

**MIGRATION AND LABOUR FORCE NEEDS
IN CONTEMPORARY AGRICULTURE: WHAT DRIVES
STATES TO IMPLEMENT TEMPORARY PROGRAMS?
A COMPARISON AMONG THE CASES OF HUELVA,
LLEIDA (SPAIN) AND PIANA DEL SELE (ITALY)^{1 2}**

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***D**uring the 1980s, Italy and Spain experienced several political and social changes, including an important demographic shift, passing from being emigration countries to immigration countries. The growth of their economies and their conversion into neoliberalism, structurally transformed the different productive segments, including the agricultural sector that progressively adopted the industrial Californian mode.*

This transformation required huge amounts of workforce at a time when nationals were abandoning the sector, so growers turned their attention to employ migrant workers, that have become nowadays a structural factor of production in the global agricultural value chains.

The ways migrants have been recruited to meet production needs differ from a productive context to another, as it depended on the specific interests and demands of farms operating in each agricultural enclave. This article analyzes, through a comparative perspective, the institutional, legal and informal mechanisms envisaged and implemented in Spain and Italy to encourage the recruitment of foreign workforce, by verifying how and why circular migration programs onto the agricultural sector have been, or not, promoted. To understand how these policies have actually been implemented, three productive enclaves have been compared, Huelva and Lleida, in Spain, and Piana del Sele, in Southern Italy, in order to identify the factors that explain why some agricultural enclaves of the world-ecology have configured systems to import labour from the global periphery, while others have privileged a deregulated model.

***Keywords:** agricultural work; world-ecology; circular migration.*

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INTRODUCTION

During the 1980s, Italy and Spain started the transition from emigration to immigration countries due to a series of factors but principally because of their economic development and, in the case of Spain, entry into the European Community. This shift provoked numerous transformations on both the social and political levels, changing the composition of their populations and reorganizing their labour markets at a time when the influence of neoliberal policies was growing.

The agricultural sectors of the two countries were among the sectors most affected by these trends. While both countries experienced the total conversion of their traditional primary sector into an industrial one (Gordo, 2008), requiring huge amounts of workers, the improvement of working conditions and the new opportunities offered by other dynamic sectors of the economy provoked a lack of sufficient workforce to meet these needs. The traditional precariousness and instability of agriculture's working conditions and the low social prestige associated with this type of activity caused the departure of nationals from farm jobs. Consequently, employers had to look for new populations whose availability and willingness to do this kind of job could ensure that the productive process could go forward, and migrants satisfied this demand. The employment of a foreign workforce offered relevant benefits for growers, not only because they have long accepted hard-working conditions, in contrast to the growing aspirations of national workers for whom the agricultural sector has become less and less attractive (López-Sala, 2016a), but also because their symbolic, social, and legal weakness, which made them a docile and controllable workforce (Sayad, 2004). To satisfy the demands of growers and to face the lack of labour supply in this sector, the Italian and Spanish States promoted a set of institutional and political mechanisms and programs at national levels to allow the recruitment of seasonal workers in temporary or circular ways (Gualda, 2012), as occurred in other States of the world-ecology³ (Molinero-Gerbeau and Avallone, 2016).

The aim of this contribution is to analyse, from a comparative perspective, the legal, institutional, and informal mechanisms envisaged and implemented by Spain and Italy to promote circular migration in their agricultural sectors in order to answer a precise question: why have some European agricultural enclaves organized temporary work programs with Third Countries while others have not made this choice?⁴

³ The concept of "world-ecology" was elaborated by Jason W. Moore (2015) in reference to the global capitalist system in which States and their economies and "natures" are part, according to their power, of the core, the periphery or the semi-periphery of the global power.

⁴ This question is justified by the fact that the European Union has a specific directive promoting the use of selection and recruitment procedures of immigrant workforce directly in the areas of origin. Directive 2014/36/UE from the EU Parliament and Council of 26 February 2014 refers to "the conditions of entry and stay of third-country nationals for employment purposes as seasonal workers". This is coherent with the architecture of the European migration policy, the needs of agricultural production – which combines seasonal jobs with permanent activities running throughout the year – and the social production patterns in the continental agricultural enclaves.

Italy and Spain have been selected for this comparative study because they share similar economic, institutional and legislative structures. In addition, both agricultural sectors share common features and experienced a similar historical transformation, so their comparison will allow us to determine why, in a similar context with a similar structural problem – a lack of workforce in their agro-export industry, Spain developed temporary circular migration programs but Italy did not.

The areas chosen to empirically study the ways in which migrant labour in agriculture is employed are three enclaves of these countries: Huelva and Lleida, the former in Andalusia and the latter in Catalonia, and Piana del Sele, in the south of the province of Salerno in Campania. The enclaves of Huelva and Lleida were selected because the directive 2014/36/UE assumed their seasonal workers' scheme model as a reference, so they are studied as a paradigmatic example of temporary work programs in the countries of origin (*contratación en origen*). Piana del Sele, in contrast, is a typical enclave representative of a part of Italian agriculture and its organization of the agricultural labour market. In this context, the use of structured circular migration programs has never been formally implemented, even though foreign workers have, over time, become to represent approximately half of the total workforce employed both in seasonal and more permanent agricultural jobs (Avallone, 2017).

