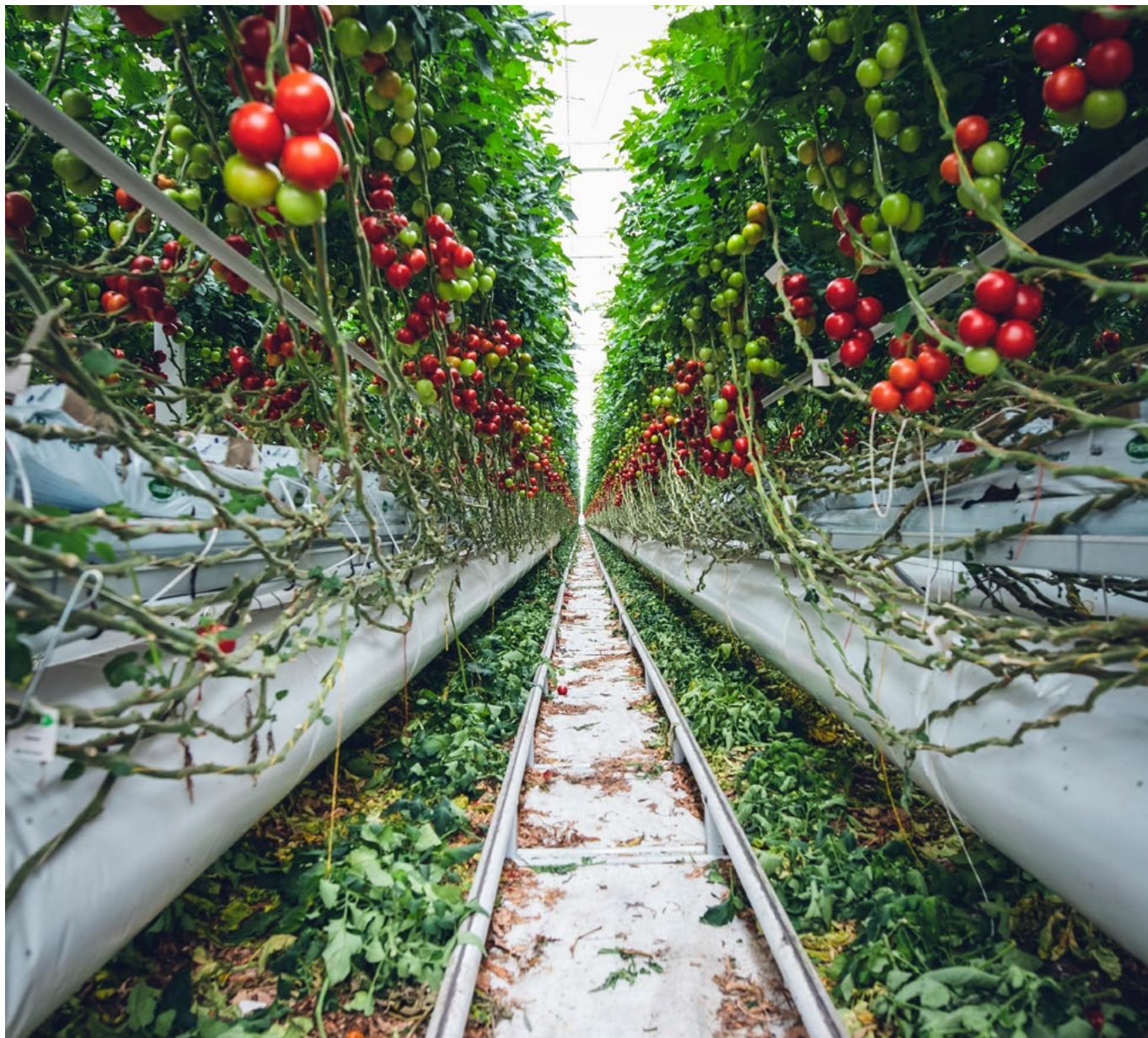




Migrant Worker Policy Recommendations

for decent living and working
conditions for migrant workers
employed in agriculture in Canada

Audience: Civil Society and Stakeholders, Canada

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Audience: Civil Society and Stakeholders, Canada

Project Information

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Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Department of Philosophy
and Cultural Heritage

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SECTION I

Introduction

I. Objectives, Methodology, and Participants

1. Research Objectives and Significance

The project investigates the struggles for fundamental rights of Migrant Agricultural Workers (MAWs) and of their allies and networks of supporters in Canada and Italy, with the central question: “How the material and symbolic boundaries of ci-

tizenship are challenged, produced, and reproduced by an essential yet structurally marginalized workforce?” The research focused on the agency and mobilizations of MAWs and their networks, as well as on what facilitates and hinders claim-making and bottom-up mobilization for the recognition of rights.

