuals to escape the cycle of poverty. This inefficiency can hinder progress and exacerbate existing challenges.

By emphasizing poverty alleviation efforts, there is an opportunity to empower families who depend on agriculture as their primary source of livelihood. This empowerment can help establish stable and sustainable income, which is essential for their immediate survival and for achieving a living standard that respects the dignity of individuals. Implementing targeted initiatives, such as access to education and training programs, can equip seasonal agricultural families with the skills necessary to improve their agricultural yields and diversify their income sources.

These efforts may enhance the families' overall quality of life by fostering more economic stability. As their financial situations improve, they may be in a better position to advocate for their labor rights. Creating an environment that acknowledges their contributions through community support and awareness campaigns can highlight families' economic contributions. Recognizing their efforts can contribute to a sustainable framework that uplifts these families while supporting their communities' overall economic development.

Therefore, the capacity of local governments to collaborate effectively with central government entities is of utmost importance. Such collaboration ensures that local initiatives are complemented by broader national strategies, creating a cohesive approach to poverty alleviation. By working together, local and central governments can maximize their resources and enhance the impact of their efforts, improving the living conditions of those affected by poverty.

4.4.1. Share of Responsibilities

Although the intentions outlined in the METİP Circular are commendable, there is a

pressing need for better execution of the recommended measures and action plans. Many proposed solutions require a more effective and timelier implementation, leaving seasonal agricultural workers with inadequate protection and resources. This gap highlights the urgent need for improved coordination and commitment from public institutions and private and civil initiatives to alleviate poverty. A diverse coalition of organizations is actively engaged in this effort, tirelessly striving to secure employment opportunities for seasonal agricultural workers and to uphold their human rights and dignity in working conditions. Their collaborative efforts address immediate needs and promote sustainable practices that guarantee fair treatment, safe working environments, and adequate housing. This united approach reflects a strong commitment to safeguarding workers' rights within the agricultural sector.

The complexities and challenges faced by public officials responsible for making crucial decisions and implementing policies in this sector are considerable. The division of responsibilities among these officials has led to significant uncertainty and confusion, hindering effective governance of poverty. Much of this confusion stems from vague and ambiguous language in existing legislation, which fails to offer clear guidelines or frameworks defining the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders. Additionally, there are notable areas for improvement in how these responsibilities are assigned, resulting in overlapping duties or, conversely, a need for more accountability among those involved. Such ambiguities impede public officials' ability to make informed decisions and fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

Additionally, introducing new policies often leads to uncertainties, emphasizing the need for thorough evaluations (Bayırbağ, 2013). Identifying and addressing existing policies' shortcomings is crucial to ensure they achieve their intended objectives. This underscores the importance of careful examination during the policymaking and implementation phases to enhance the effectiveness of poverty reduction initiatives.

Furthermore, according to METİP circulars, implementation should occur through action plans and participatory methods based on policies established at the central level. However, there are no specific local action plans in place. The Circular emphasizes the necessity for the participation of institutions and organizations at all levels. An interviewee from the Polatlı Municipality explained their participation in

these gatherings. He stated, "We attend the meetings, and our staff also participates regularly. The Ministry is informing us about the National Action Plan for these meetings. We are tracking the METİP Circular very closely. We provide all services assigned to us by Circular." This statement is particularly significant as it sheds light on the lack of a comprehensive local action plan for seasonal agricultural workers.

In the Polatlı district, the Governor oversees all facets of public management. At the same time, the local municipality plays a critical role by actively participating in these essential meetings. This collaboration is vital as it ensures that the Governor and their team remain consistently informed about the extensive national plans directly impacting seasonal agricultural workers. However, it appears that local and district authorities currently lack tangible local action plans. When questioned about this absence, their response indicated that they rely on regular meetings to discuss relevant issues. Nevertheless, it is crucial to develop and implement local action plans that align with and expand upon national initiatives, ensuring that the unique circumstances and needs of the community are thoroughly addressed in policy application.

Interviewees within the municipality and the governorship believe that the Ministries are primarily responsible for delivering vocational, social, and sporting services for seasonal agricultural workers and their families, including children. This perspective is rooted in the guidelines outlined by the METİP Circular, which designates the Provincial Directorates of the İŞKUR as the leading organizations responsible for adult education initiatives in the community, alongside the National Education Ministry. These initiatives are implemented through public education and vocational training centers strategically established to enhance the workforce's skill sets. Also, the circular states that coordinated studies will be conducted with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security to ensure that services such as mobile libraries and museums provided by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism operate in temporary settlement areas.

Similarly, the Ministry of Youth and Sports will organize social and sporting activities for the children of seasonal agricultural workers. By doing so, they not only equip workers with valuable competencies but also address the critical issue of child labor that often arises in seasonal agricultural work. Such efforts aim to foster a more informed, equitable, and engaged society where every individual can thrive and make

meaningful contributions to their community.

Interviewees in Polatlı municipality and the governorship were asked about the presence and execution of information and awareness-raising activities concerning the National Action Plan on seasonal agricultural workers. Employees within the Governor's office shared insightful responses, indicating that they routinely receive timely updates from their governors on the latest developments related to this national initiative. One member of the Governor's team elaborated on this by emphasizing the Governor's proactive engagement in all meetings organized by the Presidency, which focus on enhancing the welfare and safeguarding the rights of seasonal farm workers.

Interviewees in the local governments believe that the Ministry bears primary responsibility for organizing informative and awareness-raising sessions regarding seasonal agricultural workers and their families. There is a general agreement that the provincial directorates of these ministries carry out such awareness-raising activities. This responsibility stems from the METİP circular, which mandates that the provincial directorates of the İŞKUR and the Social Security Institution conduct initiatives to improve workers' labor and social security conditions. These efforts involve collaboration with relevant public institutions and organizations, notably the provincial national education directorates. Specifically, the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs leads educational programs and awareness campaigns that address the challenges and opportunities associated with seasonal agricultural employment, as outlined in the Circular. However, governorships and municipalities lack explicit mandates to hold sessions on women's health or child labor for seasonal agricultural workers. As a result, local authorities do not feel fully responsible for conducting awareness-raising activities.

Furthermore, while the Ministry does offer these sessions, their number is limited and primarily targets families, often excluding landowners, agricultural intermediaries, and traders. Due to their physical proximity and familiarity with the local context, local authorities could be more inclusive than central government agencies. Although the Circular does not explicitly require municipalities or governorships to undertake this role, local authorities possess the resources and capacity to implement awareness-raising activities effectively. They can provide tailored educational and vocational

services that meet the specific needs of seasonal agricultural workers. This capability allows local governments to complement and enhance the Ministry's efforts, creating a more supportive environment for these workers and their families. Consequently, collaboration between the Ministry and local governments is essential to ensure that seasonal agricultural workers receive the guidance and support they need to navigate their circumstances more effectively.

In addition to the above, all decision-making and implementing bodies must provide coherent and consistent policy responses to address seasonal agricultural workers' challenges. Communication and collaboration among all stakeholders are essential to ensure the project's sustainability. Local governments should take a proactive and cooperative approach, as their involvement is crucial for the project's overall success. Local administrations can align their efforts with the central government's objectives by promoting a collaborative environment and creating a unified strategy for executing the METİP Project. Strengthening these relationships will facilitate smoother implementation and ensure that the project addresses the diverse needs of the communities it aims to serve.

Following the Presidential Circular 2024/5 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers', it continues the provisions of the 2017 circular while addressing its shortcomings and introducing significant changes, particularly in terms of cooperation and coordination. For instance, under the 2017 circular, it was only necessary to transfer the allocation or protocol document to e-METIP for the areas specified in the action plan prepared by the Governor. Similarly, the Governor's Office will enter the action plan into e-METIP annually within the timeframe specified by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security. Furthermore, the circular stipulates that new action plans will not be considered unless the previous year's action plan results reports have been entered into e-METIP. Thus, the government seeks to keep data digitally. Moreover, ascertaining the population during a disaster can be considered a fundamental advantage of this registration system.

The METİP Circular 2024/5 delineates a framework for action plans at the governorate level as part of its commitment to addressing local needs. A notable shift in this initiative is the transition of funding allocation into the digital domain through the e-

METİP platform, which aims to streamline processes and enhance efficiency. However, examining the current national policy documents reveals significant gaps and shortcomings. These documents often lack a solid foundation in comprehensive data or thorough research, creating policies without a complete understanding of the challenges and specific needs. For example, although media reports occasionally showcase officials visiting METİP areas, it remains uncertain whether systematic needs analyses accompany them. During interviews with key stakeholders, it became evident that no in-depth needs assessments were implemented. All eight interviewees were unaware of such initiatives when asked about any formal field studies—such as needs analyses or mapping activities—conducted about the METİP project. They acknowledged receiving general information from the central administration regarding the METİP project; however, none reported undertaking systematic field studies.

One interviewee from the governorship mentioned, "I have no information about that. However, our administrators have visited the workers multiple times before the METİP project and have continued to oversee the situation by visiting temporary settlements throughout the project. I am unsure whether these visits are conducted regularly or if there is any documentation on field studies like needs mapping or similar initiatives." In a similar vein, an interviewee from the municipality noted that authorities frequently conducted visits to the region and were able to identify local needs during those times. Nevertheless, a formal system to record these observations was conspicuously absent. To address these shortcomings, it is crucial to establish a robust monitoring and supervision system that effectively oversees all planned activities. This system should include a comprehensive digital registration platform.

Consequently, there is no evidence of a structured needs analysis or mapping undertaken for seasonal agricultural workers residing in the Sarıoba METİP Settlement. This lack of thorough assessment is concerning, as it is essential to carry out a detailed needs analysis that includes mapping the target group to uncover their specific challenges. Unfortunately, the involvement of local administrations, non-governmental organizations, and professional bodies in this critical process has been minimal. This oversight shows that current policies cannot understand the underlying issues and needs. Had local authorities, who possess a deeper insight into the unique circumstances of their communities been included more actively, the preliminary

analyses would have been more accurate and reflective of the realities on the ground.