By analysing these two national case studies, we contribute to the research carried under the world-ecology paradigm to elucidate the factors that explain why some global agricultural enclaves have prioritized the establishment of work-import systems under temporary programs from the global periphery while others have privileged a model that, in previous research, we have characterized as “deregulated” (Molinero-Gerbeau and Avallone, 2016). This research is also connected with the overall discussion on migrant labour in globalized/neoliberal agriculture that has attracted (and continues growing) the attention of several researchers from different countries mainly in the last decade (Corrado et al, 2017; Gertel and Sippel, 2014; Colloca and Corrado, 2013; Bonnano and Cavalcanti, 2014).

The results shown in this paper have been produced using a mixed methodology based on the analysis of legal and political norms, statistical data, the use of qualitative interviews, and notes from participant observation carried out several years in the three analysed enclaves.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the changes that have occurred in the agriculture of both countries over the last three decades are explained. Subsequently, the two national contexts are presented from the point of view of the agricultural and legislative structures, focusing, then, on three specific enclaves, to understand why circular migration programs were implemented in two, the areas of Huelva in Southern Spain and Lleida in Catalonia, while in the third, Piana del Sele, in the Italian province of Salerno, this did not happen.

INDUSTRIALIZATION, INTERNATIONALIZATION AND INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS IN ITALY AND SPAIN'S AGRICULTURES

Italy and Spain have been immigration countries since the early 1980s. In the beginning, migrant mobility was mainly from North African countries, although in the Italian case, the origins were more differentiated. Their inclusion in local economies followed similar processes, principally with their employment in legwork, agriculture and the lowest positions, in terms of wages and social status, in the food and tourism industry (Avallone, 2013).

Some jobs in the agricultural sector were among the first opportunities available for immigrants both in Italy and in Spain. In the former country, foreigners regularly employed in agriculture have gone from approximately 23,000 in 1989 to approximately 268,000 in 2012, accounting for 31.7% of the total employed (INEA, 2014). In the latter country, the presence of immigrants has been evident since the mid-1980s (Berlan, 1987). This trend has not halted in the following decades, and migrant workers have become central in the agricultural labour market, reaching in 2011 27.6% of the total⁵.

Spanish and Italian growers introduced many structural changes in this period that explain the centrality of migrant labour in these productive contexts. Among the variety of processes that occurred, three fundamental transformations can be identified: the differentiation of crops and the growing orientation of production towards exports; strong productivity growth through the deseasonalization of production, the increase of technological investments and the spread of new agronomic techniques in many territorial areas; and the increasing insertion of foreign labour (Avallone, 2014).

In the course of the three decades during which these transformations have unfolded, a profound change occurred in the constituent characteristics of capital and labour employed in agriculture. Capital has been geared towards increasing production levels and productivity, tending to boost its competitive capacity in the national and international markets. Labour has adopted new characteristics and has become increasingly internationalized and feminized, seeing a contraction of the presence of Italian and Spanish male occupants and a gradual increase in the percentages of women and, in absolute values, of migrants. Foreign workers were first males and then women, especially by the beginning of the new century in some productive areas. From a socio-economic point of view, agriculture has incorporated a more flexible workforce, both female and foreign born, and this has been favoured by the lowest social and symbolic positions of these parts of the population over the rest.

In countries with a long history of emigration, which has characterized local societies since the last decades of the nineteenth century, it is necessary to

⁵ According to the data of *Alta laboral en la Seguridad Social*.

understand how the transition has transformed them into countries of immigration and how the entry of foreign labour has been regulated, from legislative and social points of view. This insight is helpful for understanding some of the features of the new agricultural labour force and the living conditions with which they have had to deal.

This issue is the core of the analysis of the next section, where the following question is answered: in what ways have migrant workers accessed Italy and Spain and their respective agricultural sectors?

FROM FORMALITY TO MATERIALITY: THE LEGAL ARCHITECTURE OF ITALY AND SPAIN

Since the 1990s, seasonal employment in agriculture and other sectors (tourism and catering) in Italy has been regulated on a formal basis mainly through a legislative measure called “flows decrees” (*Decreti Flussi*), as foreseen by the First Organic Law on Immigration, 39/90, and confirmed by its subsequent reforms. This measure was based on the concept of quotas, which provided a maximum yearly number of workers to be incorporated by companies in Italy, distinguishing between seasonal and non-seasonal activities. The agriculture and tourism sectors were identified as seasonal sectors by the law. This approach was confirmed by the new framework law, adopted in 1998 by the ministers Turco and Napolitano and approved by Legislative Decree 286/1998. This legislation introduced several changes but did not reshape the regulation of access to employment through the flows decrees.

However, the typical way of access to the territory and then to employment in Italy was not through the flows decrees but through irregular entry or stay from an administrative point of view, which subsequently emerged from large-scale regularizations (Sciortino, 2006). Some authors (Santoro, 2006; Ferraris, 2009) explain that this phenomenon is not the unexpected effect of a perversion of the system but the result of the whole Italian migratory system, which was deliberately built to promote this circuit to produce a reserve army of cheap and docile foreign workers available for the economy.