2. Methodological and Analytical Framework (Synthesis Map)

Study Element	Italy Context	Canada Context
Research Duration	2022 (October) – 2025 (November)	2022 (April) – 2024 (November)
Primary Methodology	Extended Ethnography (PAR)	Situational Analysis (SA)
Additional Components	Media Scan + Policy Analysis (Legal Status)	Media Scan + Policy Analysis (Legal Status)
Ethnography (Duration/Scope)	5 months of fieldwork (Year 2025). Over 500 MAWs met.	Focus on consultative meetings, participant observations and organized networks
Interviews & Meetings	48 Interviews + 14 Consultative Meetings 13 women (4 MAWs)	12 Interviews + 9 Consultative Meetings
Fieldwork Engagement	Meals Distribution, Night Outreach, Low-threshold contact with the homeless; Street Union	Migrant Organizations/Allies
Reference Population	Coverage of 5 regions: Piedmont, Puglia, Sicily, Basilicata, Campania, Lombardy	Migrant-Led Organizations. Coverage of 4 provinces: Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia

II. Methodology and Structural Context

Research Focus and Framework

This study is based on a comparative analysis of MAWs’ struggles in Italy and Canada. The research utilized Extended Ethnography and Participatory Action Research (PAR) in the Italian context, while adopting Situational Analysis (SA) complemented by consultation with organized networks in the Canadian context. This methodology allowed the research to focus on the agency and mobilizations of MAWs and their networks, highlighting what facilitates and hinders claim-making and bottom-up mobilization for rights recognition.

Structural Critique (Canada Preeminence)

For both contexts, exploitation is reinforced by precarious legal status, control and discipline through housing, spatial and social isolation. Housing together with legal status, in particular, emerge as

central to collective self-organization, shaping both opportunities and constraints. In Canada, the direct tie between a migrant’s legal status and their employer, established through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), is identified as a primary enabling factor for exploitation. This status-employer link creates a “breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery,” facilitating the complete subordination of workers.

Nature of Struggles and Barriers

In Italy, struggles are typically fragmented micro-struggles focused on survival - “struggles for humanity” - and action is hindered by ideological fragmentation among allies.

In Canada, the research found evidence of advanced and organized mobilization led by cohesive networks. These struggles are clearly focused on legal status, interpreted as the “right to have ri-

ghts.” However, the main barrier remains legal precarity, which generates a profound fear of reprisal and deportation—a powerful deterrent against collective action. The drivers of agency in Canada are identified as cohesion and a well-defined interpretive framework (framing), supported by allied organizations that operate as a united migrant-led front.

III. Conclusions and Central Political Message Co-Constructed Policy Mandate

These recommendations are the result of three years of research and, crucially, a co-construction process involving three specific consultative meetings with research participants. They are an invitation to continue building and solidifying alliances based on years of activism, trade union work, and international connections.

Central Message and Call to Action

The key message of this work is that the success or failure of MAWs’ struggles in both contexts hinges on the ecosystem of allies and network of supporters—specifically, their cohesion, strategy, and whether they are migrant-led.

The recommendations are intended as living material to be used by activists, associations, trade unions, and, above all, MAWs themselves, as a tool for possible change and transformation. They are designed to support MAWs in their long-term struggle for just living and working conditions and, most importantly, to ensure that the dignity of their lives and their rights is central to every single, collective, and political action.

This research calls for the implementation of policies, practices, and solidarity actions with an intersectional and decolonial approach. It highlights the need for a holistic and integrated approach that involves communities from the local to the national level, where every actor assumes responsibility for the care and protection of people and rights.

Local actors (institutions, unions, associations, and workers) are encouraged to jointly define a realistic timeline and shared priorities for each recommendation, basing their implementation on the specific resources available in each context.

Alignment with Global Objectives

The recommendations directly reference the following 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including: Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being; Goal 4: Quality Education; Goal 5: Gender Equality; Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth (in particular

point 8.7: effective measures to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking), as well as EU political objectives concerning gender equality and the fight against discrimination.

Document’s Structure

Following this introductory section, the second section contains the Executive Summary – the recommendations in brief. The third section includes the recommendations designated for Federal and Provincial Governments and State Institutions.

Quotes are excerpts from research interviews conducted in Canada with former migrant workers, activists, and academics. To maintain anonymity, participants are identified by codes based on their profile (A: Activist; A_MAW: Migrant Agricultural Worker and Activist; CA: Canada).