4.4.2. Coordination Among Actors

The legal framework must encompass all institutions and involve relevant organizations to effectively implement and oversee the proposed initiatives. Given the numerous public committees, private firms, and civil initiatives involved in policy implementation, regulating their interactions and defining their roles in policy development can be challenging. Creating orientation guidelines on poverty alleviation policies to mitigate this issue can facilitate smoother operations. For example, developing a guideline on the METİP Circular for services under the authority and responsibility of governorships and municipalities is essential. This approach will help ensure that implementations through local action plans and participatory methods align with central policies, thereby promoting the involvement of institutions and organizations at all levels.

In interviews, municipal and district governor officials were asked whether orientation guidelines have been provided to ensure the proper execution of policies within their jurisdiction. Most respondents indicated that no such guidelines existed; however, they noted that the Ministry communicated relevant responsibilities during regular, intermittent meetings.

One interviewee stated: "As Polatlı district governorship, we regularly participate in monitoring and evaluation meetings on seasonal agricultural workers. The relevant ministries are present at these meetings, informing us of what we need to do and how to do it. We interpret the directives through general circulars. The process is already progressing with the knowledge of our district governor." However, guidelines for such actors are essential for consistently implementing policies.

In 2017, designated temporary settlement areas were chosen from publicly owned or Treasury properties, with final approval from the Ministry of Finance for specific purposes. As of 2024, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change will handle the allocation of requested Treasury properties, while other public properties will be allocated based on a protocol established with the Governor's Office

and relevant public institutions, including professional organizations. This amendment has been made to distribute the responsibilities previously held by the Ministry of Finance. While the legislation is still recent, the impact of these policy changes has yet to be fully assessed.

In 2017, the Presidency of Religious Affairs was tasked by the provincial mufti offices with taking all necessary measures to address the faith and worship needs of seasonal agricultural workers and their families. In 2024, the Presidency was further tasked with increasing awareness among children and families about their right to education and the significance of education in provinces with and without the highest number of migrants. It will also support initiatives to educate families about preventing child labor and ensure children continue their compulsory education. The provincial Mufti's offices have been included in responsibility for the efforts to combat poverty and child labor.

Reimer presents social exclusion and inclusion as intricate and multifaceted concepts encompassing various dimensions. At the heart of this discussion is that individuals can be marginalized or cut off from numerous forms of institutional and social organizations. Seasonal agricultural workers encounter significant hurdles in accessing vital infrastructure services, such as clean water and reliable energy sources, including natural gas. Reimer highlights the pervasive link between poverty and social exclusion, emphasizing how these issues often stem from the uneven distribution of resources across different communities.

In municipalities with limited financial resources allocated for infrastructure services, seasonal workers, typically employed in remote areas, can experience severe deprivation of essential facilities. The term "outlying areas" is especially relevant in this context, as these workers frequently migrate to rural locations based on job availability. These rural regions are where seasonal agricultural activities occur within the municipalities. A poignant example is the Sarıoba district, which previously operated under provincial administrations while it held village status. During interviews, the interviewees noted that the range of services extended to the Sarıoba neighborhood also encompasses the METİP settlement within its boundaries. However, it became evident that regions characterized by intensive seasonal

agricultural work necessitate more frequent oversight and support than standard.

Critical infrastructure issues—such as sewage management, garbage disposal, waste collection, pest control, and access to clean water—require heightened attention, particularly during peak seasons when workers flood these areas. The interviewee's feedback revealed that agricultural regions undergo regular pest control treatments; however, a specific garbage collection system for the METİP area was notably absent, leaving tap water as the occupants' primary hydration source. Consequently, a holistic understanding of poverty—addressing its multifaceted dimensions—is imperative.

Intermediaries in the agricultural sector should be registered and legally supervised. The Provincial Directorates of the İŞKUR will conduct promotional and incentive activities to facilitate the employment of seasonal agricultural workers through private employment agencies or agricultural intermediaries registered with the General Directorate of the İŞKUR. Measures will be implemented to certify agricultural intermediaries, prevent uncertified intermediaries from recruiting workers, and ensure the proper execution of contracts between intermediaries and employers or directly between workers and employers. Additionally, mechanisms will be established to resolve disputes between employers/intermediaries and workers, primarily through monitoring committees at the provincial and district levels.

Türkiye has no comprehensive legislation shaped by the legal framework and local welfare policies regarding seasonal agricultural workers. In this context, there are many reasons for this gap in terms of studies focusing on the relationship between service providers and poverty. The central government influences and supports infrastructure development by developing sector policies, standards and guidelines, and budget allocations. In a successful example of coordination between central government and local participation, Indonesia initiated a decentralization process in 2001 that devolved local authorities' responsibility for local infrastructure development. The capacities required at these levels achieved in Indonesia are not yet sufficiently developed in Türkiye, affecting the state of the country's infrastructure. Priority should be given to developing basic systems for effective and accountable administrative and fiscal management and participatory planning and monitoring models. In this context, pro-poor local governance models should be introduced, and

technical skills in various sectors should be strengthened.

Communication, interaction, and coordination for reducing poverty seem to be the most significant challenges local governments face in poverty reduction. In many places, people experiencing poverty have little influence in local politics. They may live in inaccessible areas or face prejudice and discrimination based on ethnicity, class, or gender. However, a firm ground can be established by building the capacity of the poor and achieving economic and political gains. Improved communication and coordination can help local authorities and people experiencing poverty understand each other and become constructively engaged in working together.

An interviewee from the Rural Development Department of Polatlı Municipality explained their participation in these gatherings. He stated, "We attend the meetings, and our staff also participates regularly. I also attend the yearly meetings as part of the Rural Development Department. We are tracking the METİP Circular very closely. We provide all the services assigned to us by Circular. We supply electricity and water to METİP, collect waste once a week, and manage infrastructural services." This statement is particularly significant as it sheds light on the municipality's outlook on their roles and responsibilities. It depicts that they are not directly obligated to initiate specific educational activities or training programs for seasonal agricultural workers. This perspective hints at a potential service gap, revealing an area that could be better addressed to meet the distinct needs of the seasonal agricultural workforce.

The district governor is responsible for implementing the action plans. Municipalities have limited responsibilities in this context, including essential services such as garbage collection, clean water supply, electricity provision, and infrastructural services. They do not have specific duties to enhance educational activities or provide awareness-raising sessions for seasonal agricultural families, agricultural intermediaries, or landowners. In this context, local service provision is addressed concerning the concept of the local welfare system, which underlies the fragmented and dynamic nature of local service provision; workers' access to this local service provision is addressed in terms of the local response to seasonal labor mobility. It also shows how coordination between service providers affects access to services within the given legal framework.

Following the Presidential Circular 2024/5 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers', it continues the provisions of the 2017 circular while addressing its shortcomings and introducing significant changes, particularly in terms of cooperation and coordination. For instance, under the 2017 circular, it was only necessary to transfer the allocation or protocol document (e-METIP) for the areas specified in the action plan prepared by the Governor. However, the 2024 circular requires the action plan, developed in consultation with stakeholders, to be entered into e-METIP to ensure the sustainability of the METİP campus.

In addition, the distribution of duties and responsibilities of local governments in existing legislation is not comprehensive enough. Kalkınma Atolyesi stated, "In addition, since the institutions and resources functionalized are different, it is necessary to ensure that they work in a coordinated manner, which is not easy. This must be one of the main reasons why Circular No. 2010/6 is insufficient" (Kalkınma Atolyesi, 2016). Since the goal is obvious, but the ways to achieve it are difficult and complex, it is necessary to try to be realistic and understandable, without being simplistic or sloppy, when formulating proposals on what needs to be done. Inter-institutional cooperation and coordination help to increase coordination.

The multidimensional nature of the problem requires simultaneous and joint efforts that are complex and interdependent, both in terms of responsible institutions and responsibilities. For example, poverty, one of the leading causes of child labor in seasonal agriculture, cannot be eliminated by a single strategy. Nor is it possible to solve this problem, which affects the whole of humanity, through local policies alone. This is also true for problems such as unemployment and lack of educational opportunities that cause children to work in seasonal agriculture. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure coordination and cooperation between all relevant institutions in a vast environment.

Before Presidential Decree No. 1, adopted on July 10, 2018, the Prime Ministry ensured cooperation and coordination between ministries. With this decree, the task has been transferred to the Presidency, and as this is a very new system, it is not yet possible to recommend this issue.

Institutions responsible for ensuring cooperation, coordination, and participation:

- Presidential Policy Boards
- Education and Training Policy Committee
- Economic Policy Committee
- Legal Policy Committee
- Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs
- Minimum Wage Determination Commission
- Seasonal Agricultural Work Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
- Agricultural Support and Steering Committee
- Rural Development Support and Monitoring Committee
- Ministry of the Interior
- Unions for the Provision of Village Services

Institutions that can support and participate in the process are Political parties, trade unions, professional associations, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, cooperatives, agricultural producer associations, and international organizations. At the same time, many committees have been established in this regard. These committees serve this purpose. However, it is unclear which of the old committees will continue to exist in the presidential system of government, and their working procedures are not yet known. On the other hand, it is necessary to develop practical cooperation not only between national institutions but also between international institutions. There is a need to share experiences and work towards common goals. This should be between governments, governments and international organizations, civil society organizations, trade unions, and professional associations. Therefore, there is a need for multi-level and multi-centered cooperation, not single-level and single-centered cooperation. It is also necessary to regulate the relationship between these committees and their contribution to the policy to be developed in this area.