The first formalization for a seasonal type of migration-related work was carried out with the Dini Decree (Law Decree 489/95), which introduced a temporary residence permit for seasonal work reasons. This measure attempted to schedule the entry of foreign workers on the basis of the labour demand expressed by businesses by granting temporary non-convertible permits of up to six months. Beneficiaries were granted the right of priority for a new seasonal permit for subsequent years, thereby introducing the implementation of the first formal mechanism for circular migration in the country.

Subsequently, the Turco-Napolitano Law extended the duration of this permit to nine months, whereas Law 189/2002, known as “Bossi-Fini”, introduced the

“multiple-year permit” for seasonal workers: a three-year permit for a maximum period of nine months per year. This measure can be considered the main formal channel for promoting and regulating circular migration for seasonal work in Italy.

In a context where quotas are being contracted because of the economic crisis, Legislative Decree 203/2016 (which transposed the Directive 2014/36/EU) reduced the availability of seasonal work permits, annual or multiannual. The figures of issued permits have dropped drastically over time, in the absence, *inter alia*, of other legal entry channels in Italy, except the one for international protection requests.

Ultimately, since the end of the 1980s, the insertion and presence of foreign workforce in the agricultural labour market in Italy have been governed by the combination of ordinary and exceptional norms and instruments. The result of this legislative and policy articulation was the subordination of migration to labour market needs and the production of a weakened workforce regarding its administrative rights and status.

A similar regulatory structure was organized in Spain at the same time, with six large-scale regularizations between 1985 and 2005, although there were two important differences. The first refers to the quota system, implemented only in some moments, between 1993 and 1995, between 1997 and 1999 and in 2002 (López-Sala, 2013). The second relates to the management of foreign labour in agriculture known as *contratación en origen* (recruitment in origin), which has favoured circular migration processes to meet the interests of employers and facilitate migration control (Márquez et al, 2009).

The Spanish case confirms the central role of outstanding norms, such as regularizations, in the same way as the Italian case, highlighting the important role played by the State in the political construction of the labour market for migrant people (Düvell, 2011). Legislative tools have, above all, limited, graded and selected the mobility and flexibility of migrant labour, producing a functional exceptionality for obtaining low wages in different economic sectors, with particular regard to agriculture (Veira et al, 2011).

THE CASES OF THE GLOBAL ENCLAVES OF HUELVA, LLEIDA AND PIANA DEL SELE

In the previous section, in general terms, the political and legislative processes that have taken place at the State level in the regulation of migrant work in agriculture in Italy and Spain have been analysed. Attention at this level is necessary but insufficient to understand the real ways of accessing work, as agriculture is strongly characterized at the territorial level and any analysis that does not focus on the specificities of individual territorial productive contexts cannot identify the actual modes of operation. It is for this methodological reason that a more in-depth study of migrant labour in specific agricultural enclaves,

namely, the cases of Huelva and Lleida in Spain, and Piana del Sele in Italy, has been conducted.

The Provinces of Huelva and Lleida, setting up “model” programs

In the second half of the XXth century, a process of mechanization, internationalization, and modernization of the primary sector began in both provinces (López-Sala, 2016a), with “an agriculture, progressively post-fordist, ultramodern, technologically advanced and well-embedded in the global value chain” (Caruso, 2016: 265) as well as export orientation being developed.

The case of Lleida is extremely relevant, as large hectares devoted to the production of pip fruits were set up, reaching an actual production of approximately 200,000 tons of pears, 230,000 tons of peaches and nectarines and 160,000 tons of apples each year (López-Sala, 2016a). Nevertheless, the case of Huelva is even more shocking, becoming one of the most privileged enclaves in this process thanks to the intensive production of Californian strawberries, which occupied 700 hectares in the 1970s being growing to more than 6,300 in 2016, with approximately 270,000 tons of strawberries being produced. Thus, Huelva has become the second largest area of this product in the world after California.

Both processes were due not only to the extension of this type of production in a large part of the region’s land but also to the adoption of the “new agriculture” model (Gordo, 2008) based on the imitation of California’s production techniques. Modernization and technical processes have transformed Lleida and Huelva into large factories, with between 70% and 80% being exported, generating turnovers of hundreds of millions of Euros (López-Sala, 2016b). The “californization” of both regions’ production has been associated with high levels of steady capital investment, but this has not prevented their fruit production from being still largely dependent on variable capital, consisting of agrochemical inputs for land and plants and, above all, labour.

Industrial agriculture, however, required an important workforce at a time when other sectors were also experiencing economic growth and offering better working conditions to nationals. In the 1990s, the lack of manpower became an important problem, so the general discourse turned, in the case of Huelva, from the “red gold” to that of the “great workforce problem” (Reigada, 2012). The solution taken by growers to solve the difficulty of finding a stable workforce was to start employing migrants.

The 90 s mark the beginning of the ethnic and sexual segmentation of both regional agricultural labour markets, which remains a feature of the industry today (Gualda, 2012; Reigada 2012; Achón, 2011). At the beginning, local migrants, principally men coming from the Maghreb, started being employed as a cheap workforce in both regions, but their progressive regularization, the growing opportunities in other economic sectors such as construction, and some episodes of protests made local labour markets unstable. The reaction of growers was thus to

develop new tools that could guarantee availability, stability and a controllable and disciplined workforce to ensure that production would succeed. The Spanish Temporary Programs were designed in this context.