SECTION II

Executive Summary: Actions for Justice and Empowerment of Migrant Agricultural Workers

Nr.	Recommendation	High-Impact Message
1	Foster and Support Migrant Workers'- Led Initiatives and Organizing	Worker-Led Action: Prioritize direct support for autonomous organizing by migrant workers to ensure advocacy aligns with their actual needs.
2	Enhance Public Awareness and Consumer Advocacy Campaigns	Break the Silence: Intensify campaigns to link consumer choices with labour conditions, exerting ethical pressure on retailers and producers.
3	Unity in Objectives and Practice	Unite for Systemic Change: Strengthen unity among all social actors (academia, trade unions, and associations) to connect migrant workers' rights to broader justice issues.
4	Prioritize Action-Oriented and Collaborative Research with/for Migrant Agricultural Workers	Research for Transformation: Academia must support action-oriented, collaborative research that generates practical insights to dismantle systemic barriers.
5	Enhance Knowledge Translation and Dissemination Strategies	Make Knowledge Accessible: Develop effective strategies to ensure research findings reach and are understood by activists, policymakers, and migrant workers.
6	Strengthen Cross-Sectorial Coalitions and Collective Advocacy	Build a Unified, Strong Voice: Civil society and trade unions must form cross-sectorial coalitions to exert greater pressure for systemic change and close service gaps.
7	Expand and Promote Direct Support Services	Extend Safe Support: Expand the provision of direct, accessible, and culturally safe support services (legal, health, language), reaching remote communities.
8	Empower Through Knowledge of Rights and Resources	Information is the First Step: Provide clear, multilingual, and accessible information on rights and services, delivered through trusted channels to build self-advocacy.
9	Facilitate and Support Collective Organizing and Mutual Aid Networks	Solidarity and Internal Resilience: Provide spaces and resources for self-organization and mutual aid networks, fostering resilience and collective advocacy within the migrant community.
10	Ensure Visibility and Accountability for Agricultural Workers' Rights	Fight the Culture of Silence: Media must commit to consistent, fact-based coverage, amplifying the direct voices of workers to drive public accountability.
11	Decolonizing Education and Acknowledging the Settler-Colonial Legacy	Educate for Historical Justice: Educational curricula must be revised to explicitly integrate the link between colonialism and the current precarity of migrant workers.
12	Ensure Historical Accountability and Curriculum Reform	Fundamental Curriculum Reform: Institutions must ensure educational narratives do not conceal the violence of colonialism to foster a critical, non-complicit citizenry.



Audience: Activists and Grassroots Organizations

Recommendation 1: Foster and Support Migrant Workers'- Led Initiatives and Organizing

Activists and grassroots organizations should continue to prioritize and directly support organizing efforts led by migrant agricultural workers themselves. Those most impacted are best positioned to identify their needs and solutions. This approach ensures advocacy aligns with workers' lived experiences and strengthens their collective voice. Support should include resource sharing, capacity building, and creating safe spaces for organizing while respecting the autonomy of worker-led movements.

"So I think that a lot of groups in the coalition have that foundation: being worker-led is really so important to directing where we go and whose voices are elevated..." (I_4_2024_A_CA)

Recommendation 2: Enhance Public Awareness and Consumer Advocacy Campaigns

Activists should intensify campaigns aimed at raising public awareness about the precarious working and living conditions of migrant agricultural workers and their fundamental rights. These cam-

paigns should leverage media, social platforms, and community outreach to connect consumer choices to labour conditions, encouraging ethical consumption and pressuring retailers and food producers to adopt fair labour practices and supply chains. This is particularly crucial to address the "culture of silence" and invisibility of these workers.

Recommendation 3: Unity in Objectives and Practice

Movements and other social actors (including academia, associations, and trade unions) are called upon to continue and reinforce "unity as a value in objectives and practice." This unity should aim to pressure for and propose alternatives for global social change, bringing together the issue of migrant agricultural workers' rights with broader issues like anti-racism, access to decent work, temp work agency regulations, food security, women rights, the occupation of Palestine, environmental care, and the rights of Indigenous peoples.

"They have that slogan: 'The workers stand united will never be defeated,' and they try to keep us separated. So that is important, right? That is extremely important." (I_6_2024_A_MAW_CA)



Audience: Academia

Recommendation 4: Prioritize Action-Oriented and Collaborative Research with/for migrant agricultural workers

Academic institutions and researchers must significantly scale up support for, and engagement in, worker-led research practices that prioritize systemic and transformative change. This involves actively supporting initiatives that move beyond traditional theoretical studies to dismantle barriers and discrimination by generating practical, community-driven insights. Knowledge produced and mobilized in genuine partnership with migrant and worker-led organizations, is a generative tool for ensuring it is directly applied to/for advocacy and grassroots action. This collaborative approach is vital for building more just and equitable communities and cities that uphold the human rights of migrant agricultural workers.