4.4.3. Data Management

Since this is a multi-layered policy document, determining how the needs for resources and human resources for each stage will be met is a policy issue. Municipalities must also provide unique budgetary and human resources to ensure that workers have decent housing, food, education, training, play, and sports facilities where they come to work.

Fair working conditions (working hours, vacations, social security, etc.). Both financial and human resources are needed for each of these steps. Some of them are required to be provided by the state. For example, the state must ensure that education is accessible, equitable, and of high quality for every child and to take measures to ensure that children who are migrants also benefit from this right. For these services, the state must allocate human and financial resources. It is necessary to assign responsibilities to the local government units and calculate the financial burden of each responsibility from the beginning.

The institutions and organizations responsible for the measures will carry out information and awareness activities for workers and agricultural intermediaries in the sending provinces, employers, and the local population in the receiving provinces so that the measures can be properly understood and implemented. The additional financial resources needed for the activities to be carried out can also be covered by the budgets of the Directorates for the Supervision and Coordination of Investments, the Special Provincial Administrations, the Municipalities, the Social Assistance Foundations, and the Solidarity Foundations.

Institutions in charge of the planning of the budget and the allocation of human resources are Presidency, Presidency of Strategy and Budget, Economic Policy Council, Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Affairs, Minimum Wage Commission, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Agriculture Support and Advisory Committee, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Ziraat Bank. Also, institutions that can support this process and take part in it are Political Parties, Cooperatives, Federation of Unions (Türk-İş, DİSK, Hak_İş), NGOs, Agricultural Producers' Associations.

While the situation of seasonal farm workers has received increased attention, interventions and research have not been carried out within the framework of a data-

driven implementation program. Instead, each institution has worked from its perspective. However, it is necessary first to identify areas of overlap and gaps, if any, and develop a comprehensive list of responsibilities. Then, identify the institution responsible for each responsibility.

Accurate, timely, and meticulously detailed data is the foundation for reducing legal gaps during policy implementations. Recording all relevant information within existing systems is vital to ensure comprehensive implementation. However, numerous unanswered questions pose significant challenges to formulate concrete and workable policies. For instance, we still lack crucial data regarding the number of children engaged in seasonal agricultural work, particularly by specific periods and geographical regions and categorized by age and gender.

Similarly, it remains unclear how effectively the support services provided by various entities, including corporations, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations—reach the families of seasonal agricultural workers, especially during the peak harvest seasons. Furthermore, there is a significant gap in information regarding the effects of educational programs on the families of seasonal agricultural workers in their home provinces. Considering these challenges, there is an immediate and pressing need for comprehensive data collection and targeted research efforts to gather the detailed information necessary for informed decision-making and policy development.

To illustrate the issue above, the TÜİK is a relevant example. It has conducted surveys on child labor force participation periodically, with the most recent one occurring in 2019. This survey represents the only regular national effort specifically focused on collecting child labor data. However, the publication of this data could be more frequent. The survey was conducted in 1994 and repeated in 1998, 2006, 2012, and 2019. These intervals are lengthy, and the survey must be conducted every 2 to 3 years to facilitate effective planning. So, there is a need to establish a new framework that provides access to more current, regional, and product-specific data. Moreover, the survey results offer limited information on working children, focusing on sectoral conditions, school attendance, and working hours. However, gathering more detailed data for each sector is crucial to better understanding the reasons behind child labor

and the conditions under which children work.

In addition to public institutions and the TÜİK, academic institutions, political parties, cooperatives, Confederation of Trade Unions (Türk-İş, DİSK, Hak-İş), non-governmental organizations, agricultural producer associations are institutions that can support this process in data collection, analysis, and research. Institutions that can also provide technical support to this process are the European Union, United Nations, UNICEF, ILO. For this reason, it should be a participatory process open to discussion among practitioners. Data management should ensure the participation of all relevant actors in policy-making processes. Civil society, professional organizations, and academic institutions are among the institutions that should contribute and participate in policymaking.

4.4.4. Local Governance

Under METİP I, provincial offices for seasonal agricultural workers, led by the deputy governor, were established, with one person from each office appointed as a coordinator. METİP Circular amendment in 2024 also outlines the responsibilities of the provincial coordinator in the provinces and the district coordinator in the districts. According to the circular, the provincial coordinator will collaborate with representatives of the relevant district directorates and municipalities, if necessary, with universities, non-governmental organizations, or professional organizations with public institutional status, as designated by the local administrative authority, during the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the action plan. The district coordinator is also required to support the provincial coordinator in preparing, implementing, and monitoring the action plan in cooperation with the district organizations of public institutions and organizations. These changes underscore the importance of local governance in the legislation.

In our country, it is possible to talk about a social structure in which the state, local governments, and non-governmental organizations can play a role in improving living and working conditions in rural areas. However, the fact that the population in rural areas is too small, fragmented, and numerous to be organized and directed towards a

single goal brings up a structure where local governments can pioneer eradicating poverty. This study will focus on local governments' roles, responsibilities, and problem-solving capacities in alleviating rural poverty.

In practice, the state and other actors in the production process are responsible for monitoring and supervision. Effective monitoring and supervision are essential to support social policies. However, monitoring and inspection cannot be carried out through a centralized system, given the nature of the agricultural sector, the short harvest season, and the short duration of workers' work in orchards, especially in some regions and crops. Therefore, labor inspectors should be organized provincially, especially in provinces where seasonal migrant workers are concentrated, and provincial teams should be mobile. On the other hand, inspectors should have a working principle that enables them to use different inspection methods together, such as routine, sudden, and upon notification.

On the other hand, the workers' and producers' organizations are one of the most important bodies for monitoring and supervising. Researchers have a consensus that legislation in the agricultural sector is disorganized and complex. Therefore, one of the priorities is to support the organization of workers and producers. There is a need to simplify legislation in the sector and to create a legal regime that allows for organizations based on democratic participation and governance. However, it is not possible to have a solution to the problems of organizing through legislation alone. It is also necessary to make sure that society and the political powers change their point of view on the advantages of an organized society.

The traders and industrialists who use agricultural products should also be responsible for establishing rules to ensure decent working and living conditions for the entire supply chain, from producer to consumer. They should also establish a system to monitor, inspect, and advise on fulfilling these rules. The companies and non-governmental organizations that monitor and audit fair labor conditions should be renewed. These indicators should include standards that consider the principles of profit and sharing. It is impossible to ensure a fair income distribution without monitoring the functioning of the mechanisms designed to ensure that the worker is paid a "decent" wage.

Local governments are efficient and accountable, and they ought to authorize poverty alleviation measures. However, aid organizations and development banks, despite their financial resources and influence, possess limited ability to alleviate poverty independently unless they identify and collaborate with local partners. Collaborating directly with the international community is feasible; yet, engaging with several tiny and different organizations presents challenges.

A multi-level governance perspective is important to address poverty reduction by focusing on community needs. Such an approach not only reduces the existing problems of the communities but also supports respecting their fundamental rights and achieving sustainable development goals. When central governments encounter difficulties in tackling the multifaceted nature of poverty, local governments can effectively address these concerns due to their ability to respond swiftly. Their physical acquaintance helps local governments gain the expertise and experience to comprehend a region more thoroughly. In this regard, local governments possess the capability to identify sustainable solutions for poverty reduction among vulnerable or marginalized communities (ICMA, 2021).

In this context, the collaborative governance perspective offers valuable insights by emphasizing the need for collaboration and coordination at the local level when developing and implementing policies in this intricate area. Collaborative governance is defined as regular and well-structured cooperation between public and private actors to achieve a common goal (Emerson, Nabatchi, & Balogh, 2012). This process establishes a stakeholder partnership framework, typically focused on tackling complex, multidimensional issues. The framework considers the outcomes of collaboration not only in terms of policy objectives but also regarding social capital, learning, and capacity building. In that sense, a collaborative perspective provides insights into how local governments can implement effective poverty alleviation policies. Improving seasonal agricultural workers' living and working conditions requires a comprehensive policy framework that addresses various interconnected issues, such as environmental sustainability, access to essential services, social and vocational opportunities, and awareness-raising initiatives.

Local governments face some inherent obstacles to alleviating poverty. For example,

they often face problems identifying poverty causes and prioritizing interventions among other responsibilities or lacking data and information on specific poor groups. Local governments, historically ignored by central planning, naturally have little experience in preparing and implementing local development plans. The capacity of local governments to respond to local needs is further constrained by other problems and obstacles, such as insufficient decentralization, inadequate and disproportionate resources, and poor coordination across sectors. However, local governments make a significant contribution because poverty is a problem that requires a comprehensive response.

There are many reasons why local government may not be effective in alleviating poverty. The government may lack political will be due to competing interests, prejudices, or corruption. As a result, it may not prioritize poverty reduction in its decision-making. The government may also lack the capacity to act effectively if it has insufficient resources or staff or if the costs of action are too high. Governments also often lack knowledge about poverty at the local level. For example, they may not know where people with low incomes are located or why they are poor in the first place. Similarly, local governments may lack the capacity to synthesize information or design intervention strategies, even when information on poverty is available.