Importing workers from the global periphery: towards a model of induced circularity

Seasonal production is highly unpredictable as it depends not only on meteorological factors but also on a volatile demand (López-Sala, 2016a). Growers do not exactly know when the product will be harvested or how many workers will have to do the work; still, growers must be sure that they have an available and ready workforce to avoid the risk of losing production and, with it, their investments. This just-in-time model requires predictability in a context where the labour market does not offer employment the whole year.

In this context, one can understand why the *pagesos* (Catalan growers) and *freseros* (strawberry growers) originally supported the program. Global competition is high, and pressure from large distribution chains leaves too little room for price adjustment (Molinero-Gerbeau and Avallone, 2017); only by selling practically the totality of production can producers make significant gains. Therefore, only by fixing the workforce in the territory can they minimize uncertainty in the production process (Achón, 2014). Based on past experiences, producers thought of a model that could counter these constraints and provide two basic things for just-in-time production: availability and cheap labour costs.

Only a low-cost and flexible workforce [...] allows, in the risk and dependency situation in which strawberry growers are located, to achieve competitiveness in the global agri-food markets (Reigada, 2012: 108).

It is in this context that the first Spanish temporary program in Lleida was launched, within the framework of the annual quota policy. Unió de Pagesos, the Catalan growers' association, proposed a first pilot experiment to the Catalan Autonomous Government and to the National Government in 1998. The idea was to "import" 35 Colombian workers to test the program and see if it would work there and then to expand it after to the rest of the National Territory. Among the main arguments justifying this kind of mechanisms were, for the State, that this imported workforce would be a controlled migration; for local authorities, that it would eradicate indigence by reducing irregularity as well as wandering by stopping the circulation of uncontrolled workers; for growers, that they would have ensured immediate availability of workers; and for Unió de Pagesos, that they would become the most powerful and representative Trade Union of the region (Achón, 2014). Thanks to the success of the initiative, Huelva's growers did their own test in 1999, importing 600 workers from Poland (Gordo et al, 2014).

The number of employed workers (mainly male in Lleida and female in Huelva) increased year by year, reaching its peak in 2007, when 40,491 workers

mainly from Romania and Morocco were recruited under the Huelva program and 7,237 workers mainly from Romania and Colombia came to Lleida, becoming the two provinces with the most extensive use of the Spanish Temporary Circular Migration Program.

The results show the success of this mechanism. Noting that between 50,000 and 80,000 workers and between 8,000 and 9,000 workers are employed in collecting and packing agricultural products every season in Huelva and Lleida, respectively (López-Sala, 2016b), in some years, the program provides half or more of the required workforce.

In the case of Huelva, a relevant evolution of the program over time was the progressive replacement of nationalities of the employed workers in the program (in Lleida this did not happen). If, by 2003, the majority came from Poland and, from 2004 to 2007, from Romania, only Moroccan workers would come in the following years. Two reasons explain this change: the entry of Eastern European countries into the EU and the financing of the AENEAS-Cartaya program.

The recruitment in origin program makes the required work force available through a flexible mechanism allowing the state to control the temporality and return of migrant people by organizing an “orderly migration” (Reigada, 2012: 108). Contracted women must have experience in agricultural work, be between 25 and 45 years old and come from countries that have signed a bilateral agreement with Spain. Returns are controlled in two ways: subordinating their recruitment to the issuing of an authorization of the Spanish consulate and granting to workers who already returned their re-employment in the coming agricultural year. Poland and Romania were favoured by the authorities because of their geographical proximity, which guaranteed a not too expensive journey (Gordo, 2008).

The entry of Poland (2004) and Romania (2007) into the EU again implied a change in the program. Citizens of these countries became European and, therefore, “free” to look for work in other national markets or other economic sectors in Spain, obliging a new orientation of the program. In the new context, Romanian and Polish workers have not stopped migrating to Spain to work in Huelva and Lleida’s agriculture but have done it out of the program, through personal networks and direct relationships with businesses. The former induced circularity began to generate a kind of autonomous and “spontaneous” circularity (López-Sala, 2016b), a less controllable and predictable mechanism than the recruitment in origin program.

The second element that changed the program definitively was EU funding, through the AENEAS program, implemented by the Municipality of Cartaya in 2006. With a sum of 1.4 million euros, the locality committed itself to rewarding producers to turn again their focus to Morocco, whereas ANAPEC (Moroccan Labour Agency) received 5 million Euros to guarantee the program’s stability in their country (Hellio, 2014). European funding made it possible to put into practice the test that would define the future of circular or “controlled” migrations that are

functional to the needs of the Union. The idea was to experiment and, at the same time, compensate employers for the entry of Eastern countries into the EU and the consequent loss of stability in the control of the mobility of workers from these countries. In the following section, the program set up in Huelva for Morocco is explained in depth.

Moroccan “a la carte” workers in times of crisis. Controversial aspects of the last program in Huelva

Although it is certain that in the previous programs, a vast portion of “imported” labour was composed of women, the program with Morocco was exclusively designed to employ a female labour force. This sexual labour market division was based on supposed specific qualities attributed to women by employers, but in this case, above all, on their higher possibilities to return, a key aspect for the EU.