“So I think activism or academia has a role to play there in conversation with the activist community too. But again, it has to be... disseminated in a way that is successful and accessible.” (I_5_2024_A_CA)

Recommendation 5: Enhance Knowledge Translation and Dissemination Strategies

Academics need to develop and implement more effective knowledge translation strategies to ensure research findings reach and are understood by diverse audiences beyond scholarly circles, including migrant workers, policymakers, civil society, media, and the general public. This includes publishing in accessible formats, utilizing various media platforms, and actively participating in public discourse to bridge the gap between academic insight and practical application. Research must also be understandable and translatable into practical guides for activists, healthcare professionals, and migrants themselves.

“The point is to create a better world: that’s what we want... What is the point of academia? Is it just for researchers? Or is to highlight issues and to create meaningful change. These researchers and activists together: Can you imagine the power to drive change when researchers and activists come together?” (I_5_2024_A_CA)

Audience: Civil Society

Recommendation 6: Strengthen Cross-Sectorial Coalitions and Collective Advocacy

Civil society organizations and trade unions should enhance existing collaborations and forge new cross-sectorial coalitions to build a stronger, more unified voice for migrant agricultural workers. By pooling resources, sharing expertise, and coordinating advocacy efforts, these groups can exert greater pressure on governments and industry to implement systemic changes, including fair (im)migration regulations, comprehensive labour protections, improved housing, and access to integration, health and support services for all migrant workers. This includes fostering networks with other migrant rights organizations, regardless of whether they serve worker permit holders, asylum seekers or undocumented individuals, to address the real gaps in rights and services for this population.

Recommendation 7: Expand and Promote Direct Support Services

Civil society organizations and trade unions should expand the provision of, and access to, direct support services for migrant agricultural workers. This includes legal aid, language support, health services, and information on rights, delivered in culturally safe and accessible ways. Efforts should also focus on outreach to remote farming communities and fostering trust to ensure workers feel safe in seeking assistance without fear of jeopardizing their employment or immigration status.

“What gets better is public awareness: COVID did help with that and more and more in most supports, I feel like, I get a sense of solidarity in most migrant rights networks across the country...” (I_5_2024_A_CA)



Audience: Migrant Workers Themselves

Recommendation 8: Empower Through Knowledge of Rights and Resources

Migrant workers should be supported in their process of empowerment with clear, accessible, and comprehensive information about their labour, immigration, and human rights in Canada. This includes knowledge of available support services, complaint mechanisms, and pathways to legal assistance, delivered through trusted community channels, multilingual materials, and digital platforms. Understanding their rights is the first step towards self-advocacy and demanding fair treatment. Crucially, continuous awareness of available services, advocacy organizations, and community practices—delivered, as much as possible, by former migrant agricultural workers, in their native language, and at very safe, accessible location(s)—is the essential first step for building trust. This process begins with internal self-assurance and progresses to trust in support organizations, leading to the subsequent steps of claiming and protecting their rights, both individually and collectively.

Recommendation 9: Facilitate and Support Collective Organizing and Mutual Aid Networks

Support for migrant workers should prioritize fa-

cilitating their ability to self-organize and establish robust mutual aid networks. Creating safe spaces and providing resources for collective action empowers workers to collectively identify problems, share solutions, and advocate for their interests. These worker-led initiatives are critical for building solidarity, resilience, and effective strategies for change from within the migrant community.

Audience: Media

Recommendation 10: Ensure Visibility and Accountability for Agricultural Workers' Rights

The media and journalistic landscape currently contribute to a “culture of silence” regarding severe human rights violations experienced by migrant and seasonal agricultural workers (MSAWs) in Canada. This silence stems from a lack of fact-based reporting and the systemic invisibility of workers, hindering public awareness and political action.

1. Mandate Fact-Based, Consistent Reporting: Media organizations at all levels (national, provincial, and local) must be called upon to actively combat the “culture of silence” by committing to consistent, fact-based coverage of the working and living conditions of migrant and seasonal agricultural workers.
2. Amplify Workers' Voices: Journalists must be

supported and encouraged to prioritize the voices and experiences of MSAWs who are directly impacted by human rights violations, thereby making visible a population that is often marginalized and ignored by mainstream media.