In some cases, local governments have the potential to address poverty. However, decentralization policies or related reforms do not provide the conditions or circumstances for local governments to act. Decentralization is often accompanied by significant policy changes brought about by reforms such as political participation, freedom of expression, markets, land, or forestry. In this context, it is essential to understand these policy frameworks to understand local governments' potential areas of responsibility. Unfortunately, the impact of new policies is often uncertain, and it will take time to determine how they will work and where gaps will be filled. In cases where local governments do not have legal obligations, they may need to cooperate with other institutions that have the authority to support policy reform or to promote the role of civil society organizations (Önen, 2010). This strengthens the argument that democratic governance needs to exist.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In brief, the seasonal migration of agricultural workers and its negative effects is a prominent issue that has been the focus of global and Turkish attention for many years. Because of that, it is essential to recognize that this has been a long and slow process and be honest about why it happened. The challenges of seasonal agricultural workers in Türkiye have been the focus of increasing attention and a prominent issue on the country's policy agenda, particularly since 2010. That year, the Prime Ministry published the Circular "Improving the Working and Social Life of Seasonal Agricultural Workers" (2010/6). Then, the Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Affairs launched a Project on Seasonal Agricultural Workers, hereafter which will referred to as –with its Turkish Acronym- METİP. Following the first program, Prime Ministry Circular No. 2017/6 on Seasonal Agricultural Workers was officially published and METİP II was initiated and implemented between 2017-2018. Under METİP II, pilot programs were set to be put in action in several provinces with vast numbers of seasonal agricultural workers. In these provinces, central government funding was allocated to establish temporary settlements that would fulfill the basic needs of seasonal agricultural workers and provide access to education, health, and social activities, as well as electricity, water, and sewerage infrastructure.

Over the past decade, significant legislative advancements have led to considerable improvements in workplace environments and housing provisions, both essential for workers' well-being. Since introducing legal regulations in 2010, multiple public institutions have taken on the critical responsibility of overseeing and enhancing seasonal agricultural workers' living and working conditions. Various legal measures have been instituted—including regulations, action plans, and extensive research initiatives aimed at tackling these urgent concerns and paving the way for a more equitable future for seasonal agricultural workers. This duty falls to various

government bodies, including ministries, provincial and district governors, and local governments. In recent years, different governmental units, such as ministries and district directorates, have collaborated significantly to alleviate poverty for vulnerable communities. These initiatives and regulations, implemented at both provincial and district levels, respond effectively to the needs of this seasonal workforce. However, there is still much to do to ensure fundamental human rights and inherent dignity for them.

Despite all these efforts and the noteworthy surge in awareness, interventions, research initiatives, and humanitarian aid to enhance the living conditions of seasonal agricultural workers since 2010, limited organizations have advocated for a more unified effort to effect substantial change. This appeal arises from the intricacies and challenges inherent in implementing poverty alleviation through such overarching policies. The deep-rooted problems targeted by national public authorities necessitate the implementation of long-term policies, greater predictability, and reduced uncertainty. For these reasons, regardless of the way the problem is defined, it is imperative to present the problem's form and nature, as well as its causes, in meticulous detail. This approach is essential for effective identification of solution and policy management. Consequently, it is crucial to emphasize all relevant actors and relationships to trace the coordinated implementation of intended solution programs.

The fact that policy documents are drafted by the institutions responsible for implementation results in a scope limited by their capacity. However, if the design is done by someone other than the person in charge of implementation, the chances of implementation will be lower. For this reason, an expert institution is expected to prepare the policy document with the participation of all relevant institutions.

Relations beyond the labor-management relationship, such as the reorganization of the minimum wage in the context of poverty reduction, need to be considered. Also, it is crucial to provide informative and awareness raising activities for seasonal agricultural workers and their families with emphasizing the underlying causes of the problem, such as poverty and child labor. However, no evidence exists that the Ministry has carried out awareness-raising activities for women. The municipalities can provide these services. However, the municipality does not feel responsible because it has not

been given a clear mandate. At this stage, central policy must strengthen the municipality's capacity. Both human and budgetary resources should be allocated for capacity building. This gap in practical application highlights the need for improved coordination and commitment from public institutions and employers.

The present policy structure only incorporates a limited number of relevant organizations. When institutions draft policy documents tailored to their implementation responsibilities, the resulting scope often reflects only the capabilities of those specific entities. In contrast, if organizations not directly involved in execution take on the task of preparing these documents, the likelihood of successful implementation diminishes significantly due to the disconnect between policy design and practical application. The current strategy addresses only a subset of the essential methods and actions required to reach the established target. For example, while the municipality holds accountability for crucial services such as waste disposal, sewage, and social assistance, these responsibilities are often executed in conjunction with the services provided by local villages. However, a significant gap exists in that there is no legal requirement to enhance institutional capacities during peak periods of agricultural labor, nor is there a mandate to appoint dedicated officers specifically for areas identified needing improvement through the METİP framework.

In addition, it is important to include all actors equally and horizontally at the local level. Institutions such as Gendarmerie can take on more active roles against child labor gender discrimination or safety issues of seasonal agricultural workers in the monitoring and evaluation process of public policies. Similarly, it is crucial to include mukhtars in the center of information flow in the public management. At the same time, Municipality and district governorship institutions are equally important in terms of implementation of poverty reduction policies. So, it seems important to implement a horizontal strategy in policy implementations for this kind of public policy management.

This signified the conclusion of a hierarchical public policy framework wherein the central government functioned as the exclusive decision-maker, consolidating all national power, directly intervening in the economy, and functioning in a top-down

manner. Rather, a public policy process exists wherein numerous public decision-makers concurrently operate within the same policy domain, hierarchical relationships are diminished across various spatial levels, representatives from the private sector and civil society are systematically engaged in decision-making processes, and direct intervention in economic and social relations become increasingly challenging. This situation does not function identically across all states; yet it is accurate to assert that a historical trend has emerged in this direction. As a result of these changes, the private sector and non-governmental organizations have formed or been restructured on multiple scales.

Finally, it is essential for all stakeholders including all actors like government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and agricultural companies to implement effective policies and programs that enhance both living and working conditions. In the sense of this, there should be a strong focus on raising awareness and educating workers about rights, ensuring access to social security, and improving safety measures. Enhancing workers' understanding of their rights and available support systems is vital for promoting a fairer and more equitable workplace environment. Furthermore, enhancing legal protections against exploitation and guaranteeing fair compensation are critical steps toward reducing poverty and promoting the well-being of the marginalized communities. A united effort is needed to create safe working environments, protect children's educational opportunities, and advocate for sustainable agricultural practices that benefit workers and their families.

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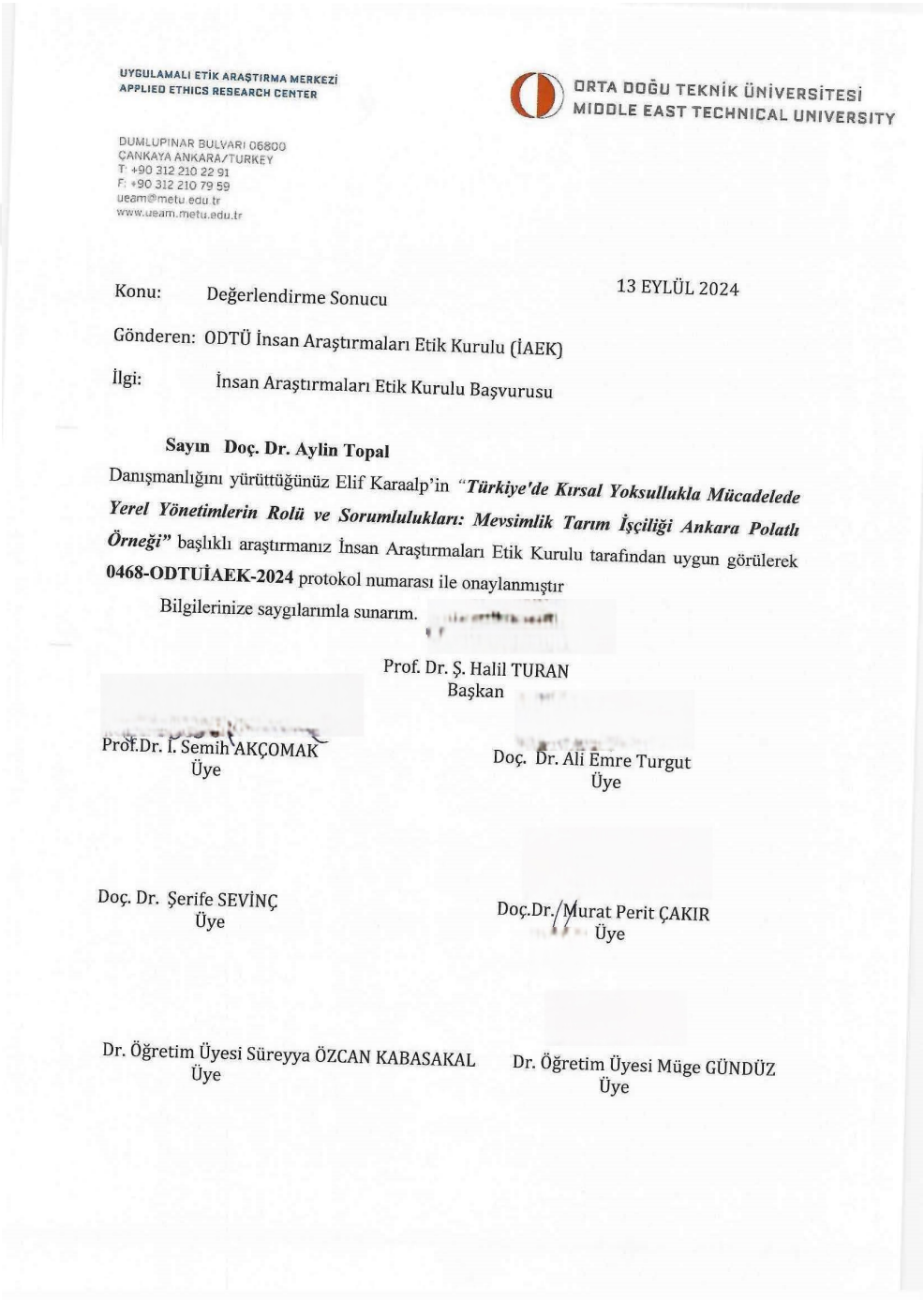
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APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE



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MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

13 EYLÜL 2024

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Doç. Dr. Aylin Topal

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Elif Karaalp'in ***"Türkiye'de Kırsal Yoksullukla Mücadelede Yerel Yönetimlerin Rolü ve Sorumlulukları: Mevsimlik Tarım İşçiliği Ankara Polatlı Örneği"*** başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek **0468-ODTUİAEK-2024** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof.Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
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Doç. Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
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Üye

B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Türkiye'de mevsimlik tarım işçiliği önemli bir nüfusun geçim kaynağını oluşturmaktadır. Mevsimlik tarım işçiliği kesin sayısı tam hesaplanamasa da en az 1 milyona yakın (bazı kaynaklarda çok daha fazla) düşük gelirli insanı kapsamaktadır. Mevsimlik tarım işçileri, Türkiye'de yoksullukla mücadele eden pek çok başka insanın iş bulmak için yaptığı gibi ülke içinde göç etmektedir. Hatta, ülke içinde meydana gelen göç hareketinde en çok başvurulan sektör mevsimlik tarım işçiliğidir (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). Üstelik, mevsimlik tarım işçiliği, kayıt dışı sektörde kendi kendini yeniden üreten ve sürdürülebilir bir alan olarak varlığını korumaktadır. Yoksulluğun bir kısır döngü halinde kendini yeniden ürettiği bu alan oldukça karmaşık bir problemler bileşkesi halini almıştır. Dolayısıyla, problemin boyutlarını iyi analiz edebilen ve bu analiz kapsamında çözüm arayışına giden bir politika anlayışına muhtaçtır.