ANAPEC’s selection of farmworkers was carried out on the basis of five criteria: good physical condition, agricultural work experience, a middle age, children and close family ties and, therefore, the status married, widowed or divorced. These criteria were considered fundamental to the success of the experiment because they were consistent with the need to ensure docile female labour, in good physical condition, prepared for work and little orientation to try to stay in Spain as they were burdened by family responsibilities in the country of origin.

This latter aspect has been the most criticized one because it has institutionalized, in fact, sexual segregation in migration policies, reflecting the EU’s orientation towards a selective migration model, useful for economic needs but weakened from the social and legal point of view, as, for example, workers receive a seasonal permit, which cannot be extended, converted or renewed, linked to a single employer. There are two central ideas. The first is to have a useful, available and effective workforce, guaranteeing its return to the country of origin. This second objective is achieved through a set of factors identified by institutions and producers as “guarantees” of return: the existence of family ties in the areas of origin, the obligation to “behave well” and return at the end of the campaign as conditions to be able to be selected again the next year, and a lack of knowledge of their rights and the Spanish language. This mix guaranteed a return rate of approximately 80%⁶.

Despite the initial reticence of producers to employ Moroccan women, the program was successful in terms of labour, ranging from 5,277 women workers imported in the 2006 campaign to 14,190 in 2008 (Macías et al, 2016). However, since this initial outcome, the number of women employed through this measure has fallen, up to the maximum limit imposed by the Government of 2,000 authorizations

⁶ If we compare this figure with that of 2003, when 95 workers were recruited by ANAPEC as a pilot test and less than 10% of them returned, as shown in (HELLIO, 2014).

for the year 2013. The main reason can be identified in the economic crisis. With a steady increase in the number of unemployed workers across the country, the government decided to close all the programs (including the one of Lleida) to force producers to re-employ national workers (Caruso, 2016). These restrictions pushed employers to come back to Eastern Europe using the old networks to import workers (mostly women) from Romania.

Data show that the recruitment of some Moroccan workers has not been completely stopped because they continue to hire some of them from year to year only for collection operations. Their number is symbolic, but it is maintained to “keep the machine oiled” (Gualda, 2012: 635) and not lose the networks built in the previous years to make it easier to reactivate this mechanism once the crisis is over. In the case of Lleida, this trend also continued, but the figures show that only 241 workers arrived under the program in 2015 (232 from Colombia, only 9 from Morocco)⁷.

Programs, especially the latest ones with Morocco, have been criticized or praised on the basis of different perspectives. The institutions have always stressed their triple win effect, as they would make it possible to develop the regions of origin and destination as well as the lives of migrants themselves (López-Sala, 2016a). The program, in this sense, is conceived as a tool to reduce poverty through circularity as it constantly mobilizes capital between places of origin and destination, generating a co-development experience (Macías et al., 2016).

On the other side, several studies reflect many negative aspects of these experiences. Workers are not docile as a natural attitude, but they are socialized to be so during the process of recruitment, in which they are trained to stay silent, not to give problems and not to criticize if they want to be employed again in the next campaign (Achón, 2011). Although their situation is legal and protected by the law, “it is difficult to assert their rights if a possible complaint exposes them to the risk of coming home, not renewing their contracts, or slipping into illegality” (Hellio, 2014: 151). Another aspect is the constant submission of the workforce to the productive needs: no worker knows when they will leave or when they will return (they communicate that only a few days before the departure), some sign the contract and then are not called, others work less than expected because employers contract more people than those they really need, to have a reserve army. Work is paid by days, so if it rains, workers will not work and therefore will not be paid. Some cases of – as is called in Italy – “gray work” practices (irregular practices inside of a legal framework, such as declaring less days or not paying extra hours), control of workers’ mobility and job performance have also been identified. In fact, as said by Achón (2017), the philanthropic argument of these programs is only a way to legitimize a strategy purely representing “migratory utilitarianism”.

⁷ Data come from Fundación Pagesos Solidaris and the Subdelegation of the Government in Lleida.

Piana del Sele: a paradigmatic case of the Southern Italian deregulated model

Piana del Sele is an agricultural area in the south of the province of Salerno in Campania, which covers the territory of eleven municipalities. Its production is divided into three sectors: livestock, horticulture and flower farming. With approximately 6,000 hectares covered by greenhouses, of which approximately 3,000 are dedicated to the production of arugula and fourth range ready-to-go salads. The latter two are the most dynamic parts of the regions sector.

Piana del Sele is characterized by a rich, dynamic and differentiated agriculture, where traditional ways of working coexist with modern technologies, with characteristics similar to those of California's agriculture (MEDU, 2015). This variety is reflected in the diversification of labour demand, which oscillates between two extremes: from stable, permanent and continuous labour demand, especially in the case of protected crops, to an occasional demand, especially for activities that take a few days, such as planting seeds, cleaning the soil, or partaking in intense collection operations.

In this given socio-economic context, as in other areas of Italian agriculture, circular migration mechanisms have never been implemented, although the possibility of establishing them exists, as national legislation allows it (see section 2).