3. **Promote Media Literacy and Training:** Governments and civil society should collaborate to fund training for journalists on the unique issues and legal frameworks (or lack thereof) governing seasonal agricultural labour, ensuring reporting is nuanced, accurate, and ethical.

"Ignorance is a problem. People do not know about the issue. We are invisible. The mainstream media is not covering it... That's the culture. So the culture is the problem. These are the barriers. These are the obstacles, the barriers. Everything is okay. Culture of silence." (I_6_2024_A_MAW_CA).

Audience: Educational Institutions and Educators

Recommendation 11: Decolonizing Education and Acknowledging the Settler-Colonial Legacy Issue - The Settler-Colonial Connection

The current model of agricultural labour is intrinsically linked to the structures of exploitation and inequality inherited from settler-colonialism and its ongoing neo-colonial practices. Existing educational curricula often "whitewash" this history, failing to connect the settler-colonial past with the systemic invisibility and precariousness of today's migrant agricultural workers. This results in generations that are unaware and potentially complicit in human rights violations.

Recommendations:

1. **Redesign Curricula with a Decolonial Lens:** Educational bodies and curriculum designers must revise school programs to explicitly integrate the history of settler-colonialism and ongoing neo-colonial practices. Instruction must draw a direct line between historical policies of land appropriation and exploitation of people, and the current working conditions of Migrant Agricultural Workers (MAWs) within Canada.
2. **Address Systemic Financial Dependencies:** For institutions supporting this educational transition, it is vital to address systemic financial dependencies. This involves strategically reducing reliance on traditional funding sources while actively exploring and securing resources from non-colonial avenues, acknowledging that current funding models are often structured in a way that inherently maintains the existing sta-

tus quo.

3. **Promote Awareness of Interconnected Rights and Educator Training:** Educators are called upon to play an active role in informing and raising awareness among new generations. The goal is to form citizens conscious of human, land, and environmental rights and equipped to identify and respond to violations, particularly those affecting vulnerable populations such as Migrant Agricultural Workers (MAWs)—whose precarious status is a continuation of settler-colonial practices. Crucially, this requires the retraining of educators who may have been trained using an unjust or whitewashed curriculum, and the active hiring of staff that reflects the composition of society. Furthermore, institutions must create safe spaces and opportunities for migrants to share their experiences directly in the classroom, enriching the curriculum with lived realities.
4. **Ensure Historical Accountability and Curriculum Reform:** Institutions must ensure that the educational narrative does not conceal the violence, past and present, of settler-colonialism, fostering the development of a critical citizenry that is not complicit in systemic injustices within a settler-colonial country. This accountability necessitates a fundamental curriculum redesign to explicitly integrate the history of settler-colonialism and ongoing neo-colonial practices, thereby connecting historical policies of land appropriation and exploitation of people to the current working conditions of MAWs in Canada.

"The people who design the curriculum in school they've whitewashed the curriculum. They never highlight the issue as it is... If the truth is exposed to those children, there will be a revolution." (I_6_2024_A_MAW_CA).



Co-authorship and Special thanks

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I also wish to thank each and every one of the participants in this international study, as well as my Canadian supervisor, Dr. Susana Caxaj, and Italian supervisor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Professor Perocco, for their precious comments and invaluable feedback on the initial drafts of this document. Furthermore, I wish to express my profound gratitude to the CERC (Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration) and Professor Anna Triandafyllidou for their kind hospitality during the fieldwork, and to Professor Donatella Della Porta for her support during the secondment at the COSMOS (Centre on Social Movement Studies) in Florence.

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Last version: **27.11.2025**

Appendix:

Programme poster for the Recommendations launch - 27.11.2025



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice
Department of
Philosophy and
Cultural Heritage

November 27th 2025
10.00 AM – 12.00 PM EST
(Toronto) / 4.00 PM –
6.00 PM CET (Rome)

[Link Zoom](#)

Marie Skłodowska-Curie
Project: Migrants' protests:
how the borders of citizenship
are conceived, mobilized and
constructed by migrants' farm
workers protest

Organized by:
Eriselda Shkopi
Ca' Foscari University of Venice
Rafaela Pascoal
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Info: eriselda.shkopi@unive.it



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Migrant Worker Policy Recommendations Launch

Eugénie Depatie-Pelletier

Association for the Rights of Household and Farm Workers
(DTMF), Canada

Santiago Escobar

United Food and Commercial Workers Union Canada

Gabriel Allahdua

Former migrant worker, author and senior mobilization
officer, DTMF, Canada

Lizeth Vera

Former migrant worker, member of advisory committee,
DTMF, Canada