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçileri üretimin artış ve azalış dönemlerine bağlı olarak genelde mevsimlik ya da sezonluk bir göç hareketliliğine katılmayı gerektirir. Bu hareketlilik yıl içerisinde üretimin ve dolayısıyla emek ihtiyacının arttığı dönemlere bağlı olarak artış veya azalış gösterir. Örneğin, mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin bir sene içerisinde çok çeşitli coğrafi bölgelerde çalışabilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra, iklim veya başka sebeplere bağlı olan ve üretim verimini etkileyen değişiklikler de işçilerin çalışma rotalarını etkileyebilir. Kalkınma atölyesi gibi sivil toplum kuruluşları her ne kadar bu çalışma rotasını çıkarma gayretinde olsa da göçün düzensizliği, resmi kayıtların ve verilerin yetersizliği, bürokratik olanakların kısıtlılığı gibi sebepler dolayısıyla tam teşekküllü haritalandırmalar yapılamamaktadır.

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçi ve aileleri zorlu yaşam koşullarıyla mücadele etmekte ve genellikle, korumasız bir barınak türü olan ve dört tarafı plastik örtülerle kaplı çadırlarda yaşamaktadır. Barınaklar ortalama 7-8 kişi olan aileler için çevresel risklerden koruyan yani sığınılan bir yer olmaktan öteye gidememektedir. Mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin çalışma saatleri ise günde 11 saatten fazla olabilmektedir. Ayrıca varış yerlerinde, birkaç farklı arazi sahibinin arazisinde çalışmak zorunda kalabilmekte ve

bu da işçilerin tatil yapmadan uzun saatler çalışmasına neden olabilmektedir.

Dahası mevsimlik tarım işçiliği ile geçimini sağlayan ailelerde hem yetişkinler hem de çocuklar hastalıklara ve yaralanmalara karşı savunmasızdır. Tarımda kullanılan kimyasallara doğrudan maruz kalma tehlikesi altında ve çevresel birçok riske karşı da korunmasız durumdadır. Olumsuz hava koşulları ve tarım ilaçları gibi çevresel etkenlere maruz kalmak ve güvencesiz iş ortamı; iş kazası, meslek hastalığı, hastalık, ölüm ve erken yaşlanma gibi tehditleri de beraberinde getirmektedir.

Ayrıca, aileler çoğunlukla sağlık tesislerinden uzakta yer alan kırsal alanlarda çalıştıkları ve barındıkları için sağlık hizmetlerine erişimleri kısıtlı kalmaktadır. Ailelerin yılın neredeyse yarısı boyunca göçebe olmaları koruyucu sağlık hizmetlerine erişimlerini zorlaştırmaktadır. Buna rağmen tarım sektörünün yapısal özellikleri, kayıt dışılık, düşük ücretler ve çalışanların sosyal güvence konusunda farkındalıklarının yeterli olamaması gibi nedenler onları sosyal güvenlik haklarını savunmaktan alıkoymaktadır. Asgari yaşam standartları için gereken geliri elde etmekte zorlanan ve düzenli bir işi olmayan mevsimlik tarım işçilerin örgütlü bir hak savunuculuğu oluşturmaları Türkiye'de pek rastlanan bir durum değildir.

Mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin kayıt dışı ve korunmasız istihdam, iş güvensizliği ve mevsimlik tarım sektöründeki kötü çalışma koşulları ile güçlü bir şekilde ilişkilidir. Buna göre, hane halkı ve üyelerinin beceri, temas, sermaye veya hareket özgürlüğünden yoksun olması nedeniyle bunların piyasa ilişkilerinden ve alternatif ekonomik fırsatlardan yoksun olması kaçınılmazdır. Refah devletinin sağladığı eğitim ve sağlık gibi kamu hizmetlerinden yararlanırken hizmetlere erişimde zorluklar ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Mevsimlik tarım işçiliği yapan aileleriyle göç eden ve kimi zamanlarda çalışmaya da eşlik eden çocukların büyük çoğunluğunun eğitime erişimlerindeki veya devamlılıklarındaki sıkıntılar dikkate alındığında, kamu hizmetlerinden mahrum kalmak bu ailelerin hayatında önemli bir sorun haline gelmiştir.

Çalışma ilişkilerinin temel aktörü, tarla sahipleri ile işçiler arasındaki bağı oluşturan tarım aracılarıdır. İşçilerin işverene doğrudan erişiminin olmaması, onları iş bulmak

için aracılara başvurmaya zorlamaktadır ve bu durum tarım aracıları ile işçiler arasında bir bağımlılık ilişkisi yaratmaktadır. Aslında çoğu çalışan iş ve gelir açısından tarım aracılarına bağımlıdır. Yani aracılar hemen hemen her konuda işçi adına karar verir ve işverenle onlar adına pazarlık yapar. Bunun karşılığında da belli bir komisyon alırlar. Güvencesiz çalışma şartlarında işçilerin aracılara bağımlılığının artması ve sonucunda toprak sahiplerine ve üreticilere karşı güçsüzleşmesi kaçınılmazdır. Bu da mevsimlik tarım işçiliğindeki emek problemini derinleştirmektedir.

Tarımda daha önce yerel işgücü kaynaklarıyla karşılanan ücretli emek ihtiyacının, çoğunlukla ülkeye sığınma yoluyla gelen göçmenler ve ülkenin kırsal ve az gelişmiş bölgelerinden gelen topraksız/küçük köylü aileler tarafından karşılanması oldukça dikkat çekicidir.

Öncelikle, mevsimlik gezici tarım işçi ve ailelerinin çoğunluğunun Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nden başka bölgelere çalışmak amacıyla göç etmelerinin arkasındaki bölgesel niteliklerin anlaşılması gerekir. Türkiye'de kırsal yoksulluğun yoğun olarak bu bölgelerde görülmesinde tarım sektöründe geliştirilen olumsuz politikalar etkili olmuştur. Örneğin, çiftçilere verilen destekler yetersiz kalmış, toprak, emek ve tarımsal girdiler üzerindeki yoğun metalaşma bağımsız üreticiliğin devamlılığı açısından sorunlar oluşturmuştur. Ayrıca, bu bölgelerde yatırım düzeylerinin düşük olması, arazi dağılımının dengesiz olması gibi nedenlerden dolayı da işsizliğin kronikleştiğini vurgulamak gerekir. Mevsimlik işçiler daha gelişmiş bölgelerde işgücüne katılarak işsizlikten kurtulmak için çözüm arayışa gitmektedir. Sonuç olarak Türkiye'de bölgesel eşitsizlik ve dengesizliğin yarattığı ekonomik ve kültürel koşullar nedeniyle mevsimlik bir işgücü göçü yaşanmaktadır.

Bir diğer mesele de Türkiye'nin sağlamış olduğu iş ve güvenlik gibi imkanlardan dolayı başka ülkelerden gelen göçmenler ve sığınmacılardır. Bu artışta, Türkiye'nin jeopolitik konumu ve 21. yüzyıl dünya siyaseti nedeniyle dış göçe açık olmasının etkisi büyüktür. Aralarında Afganlar ve Iraklılar gibi mülteci işçiler bulunsa da mevsimlik tarım işçiliği yapan göçmenlerin çoğunluğu 2011 yılında Suriye'de başlayan iç savaş nedeniyle Türkiye'ye sığınan Suriyeli ailelerden oluşmaktadır (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). Suriyeli sığınmacılar hem kendilerinin hem de yakınlarının temel ihtiyaçlarını

karşılayabilmek ve geçimlerini sağlayabilmek için düşük ücretle çalışmak zorunda kalmaktadır. Bu durum toprak sahiplerinin onları daha çok tercih etmesine neden olmaktadır. Bu bağlamda giderek daha fazla mültecinin istihdam edildiği mevsimlik tarım sektöründe ücret dengesi sağlanamamakta, sorunların çözümü daha karmaşık ve zor hale gelmektedir. Suriyeli işçilerin sektördeki sayısının artması halihazırda güvencesiz ve düşük ücretli çalışmaya bağlı oluşan sorunları pekiştirmektedir. Örneğin, yetersiz yasal düzenlemeler, kayıt dışı çalışma, güvensizlik ve kırılganlık gibi sektöre özgü birtakım sorunları büyütmektedir.

Mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin mevsimlik göçü ve bunun olumsuz etkileri, uzun yıllardır küresel ve Türkiye'nin ilgi odağı olan önemli bir konudur. Bu nedenle, bunun uzun ve yavaş bir süreç olduğunu kabul etmek ve neden böyle olduğu konusunda dürüst olmak çok önemlidir. Türkiye'de mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin karşılaştığı zorluklar, özellikle 2010 yılından bu yana artan bir ilginin odağı ve ülkenin politika gündeminde öne çıkan bir konu olmuştur. O yıl Başbakanlık "Mevsimlik Tarım İşçilerinin Çalışma ve Sosyal Hayatlarının İyileştirilmesi" Genelgesini (2010/6) yayınladı. Ardından Aile, Çalışma ve Sosyal İşler Bakanlığı, bundan sonra Türkçe kısaltmasıyla METİP olarak anılacak olan Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri Projesi'ni başlattı.

İlk programın ardından, Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri ile ilgili 2017/6 sayılı Başbakanlık Genelgesi resmi olarak yayımlandı ve METİP' in devamı niteliğinde olan METİP II projesi başlatılarak 2017-2018 yılları arasında uygulamaya kondu. METİP II kapsamında, mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin yoğun olarak çalıştığı bazı illerde pilot programlar uygulanmaya başlandı. Bu illerde, mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayacak, eğitim, sağlık ve sosyal faaliyetlerin yanı sıra elektrik, su ve kanalizasyon altyapısına erişim sağlayacak geçici yerleşimlerin kurulması için merkezi hükümet fonu tahsis edildi.

Bu iller arasında Ankara'nın Polatlı ilçesinde Sarıoba Mahallesi yakınlarında, mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin ailelerini barındırmak amacıyla belirlenmiş bir METİP alanı oluşturulmuştur. 2018 yılında, bu bölgede yaşayan çocuklar için İlçe Milli Eğitim Müdürlüğü tarafından bir çadır okul açılmıştır. Sarıoba'nın yerleşim alanı olarak seçilmesinin nedeni, özellikle soğan tarımına oldukça uygun olan geniş arazilere sahip

olmasıdır. Bu tarımsal potansiyel, tarım sezonunda istihdam arayışıyla Sarıoba'ya gelen çok sayıda mevsimlik tarım işçisini cezbetmektedir.

Sarıoba METİP Kampüsü, Polatlı ilçesine bağlı Sarıoba Mahallesi'ne yaklaşık 1 kilometre mesafede, 22 dönümlük bir alan üzerine kurulmuştur. 2010 yılında hayata geçirilen bu kampüs, mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin ve ailelerinin barınma ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak amacıyla tasarlanmış olup; yaşam çadırları, banyolar, ortak mutfaklar ve sosyal tesislerden oluşan kapsamlı bir yerleşim alanı sunmaktadır. Kampüs, mevsimlik tarım işçileri için geliştirilen çadır kent uygulamaları içinde pilot proje niteliği taşımaktadır.

Yerleşim alanında 320 adet yaşam çadırı yer almakta olup, bu çadırlar yaklaşık 2.500 kişiye barınma imkânı sağlamaktadır (Yılmaz, 2020). Branda malzemeden üretilen çadırlar, yanmaz ve su geçirmez özellikte olup, çeşitli hava koşullarına karşı dayanıklı bir şekilde tasarlanmıştır. Her biri 30 metrekare büyüklüğünde olan bu çadırlar, sağlam beton zeminler üzerine kurulmuş ve temel yaşam koşullarını sağlayacak şekilde düzenlenmiştir. Her çadır bölgesinde güvenli ve kapalı bir ortamda tuvalet, duş ve mutfaklar yer almakta; ayrıca sıcak su sistemleri sayesinde yemek pişirme ve kişisel hijyen ihtiyaçları karşılanabilmektedir.

Ancak yapılan üç ayrı görüşme, işçilerin dışarıda konumlanan ortak mutfakları kullanma konusunda isteksiz olduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Özellikle çadırlarda daha fazla vakit geçiren kadınlar açısından bu durum önemli bir zorluk yaratmaktadır. Mutfaklara erişimin dış mekânda olması, kadınların bu alanları kullanmasını güçleştirmekte; ayrıca mutfaklarda herhangi bir ısıtma sisteminin bulunmaması, özellikle kış aylarında bu alanların kullanışsız hale gelmesine neden olmaktadır. Bu koşullar nedeniyle bazı işçiler, daha düşük maliyetlerle kiralayabildikleri köy evlerini tercih etmekte, bu evlerde kendilerine ait küçük bir bahçeye sahip olarak sebze ve meyve yetiştirme imkânına da kavuşmaktadır.

Bu bulgular doğrultusunda, METİP yaşam alanlarının mevcut çadır yapısından ziyade küçük bahçeli, kapalı duvarlara sahip minimal evler şeklinde yeniden tasarlanması önerilebilir. Böyle bir yaklaşım hem yaşam konforunu artıracak hem de mevsimlik

işçilerin kırsal yaşam biçimlerinden gelen alışkanlıklarını sürdürmelerine olanak tanıyacaktır. Kendi gıdasını üretebilme fırsatı sunan bu tür yaşam birimleri, aynı zamanda ekonomik ve psikolojik açıdan da işçilerin refahını artırabilir.

Yerleşim alanı sadece barınma ihtiyaçlarını karşılamakla kalmayıp, sosyal yaşamı destekleyici altyapılara da sahiptir. Aileler ve çocuklar için özel olarak planlanmış alanlar arasında, erken çocukluk eğitimine öncelik veren donanımlı bir anaokulu yer almaktadır. Anaokulu; yaş gruplarına göre ayrılmış sınıflar, gelişim düzeylerine uygun eğitim materyalleri, iki geniş sınıf, öğretmenler için bir personel odası, yemek hazırlama mutfağı, malzeme deposu ve küçük çocuklara özel tuvaletlerden oluşmaktadır. Ayrıca anaokuluna bitişik eğitim alanları, çocukların yaratıcılığını ve çok yönlü gelişimini desteklemeye yönelik olarak tasarlanmıştır.

Kampüs içerisinde haftanın belirli günlerinde hizmet veren bir sağlık merkezi de bulunmaktadır. Kreş bünyesinde yer alan bu sağlık birimi; doktor muayene odası, genel muayene odası ve sağlık hizmeti sunan diğer birimlerden oluşmaktadır. Bu düzenleme hem çocukların hem de yetişkinlerin temel sağlık ihtiyaçlarını karşılamayı amaçlamakta ve ailelerin sağlıklı gelişimini destekleyen bütüncül bir yaklaşım sunmaktadır. Tüm bu altyapılara ek olarak, çok amaçlı bir toplantı salonu da kampüs sakinlerinin sosyal etkileşim kurabileceği bir alan olarak kullanılmaktadır. Ayrıca, kampüs sınırları içinde yer alan cami, ibadet ihtiyacının karşılanmasının yanı sıra topluluk içi sosyal buluşmalar için de bir mekân sunmaktadır. Bu yönüyle Sarıoba METİP Kampüsü, sadece fiziksel ihtiyaçların değil, aynı zamanda sosyal, eğitimsel ve kültürel gereksinimlerin de dikkate alındığı bütünleşmiş bir yaşam alanı örneğidir.

Mevsimlik tarım işçilerine ve ailelerine sunulan kamu hizmetlerinin daha etkin ve koordineli bir biçimde yürütülmesini sağlamak amacıyla E-METİP (Elektronik Mevsimlik Tarım İşçileri Projesi) sistemi geliştirilmiştir. Bu sistem, valilikler tarafından hazırlanan yerel eylem planlarının elektronik ortama taşınmasını ve bu planlar doğrultusunda yapılacak ödenek tahsislerinin dijital olarak takip edilmesini mümkün kılarak sürecin şeffaf ve izlenebilir hale gelmesini hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca, E-METİP sistemi, yalnızca hizmet sunumunun etkinliğini artırmakla kalmayıp, aynı zamanda afet ve acil durumlarda nüfusun hızlı bir şekilde tespit edilmesini sağlayarak,

kriz yönetiminde kamu kurumlarına önemli bir avantaj sağlamaktadır. Bu yönüyle sistem, mevsimlik tarım işçilerine yönelik sosyal politika uygulamalarının dijital dönüşümünü temsil eden önemli bir araç niteliğindedir.

E-METİP sisteminin işlevsel olabilmesi için, mevsimlik tarım işçilerine ait verilerin güncel, düzenli ve sağlıklı bir biçimde sisteme aktarılması büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, işçilerin çalışma amacıyla farklı illere geçici olarak yer değiştirdikleri durumların kayıt altına alınabilmesi, kamu hizmetlerinin sürekliliği açısından kritik bir gerekliliktir. Bu amaçla, mevsimlik işçilerin geçici olarak ikamet ettikleri yerleşim alanlarında kimlik bildirimlerinin doğrudan kolluk kuvvetleri tarafından yapılması ve bu bilgilerin ilgili kamu kurum ve kuruluşlarıyla düzenli olarak paylaşılması gerekmektedir.

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçiliğinin en üzücü sonuçlarından biri de çocuk işçiliğidir. Mevsimlik tarımda çalışmak üzere göç eden ailelerin tüm üyelerinin bir arada olması bu sektörde sık rastlanan bir durumdur. Yakın akrabaların geniş aileler oluşturarak birlikte çalışması ve göç etmesi yaygındır. Ayrıca mevsimlik tarım işçiliği yapan ailelerde kadın başına düşen çocuk sayısı yüksektir ve genç bir nüfus yapısı bulunmaktadır (Kalkınma Atölyesi, 2016). Aileleriyle göç eden çocukların fiziksel, duygusal, psikolojik ve sosyal gelişimleri olumsuz etkilenmektedir. Bu çocukların okullaşma oranlarının düşük olması ve eğitimlerinde aksaklıklar oluşması muhtemeldir. Eğitimleri aksayan çocuklar piyasada iş bulmak için gerekli olan bilgi ve becerilerden mahrum kalmaktadır. Çocuklar ailelerinden öğrendikleri işleri yapmaya devam ederek aile gelirine katkı sağlamak için çalışabilmektedir. Buradan hareketle, bu sektörde nesiller arası kültürel aktarımın olduğu ve yoksulluğun kronik bir döngü haline geldiği sonucu çıkartılabilir.