Migrant people have, over time, followed different routes to enter the country and the agriculture sector has become a first door to employment in the absence of alternatives for a portion of them. Our field research conducted between 2011 and 2017 confirms that local workers' entry into Italy has been diversified. In some cases, it has been irregular and, in other cases, especially for Moroccan workers, it has been regular, but such cases are often followed by fraud, with the immediate loss of the status of administrative regularity after their entrance (Avallone, 2017). Personal networks have led people towards Piana del Sele, where access to work occurs through direct relationships, mediated by friends, relatives or the *caporali* (the typical illegal intermediaries mainly established in southern Italy), outside of institutional channels.

The irregular conditions of migrants, with which they accede to the labour market, are accentuated in the real labour relations. At a national level, the rate of irregulars employed in agriculture is estimated at approximately 17.5% on a general average of 15.7% (ISTAT, 2016), with research highlighting the centrality of grey labour, hence the distance between actual conditions and real wages from those laid down in national and provincial contracts (Avallone, 2017).

Access to work is mediated, in some cases, by a so-called *caporale*, which offers a brokerage service, although this kind of intermediation is illegal and since 2011 is a criminal offense. The *caporalato* system is one of the keys, though not the only one, and not the main one, for understanding the situation in agriculture and in the society of Piana del Sele (Avallone, 2017). In this context, access to paid work is often, although not always, a resource controlled by private recruiters

acting in direct or indirect collaboration with a portion of the farms. The *caporali* are intermediaries, Italians or co-nationals of migrant workers, who connect companies with workforces, guaranteeing at the same time access to work and a disciplined workforce. The *caporali* play the dual role of organizing the meeting between demand and job supply and the meeting of specific economic needs and specific social needs. In this sense, the *caporali* are the most functional figures for reproducing a context in which a portion of labourers are looking for work, under the pressure of unemployment, precariousness and migration legislation. The weakness of public employment services also partly explains why businesses that are looking for low-cost and disciplined workers, as is the case in other agricultural contexts in southern Europe, pay for the services of the *caporali* (Avallone, 2013).

The reproduction of the informal brokerage system over time is based on the constraints for a portion of farmworkers in finding a job autonomously, determined by the attitude of businesses, which constantly delegate this role to the *caporali*. The latter, in other words, sell a resource to workers, that of acceding to employment, privatizing the organization of the labour market. In this way, a portion of the workforce becomes completely dependent on the *caporale*, in an ambivalent relationship in which a good relationship with one or more *caporali* is crucial to obtain a job, albeit in a disadvantaged force relationship.

Access to work through a *caporale* worsens employment conditions, especially because of the subjective situation that this entails but also because of the reduction of real wages due to the fee that has to be paid for the intermediation service. The worst result, however, is the general spread of grey labour in agriculture, which has led to a structural loss of wages, which can be between 25% and 35% at the local and national levels (Avallone, 2017; Dines and Rigo, 2015).

In-depth interviews with foreign workers do not reveal the existence of circular migrations. In the case of people coming from countries outside the European Union, primarily from Morocco, India and Ukraine, the procedures for entry or stay have often been characterized by administrative irregularities, regularized through amnesties and the flows decrees. For this part of the workforce, returning to the country of origin is subject to obtaining a regular administrative status, a residence permit, but not converted in circular migrations. Only in some cases do migrants return to visit their family in their country of origin, for a few months, but in this case, it is not possible to speak of real circular migration as, on their return to Piana del Sele, people usually have to start by looking for a new company for employment, with no stable reinstatement programs to which they can refer.

This is also the case of the workforce coming from countries belonging to the European Union, locally coinciding with Romanian nationals, who come back to their country of origin for short periods.

As highlighted in some interviews with agricultural employers, the flows decrees, based on the quota system, have been used over time to regularize some of the foreign workers:

“this tool targets, in reality, foreigners already present on the Italian territory, who through this procedure are regularized. The fact that the flows decrees are usually used to regularize, albeit for a long time, those who are already in Italy can be demonstrated even formally, verifying the fact that firms use nominal applications (...). It is clear that businesses or their intermediaries have a direct and privileged relationship with the immigrants they are requesting” (agricultural employer).

“The problem is that in the flows decrees there are two or three things of difficult application. One, the worker must be in Tunisia, which is a buffoonery, it’s a fiction because we all know that the worker is here because I do not know what’s up there, I know you, who’re here and want to work and then I have to make a fiction” (agricultural employer).

The constant presence in the enclave of a workforce that is willing to be employed has contributed, together with the other institutional, regulatory and organizational factors identified (Santoro, 2006), to a social regulation of the workforce based not on circular migration programs but on grey labour and the management of the condition of expulsion and, in some cases, the administrative irregularity of non-EU migrants.