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçiliği yapan ailelerin çocuklarının eğitimle olan ilişkisinde, erişim ve devamlılık tıpkı yoksulluk gibi bir döngü biçiminde seyreder. Çocukların aileleri hem yoksul hem de gezici olduğundan çocukları eğitim sürecine katılamamakta, katılanlar ise devam edememekte ve çoğu zaman eğitimlerini yarıda bırakmak durumunda kalmaktadır. Okula devam konusunda çocuklar ve ailelerdeki motivasyon eksikliği, çalışmak için gidilen yerde kolay erişilebilir okul olanağının

bulunamaması gibi sebepler de eğitime devamı olumsuz etkilemektedir. Eğitime devamsızlık da meslek sahibi olma ve daha iyi koşullarda iş bulma olasılığını azaltmakta ve hatta ortadan kaldırmaktadır. Bu nedenle, kısa vadede zorunlu eğitim çağına gelen çocuğun okula devamının sağlanması ve bu devam sırasında gelişiminin ve okul başarısının desteklenmesi oldukça önemlidir. Bu hem içinde bulunulan durum hem de gelecekte emeğinin sömürüsünden korunması için en önemli müdahalelerden biridir.

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işlerinde çocuk işçiliğinin önlenmesine yönelik etkili bir mücadele, bir dizi temel adımın bütüncül bir yaklaşımla hayata geçirilmesini gerektirmektedir. Bu kapsamda, öncelikle sektörde faaliyet gösteren aracıların ve tarım işletmelerinin resmi kayıt altına alınması gerekmektedir. Kayıt sistemi, hem denetim süreçlerinin sağlıklı yürütülmesine olanak sağlamakta hem de sorumluluğun kurumsal düzeyde izlenebilmesini mümkün kılmaktadır. İkinci olarak, çocukların tarımsal üretimde çalıştırılmasının önüne geçilmesi amacıyla etkili denetim mekanizmalarının kurulması ve işletilmesi zorunludur. Bu denetimler yalnızca çocuk işçiliğinin tespiti ile sınırlı kalmamalı; aynı zamanda mevsimlik işçilerin maruz kaldığı çalışma ve yaşam koşullarının insan onuruna yakışır düzeyde olup olmadığını da değerlendirmelidir.

Bu görevlerin başarıyla yerine getirilebilmesi için, yalnızca merkezi veya bölgesel düzeyde değil, il düzeyinde örgütlenmiş İş Teftiş Kurulları ve yerel düzeyde yetkin iş müfettişlerinin görevlendirilmesi gerekmektedir. İl düzeyinde yapılandırılmış bir denetim sistemi, yerel sorunlara daha hızlı müdahale edilmesini ve mevzuata aykırı uygulamaların önlenmesini kolaylaştıracaktır. Bu bağlamda çocuk işçiliğiyle mücadele, yalnızca hukuki düzenlemelerin varlığı ile değil, aynı zamanda bu düzenlemelerin saha düzeyinde uygulanabilirliğini sağlayacak kurumsal kapasitenin geliştirilmesiyle mümkündür.

Son on yılda gerçekleştirilen yasal gelişmeler, mevsimlik tarım işçileri ve ailelerinin refahı için gerekli olan işyeri ortamları ve barınma koşullarında önemli iyileşmelere yol açmıştır. Mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin yaşam ve çalışma koşullarının denetlenmesi ve iyileştirilmesi konusunda 2010 yılında yasal düzenlemelerin yürürlüğe girmesinden

bu yana çok sayıda kamu kurum ve kuruluşları önemli sorumluluklar üstlenmiştir. Bu acil sorunların üstesinden gelmeyi ve mevsimlik tarım işçileri için daha adil bir geleceğin yolunu açmayı amaçlayan yönetmelikler, eylem planları da dahil olmak üzere çeşitli yasal önlemler alınmıştır. Bu görev, bakanlıklar, il ve ilçe valilikleri ve yerel yönetimler de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli hükümet organlarına düşmektedir. Son yıllarda, bakanlıklar ve bölge müdürlükleri gibi farklı hükümet birimleri, hassas durumdaki toplulukların yoksulluğunu azaltmak için önemli ölçüde iş birliği yapmıştır.

Tüm bu çabalara ve farkındalık, müdahale, araştırma girişimleri ve insani yardımlardaki kayda değer artışa rağmen, sınırlı sayıda kuruluş önemli bir değişim yaratmak için daha müşterek bir çaba gösterilmesi gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Bu çağrı, yoksulluğun azaltılmasının bu tür kapsayıcı politikalar yoluyla uygulanmasının doğasında var olan karmaşıklık ve zorluklardan kaynaklanmaktadır. Ulusal kamu otoriteleri tarafından hedeflenen köklü sorunlar, uzun vadeli politikaların uygulanmasını, daha fazla öngörülebilirliği ve belirsizliğin azaltılmasını gerektirmektedir. Bu nedenlerle, sorunun tanımlanma şekli ne olursa olsun, sorunun biçim ve niteliğinin yanı sıra nedenlerinin de titizlikle ortaya konulması zorunludur. Bu yaklaşım, çözümün etkili bir şekilde belirlenmesi ve politika yönetimi için elzemdir. Sonuç olarak, amaçlanan çözüm programlarının koordineli bir şekilde uygulanmasının izini sürmek için ilgili tüm aktörleri ve ilişkileri vurgulamak çok önemlidir.

Bu nedenle, öncelikle örtüşen alanların ve varsa boşlukların saptanması ve kapsayıcı bir sorumluluklar listesi oluşturulması, daha sonra da her bir sorumluluk için sorumlu kurumun saptanması gerekir. Böylece, hangi kurumdan hangi sorumluluğun yerine getirilmesinin istenebileceği daha net olarak belirlenmiş olacaktır.

Mevcut politika yapısı sadece sınırlı sayıda ilgili kuruluşu kapsamaktadır. Kurumlar kendi uygulama sorumluluklarına göre politika belgeleri hazırladıklarında, ortaya çıkan kapsam genellikle sadece bu belirli kurumların yeteneklerini yansıtmaktadır. Buna karşılık, doğrudan uygulamada yer almayan kuruluşlar bu belgeleri hazırlama görevini üstlenirse, politika tasarımı ile pratik uygulama arasındaki kopukluk

nedeniyle başarılı uygulama olasılığı önemli ölçüde azalır. Mevcut strateji, belirlenen hedefe ulaşmak için gereken temel yöntem ve eylemlerin yalnızca bir alt kümesini ele almaktadır. Örneğin, belediye atık bertarafı, kanalizasyon ve sosyal yardım gibi önemli hizmetlerden sorumlu olsa da bu sorumluluklar genellikle yerel köyler tarafından sağlanan hizmetlerle birlikte yürütülmektedir. Bununla birlikte, tarımsal işgücünün yoğun olduğu dönemlerde kurumsal kapasitelerin artırılmasına yönelik herhangi bir yasal zorunluluk bulunmaması ve METİP çerçevesinde iyileştirilmesi gerektiği belirlenen alanlar için özel görevliler atanmasına yönelik bir yetki olmaması önemli bir eksikliktir.

Buna ek olarak, yerel düzeyde tüm aktörlerin eşit ve yatay olarak sürece dahil edilmesi önemlidir. Jandarma gibi kurumlar, kamu politikalarının izleme ve değerlendirme sürecinde çocuk işçiliğine karşı cinsiyet ayrımcılığı veya mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin güvenliği konularında daha aktif roller üstlenebilir. Benzer şekilde, kamu yönetiminde bilgi akışının merkezine muhtarların dahil edilmesi büyük önem taşımaktadır. Aynı zamanda belediye ve kaymakamlık kurumları da yoksulluğu azaltma politikalarının uygulanması açısından aynı derecede önemlidir. Dolayısıyla, bu tür bir kamu politikası yönetimi için politika uygulamalarında yatay bir strateji uygulamak önemli görünmektedir.

Bu durum, merkezi hükümetin tek karar verici olarak işlev gördüğü, tüm ulusal gücü elinde topladığı, ekonomiye doğrudan müdahale ettiği ve yukarıdan aşağıya bir şekilde işlediği hiyerarşik bir kamu politikası çerçevesinin sona erdiği anlamına gelmektedir. Bunun yerine, çok sayıda kamu karar vericisinin aynı politika alanında eş zamanlı olarak faaliyet gösterdiği, çeşitli mekânsal düzeyler arasında hiyerarşik ilişkilerin azaldığı, özel sektör ve sivil toplum temsilcilerinin karar alma süreçlerine sistematik olarak dahil olduğu ve ekonomik ve sosyal ilişkilere doğrudan müdahalenin giderek zorlaştığı bir kamu politikası süreci mevcuttur. Bu durum tüm devletlerde aynı şekilde işlememektedir; ancak bu yönde tarihsel bir eğilimin ortaya çıktığını söylemek doğru olacaktır. Bu değişimlerin bir sonucu olarak, özel sektör ve sivil toplum kuruluşları çeşitli ölçeklerde oluşmuş veya yeniden yapılandırılmıştır.