The local agricultural labour market has never lacked a workforce and therefore does not require the implementation of circular migration programs. The regulation of the workforce is based on the combination of different social forms, which, in summary, concern four factors. The first relates to the fact that migrant workers in agriculture are already present on the territory and are bound to this sector of the labour market because it is difficult for them to deal with other different sectors. The second factor concerns the organization of production, which, ranging from seasonal to non-seasonal crops, extends throughout the year, constantly requiring a workforce, albeit with variable performance over a period of time based on production needs. The third factor is the spread of grey or completely irregular labour (called black labour in Italian), favoured by the absence of institutional controls but also by the socially defined difficulty of denouncing employers as this can carry difficulties to accede to new jobs on different farms. The fourth factor is related to the employers’ guidelines. They are less interested in bureaucratic regulatory tools that can slow the process of recruiting workers; in some cases, the just-in-time demand requires them hiring workers from one day to another, so they are more prone to follow more predictable logic such as the informal intermediation system of *caporali* or direct relationships with the workforce.

In summary, social regulation to access the agricultural labour market in Piana del Sele is achieved through a varied combination of formal and informal factors and relations, which mainly concern the articulation of normative provisions introducing different administrative statuses, informal intermediation, the presence of labourers on the territory, and the systematic organization of grey work patterns. This set of factors conforming the “deregulated model” (Molinero-Gerbeau and

Avallone, 2016) does not require specific circular migration programs, which tend to make the labour market more rigid and, therefore, dysfunctional to the interests of agricultural companies and, in part, to the foreign workforce itself.

THE CAPITAL-LABOUR RELATIONS AS A DETERMINING FACTOR FOR SETTING UP (OR NO) PROGRAMS

The observed cases show two completely different models of foreign workforce insertion in the agricultural sector, representing two typical ways of introducing migrant labour in agriculture that can be observed throughout the contemporary world-ecology (Molinero-Gerbeau and Avallone, 2016). If Huelva and Lleida are prototypical cases of state-controlled programs, Piana del Sele is a paradigmatic case of “deregulation” and the heterogeneous use of labour through a mixture of formality, informality and irregularity.

The Spanish and the Italian States share the same European supranational regulation and have defined seasonal permits that allow the creation of programs to import workers from third countries. However, what determines the organization, or lack thereof, of circular migration programs is the relationship between labour demand and supply and, more broadly, the relationship between capital and work in each specific enclave. The lack of available workers has driven producers and the state to try to import work by organizing their mobility, but if there is already an actively and steadily reproducible local reserve army, then business interests are met, reducing interest towards the definition of specific recruitment programs. The latter exists to the extent that they are needed to meet the needs of farms: this condition is essential to understanding why these programs have been developed in some enclaves, but it also explains why in others there was no need to put them in practice.

Huelva, Lleida and Piana del Sele are clear examples of this functioning. Whereas in the Spanish cases there was a traditional lack of labour, this did not happen the latter. Piana del Sele’s employers have been able to develop industrial agriculture thanks to the architecture of the Italian migration policy geared towards the production of a reserve army of irregular migrants, which has guaranteed the constant availability of low-cost workers. The traditional forms of recruitment that have been present for at least a century in southern Italy, such as the *caporalato*, have adapted themselves to the changes required by the new forms of production, but the practice of informal intermediation has always been a guarantee for producers, who have never worried about organizing programs to recruit workers in origin. In addition, the *caporalato*, from the point of view of its utility to growers, has remained a functioning system, allowing just-in-time availability of labour and thereby maximizing the benefits of each campaign. Various forms of legal and illegal intermediation between employers and labour force exist also in Huelva and Lleida but do not form a system as strong as the *caporalato* and

generally serve to provide an “extra” workforce when programs are not enough to cover all the needs of the collection.

Another important factor in identifying the propulsive factors of programs is the type of production that prevails in the specific enclaves. Huelva’s main crop is the strawberry, which absorbs almost all agricultural activity in the region, concentrated in a long season, from the end of February to the middle of June. Gordo et al (2014) explain that this factor is decisive for the program because, unlike the areas where there is work year-round, Huelva needs 60,000 workers during a maximum period of four months, being extremely dependent on a travelling workforce not permanently established in the territory. It is the same for Lleida, where 9,000 workers are required for working a maximum of four months. The program makes it possible to have a workforce that is not available in the enclave, for a period when it is needed. In Piana del Sele, however, the most common crop, arugula, can be produced throughout the year under greenhouses. In addition, agricultural production is varied and constantly requires labour; this helps to stabilize a part of the labour force and guarantee the constant presence of migrants willing to work for Piana del Sele’s firms. The deseasonalization of production has reduced uncertainty about the availability of labour for local employers, who do not have to support other mechanisms, such as recruitment programs, to ensure the presence of workers when it is needed.

In this sense, predictability is a central element. Huelva and Lleida’s programs ensure that production needs are met despite the absence of a reserve army in place. In Piana del Sele, predictability is obtained through the combination of different factors, related to the legal architecture of the national migration policy, which guarantees the availability of irregulars in the country; to the deseasonalization of production, which allows settling workers on the territory; and the existence of the *caporalato*, which connects a portion of workers and employers, despite the dispersal of farms on a vast rural area.

In addition, in Italy, two important factors can be identified to disincentive the creation of recruitment programs. On the one hand, the traditional extension of informal practices in the agricultural sector (Colloca and Corrado, 2013) and the absence of effective State controls allow employers to reproduce this logic. On the other hand, the rigid procedure to obtain seasonal permits linked to the available quotas of the flows decrees has reduced, especially up to 2014–2015, the chances of employing workforce in line with production needs (Amnesty International, 2012), which has not helped in converting the sector into a more formalized one.