Ayrıca, devlet kurumları, sivil toplum kuruluşları ve tarım şirketleri gibi tüm aktörler

dahil olmak üzere tüm paydaşların hem yaşam hem de çalışma koşullarını iyileştiren etkili politikalar ve programlar uygulaması elzemdir. Bu anlamda, işçilerin hakları konusunda bilinçlendirilmesi ve eğitilmesine, sosyal güvenliğe erişimlerinin sağlanmasına ve güvenlik önlemlerinin iyileştirilmesine güçlü bir şekilde odaklanılmalıdır. İşçilerin hakları ve mevcut destek sistemleri konusundaki anlayışlarının geliştirilmesi, daha adil ve hakkaniyetli bir işyeri ortamının teşvik edilmesi açısından hayati önem taşımaktadır. Ayrıca, sömürüye karşı yasal korumaların geliştirilmesi ve adil tazminatın garanti altına alınması, yoksulluğun azaltılması ve ötekileştirilmiş toplulukların refahının artırılması yönünde atılacak kritik adımlardır. Güvenli çalışma ortamları yaratmak, çocukların eğitim fırsatlarını korumak ve işçiler ile ailelerine fayda sağlayan sürdürülebilir tarım uygulamalarını savunmak için ortak bir çabaya ihtiyaç vardır.

Yerel yönetimlerin yoksullukla mücadelede gereken esnekliği sağlamanın yanında, hızlı müdahale etme, sorunun kökenini daha yakından teşhis edebilme ve farklı ihtiyaçlara farklı programlarla cevap verebilme gibi birçok üstünlüğü bulunmaktadır. Yerel kesimdeki yoksulluğu anlamak, yoksullarla iletişim kurmak ve koordine etmek, yoksullara yarar sağlayacak eylemlerde bulunmak ve refahın farklı yönleri arasında bir denge kurmak yerel yönetimlerin yoksullukla mücadeledeki yerini önemli kılar.

Yerel yönetim aktörleri çalıştıkları alana olan fiziksel yakınlıkları sebebiyle oradaki özellikleri daha iyi anlayacak bilgi ve donanıma sahip olabilirler. Yerelin özelliklerine hâkim olmak sürdürülebilir çözümler üretmek açısından oldukça faydalıdır. Dolayısıyla, sorunun tespiti ve analizinin yapılmasında yerel yönetimlerin merkezi yönetime göre daha etkin olması beklenmektedir. Ayrıca yerel politika uygulayıcılarından alınan geri bildirimler de uygulamaların sürekliliği açısından oldukça önemlidir. Uygulayıcı taşra teşkilatının nitelik ve nicelik bakımından kapasitesinin arttırılması ve yürütülen çalışmalara genel bütçeden yeterli pay ayrılması konu kapsamında önemlidir. Aynı zamanda yapılan çalışmaların erişim ve etki açısından sistematik olarak değerlendirilmesi de taşra teşkilatları tarafından yapılabilir.

Bununla birlikte, yoksullukla mücadelede yerel yönetimlerle merkezi yönetim

arasında gereken eşgüdümün ve uyumun sağlanamaması halinde, tekrar eden müdahalelerin olmasına yol açabilir. Bu da kısıtlı olan kaynakların verimli kullanılamamasına ve bireylerin yoksulluk hallerinden kurtulamamasına yol açabilir. Dolayısıyla, yerel yönetimlerin yoksullukla mücadelede kendilerinden beklenen rolleri tam anlamıyla yerine getirebilmeleri en başta merkezi yönetimle uyumlu ve birbirini tamamlayan bir biçimde çalışmalarına bağlıdır. Yerel yönetimlerin yoksullukla mücadele konusunda karşılaştıkları en büyük zorluklardan biri de yoksullarla iletişim, etkileşim ve eşgüdüm sağlamaktır. Birçok yerde, yoksullar, yerel politikada çok az etki sahibidir, erişilemeyen bölgelerde yaşamaktadır veya etnik köken, sınıf veya cinsiyet temelinde önyargı ve ayrımcılığa maruz kalmaktadır. Ancak, yoksulların yeteneklerini geliştirmek ve daha sonra ekonomik ve politik kazanımlar elde etmek için güçlü bir temel oluşturulabilir. İletişimin ve eşgüdümün iyileştirilmesi, yerel yönetimlerin ve yoksulların birlikte harekete geçmek için karşılıklı anlayışı ve yapıcı katılımı geliştirmelerine yardımcı olabilir.

Ayrıca, kırılgan grupları korumaya yönelik örneğin cinsiyete duyarlı politikalar belediyelerin kaynaklarının tahsisini ve yönetimini optimize etmesine olanak tanıyabilir. Hem kadınları hem de erkekleri kapsayacak katılımcı bir planlama süreci, yerel kalkınma ve yoksulluğun azaltılması açısından temel bir unsurdur. Cinsiyet yaklaşımının politika, planlama ve yönetime entegrasyonu, yerel kalkınmayı yalnızca daha adil değil aynı zamanda daha etkili hale getirecektir.

Ülkemizde, yoksullara sosyal yardımlar daha çok gıda, barınma, sağlık vb. birçok temel ihtiyaç Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Vakıfları tarafından karşılanmaktadır. Ayrıca yoksullara yönelik çeşitli nakit transferleri gerçekleştirilmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra yerel yönetimler aracılığıyla da yardımlar yapılmaktadır. Ayrıca gönüllü kuruluşlar, çeşitli vakıf ve dernekler bu alanda faaliyet göstermektedir. Yoksulluğun azaltılması ve yoksulluğa bağlı çeşitli sosyal problemlerin engellenmesi hususunda her birinin rolü oldukça önemlidir. Belediyeler yapılan diğer yardımlara ek olarak tamamlayıcı bir rol üstlenmektedir. Halka çeşitli hizmetler sunan yerel yönetimler yoksulları yerinde tespit ederek yardımlarını ihtiyaca yönelik olarak gerçekleştirmektedir. Yoksullara yardım faaliyeti gerçekleştiren belediyeler yardımlarını daha çok ayni olarak gerçekleştirmektedir. Yapılan

yardımlarla birlikte yoksulların durumu iyileşmekte, kalıcı bir çözüm olmasa bile mağduriyetleri giderilmektedir.

Mevsimlik gezici tarım işçilerinin hem geldikleri bölgelerdeki yaşam koşulları hem de çalıştıkları alanlardaki belediyecilik faaliyetleri açısından değerlendirilmesi önem arz etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, METİP Genelgeleri kapsamında belediyelere çeşitli sorumluluklar yüklenmiştir. Belediyelerin en temel görevlerinden biri, mevsimlik gezici tarım işçilerine ve ailelerine kalabilecekleri çadırları temin etmektir. Eğer işverenler veya arazi sahipleri tarafından barınma yerleri sağlanamıyorsa, belediyelerin toplulaştırılmış konaklama alanları tespit etmesi ve bu alanların hem altyapı hem de üstyapı bakımından uygun hale getirilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu konaklama alanlarında, çevre temizliği, bitki örtüsünün ve ağaçların korunması ile orman yangınlarının önlenmesi gibi konularda işçilerin bilinçlendirilmesi de belediyelerin görevleri arasında yer almaktadır.

Ayrıca, belediyeler içme ve kullanma suyu sağlamak, atıkların düzenli aralıklarla bertaraf edilmesini sağlamakla yükümlüdür. Çocuk işçiliğiyle mücadele kapsamında, belediye zabıtaları veya görevlendirilen özel personel aracılığıyla çalışan çocukların faaliyetlerinin önlenmesine yönelik tedbirler alınmalıdır. Bununla birlikte, gençler ve çocuklara yönelik sosyal ve kültürel hizmetlerin yürütülmesi, meslek ve beceri kazandırma kurslarının açılması, öğrencilere ve amatör spor kulüplerine destek verilmesi, çalışan çocuklara yönelik rehabilitasyon ve destek hizmetlerinin sağlanması gibi görevler de belediyelerin sorumluluğundadır. Bu hizmetler yürütülürken kamu kurumları ve sivil toplum kuruluşları ile iş birliği yapılması teşvik edilmektedir. Son olarak, büyükşehir belediyeleri ile nüfusu elli binin üzerinde olan belediyeler, kadınlar ve çocuklar için koruma evleri açmakla yükümlüdür. Bu hizmetler, mevsimlik gezici tarım işçilerinin temel yaşam ihtiyaçlarının karşılanmasının yanı sıra toplumsal refahın ve sosyal adaletin sağlanması açısından da büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Bu çalışma, mevsimlik gezici tarım işçilerinin karşılaştığı yapısal yoksullukla mücadelede kamusal hizmetlerin rolünü ve yerel yönetimlerin bu süreçteki sorumluluklarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamıştır. Elde edilen bulgular, mevcut hizmet sunumunun hem mevzuatsal boşluklar hem de uygulamadaki kurumsal yetersizlikler

nedeniyle işçilerin temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılamada yetersiz kaldığını göstermektedir. Özellikle barınma ve çalışma koşullarının iyileştirilmesine yönelik yerel düzeyde geliştirilen politikaların, çoğu zaman uygulama alanında karşılık bulmadığı görülmektedir.

Yerel yönetimlerin, yasal düzenlemelerle kendilerine yüklenen görevleri yerine getirmeleri, yalnızca hizmet sunumunun etkinliği açısından değil, aynı zamanda mevsimlik tarım işçilerinin temel haklara erişiminin sağlanması açısından da kritik öneme sahiptir. Bu bağlamda, söz konusu hizmetlerin sürekliliğini ve kapsayıcılığını güvence altına alacak şekilde, kurumsal kapasitenin güçlendirilmesi, koordinasyonun artırılması ve yasal altyapının yeniden gözden geçirilmesi gerekmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, mevsimlik gezici tarım işçilerinin yaşam koşullarını iyileştirmek, yalnızca sosyal adaletin tesisi açısından değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal kalkınma ve sürdürülebilir tarım politikaları açısından da öncelikli bir hedef olmalıdır. Bu hedefe ulaşmak ise, yerel yönetimlerin aktif katılımı, merkezi idarenin yönlendirici rolü ve ilgili tüm paydaşların iş birliği ile mümkün olacaktır.

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