How are migrant people affected by these models? One might think that the program model, controlled by the State, and verified by local actors, will better ensure respect for workers’ rights compared to the deregulated dynamics dominating Piana del Sele. Some authors, such as Olga Achón (2011), show how programs are a social control mechanism where one finds “a normativisation of [the workers’] daily life and the limitation of some of their fundamental individual freedoms”.

Frédéric Décosse (2017) qualifies the situation of workers in the French program as of “voluntary servitude”: workers in these situations formally choose to sell their workforce but are entirely subject to the discipline of the companies that employ them. The fact that they are hosted in the workplace, their lack of knowledge of the local language, the impossibility of changing workplaces and the compulsory return are other elements highlighted by some of the program analysts who have shown the limits imposed on the autonomy of migrants all ‘inside these production relationships (Hellio, 2014).

The factor explaining the preference of employers for programs over irregular employment is again predictability, because even if irregular migrants are on average willing to work for lower salaries, they also constitute a more volatile labour force (Achón, 2011: 2). This means that, even if irregulars have an important limitation on their rights, they are not forced to work for the same farm and can develop a multitude of strategies that are prohibited for migrants involved in the programs. It is true that these can run away and become irregulars, but this possibility is difficult because of deportations, guaranteed by bilateral agreements, and the strict control of their mobility managed by the State.

Do these considerations converge to mean that irregular migrants in Piana del Sele may exercise more agency and autonomy than those who are hired through the program of Lleida and Huelva? In fact, even irregular people depend on firms to be regularized, confirming that no model is better than another from the point of view of migrant workers, as strategies are adopted in a differentiated way according to the local and social structure.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of concrete contexts, such as Lleida, Huelva and Piana del Sele, shows the limits of the EU’s circular migration policy. In the first two cases, the economic crisis revealed the difficulty of maintaining a model that legally imports workers in a context of unemployment and mass precariousness. Programs have become virtually irrelevant in recent years, and migrants outside of them, such as undocumented people and Eastern Europeans, have been again prioritized. In Piana del Sele, the situation is even clearer: although national migration policy has been harmonized with the Union’s guidelines, the formal architecture has never been used to organize recruitment programs; in fact, it has become a cheating mechanism for a portion of migrants.

The observation of these three cases has allowed us to conclude that circularity depends on many factors, but above all, it depends on the interests of local growers. In the case of Piana del Sele, businesses never requested the implementation of such programs, and therefore they do not exist. In the case of Lleida and Huelva, growers requested a program of this kind to avoid labour shortages, showing how macro-politics and macroeconomics intersect, establishing

the formal framework through which the mobility of workers in agricultural enclaves occurs.

Food production will not stop. New frontiers of labour will appear, and farm employers will develop new mechanisms to ensure the availability of cheap workers. It is not the existence or absence of recruitment programs that will determine the survival of the agricultural sector in Spain or Italy. Its centrality in reproducing the accumulation process is so important (Moore, 2015) that it cannot be stopped by limitations of the labour supply. In the current power relations, the migrant reserve army will continue to maintain cheap food production in Europe with or without programs.

Europe already experienced a first period of recruitment programs between the end of World War II and the 1970s. Stephen Castles (2006) identified their death and then their resurrection at the beginning of the XXIst century. Are we now facing the end of this second period? Are we at the beginning of a new phase? Will the new law against *caporalato* approved in 2016 in Italy (Law 199/2016) put an end to the current system, and will Italy move towards a more regulated model with specific recruitment programs? Will the ‘end’ of the economic crisis in Spain announced by the government allow growers to reopen the program? These questions represent opportunities for future research in this study area.

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In anii '80, Italia și Spania au trecut prin schimbări politice și sociale. Acestea au inclus un salt demografic, trecând de la a fi țări de emigrație, la țări de imigrație. Creșterea economiilor și trecerea la neoliberalism au transformat structural diferitele segmente productive, inclusiv sectorul agricol care a adoptat progresiv modelul industrial Californian.

Această transformare a necesitat o forță de muncă imensă într-un moment în care populația națională abandona sectorul, așa că agricultorii și-au îndreptat atenția spre muncitorii migranți, care au devenit azi un factor structural de producție în lanțul global agricol.

Felul în care migrații au fost recrutați spre a se potrivi cererilor de producție a diferit de la un context la altul, și a depins de interesele specifice ale fermelor din diferite zone. Acest articol analizează, printr-o perspectivă comparativă, mecanismele legale, informale și instituționale implementate în Spania și Italia, spre a încuraja recrutarea de forță de muncă străină, verificând cum au fost promovate sau nu programele de folosire a forței de muncă migrantă. Spre a înțelege cum au fost implementate aceste politici, au fost comparate cele două zone: Huelva, Lleida, în Spania, și Piana del Sele, Italia (Sudul Italiei), spre a identifica factorii care explică de ce unele zone agricole ale ecologiei globale au configurat sisteme care importă forță de muncă din periferia globală, iar altele au privilegiat un model nereglementat.

Cuvinte-cheie: munci agricole; ecologia globală; migrație circulară.

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