

Hofstra University Model United Nations Conference 2020

Food and Agriculture Organization



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Chair

Introduction to the Committee

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) was first established as a specialized United Nations (UN) agency in 1945¹ focused on eliminating “hunger, malnutrition and poverty and [to] do so in a sustainable manner.”² The FAO’s Director-General as of August 2019 is Qu Dongyu from China.³ The FAO is made up of 194 members, two of which are “associate members” and one, the European Union, which is classified as a “member organization”.⁴

The work of the FAO is broken down into five distinctive areas that facilitate more beneficial outcomes, including helping countries adopt sustainable agriculture practices, advising governments on policies to strengthen development and fight hunger, convening meetings for companies and governments to cooperate and share information on smallholder agriculture, managing projects in rural areas to protect livelihoods and rebuild after disasters, and provide risk-management and disaster-relief advice for agricultural areas.⁵

Introduction to the Topic

The first matter that will be addressed in the FAO committee is child labor in agriculture. In third world countries, the growing need for food production relates to the number of children working within the agricultural field. “Worldwide 60% of all child laborers are in the 5–7 age group work in agriculture, which includes farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry, and livestock. This amounts to over 129 million girls and boys.”⁶ Approximately 67.5% of these child laborers, or 87,075,000 children, are unpaid members of families, meaning that much of the work is managed by the household where they live.⁷ The safety of children who work in agriculture is also a significant issue. “Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. About 59% or 70 million, of children in hazardous work aged 5–17 are found in agriculture.”⁸

Delegates will find that the topic of child labor in agriculture invites a very strong discussion to the table, and they will have to create clear positions and resolutions. It will be important for delegates to focus on the aspect of food production, and how the number of children working in agriculture can be minimized, as well as alternative options when minimizing that number of working children.

The second matter under consideration is the Zika virus and what the FAO can do to help prevent its spread and support efforts to find a cure. “The Zika virus disease is a viral disease transmitted by *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes; the same [type] carrying dengue, yellow fever, chikungunya, and Rift Valley viruses.”⁹ The spread of Zika virus disease is a concern to global health because infection during pregnancy leading to birth defects. In addition to this concern, there are rare cases where Zika can cause Guillain-Barre syndrome, or symptoms that include swelling of the brain, spinal cord, or blood disorders.¹⁰ This virus was first discovered in Eastern Africa during the 1940’s, and appeared in smaller numbers of cases in Western Africa and Asia at various points over the next three decades.¹¹ The current strain of the Zika virus was identified in 2014 after it affected Chile, and soon after Brazil.¹² Since then there have been various outbreaks across the Americas. With the need to find a cure, as well as ways for countries to protect their citizens from the spread of the virus, this topic opens up a wide array of resolution starters.

Topic 1: Child Labor in Agriculture

Child labor “is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.”¹³ The type of work that fits this definition includes any that;

[is] mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and; interferes with their school by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.¹⁴

The FAO provides examples to illustrate this definition, including when children who are legally too young to work but are tasked with activities like herding cattle, applying pesticides, or working overnight “[on] a fishing boat and [being] too tired to go to school the next day”.¹⁵ The FAO is careful to recognize that some activities done around the home are not considered child labor, including “[some] activities [that] may help children acquire important livelihood skills and contribute to their survival and food security.”¹⁶

There are approximately 107 million children working within the agricultural industry in the fields of farming, livestock, forestry, fish and aquaculture—out of a global total of approximately 152 million.¹⁷ In some regions, child labor is more prominent than others. “In absolute terms, almost half of child labor (72.1 million) is to be found in Africa; 62.1 million in the Asia and the Pacific; 10.7 million in the Americas; 1.2 million in the Arab States and 5.5 million in Europe and Central Asia.”¹⁸

The root of this issue stems from rural poverty with the lack of social protection that children are provided by their country.¹⁹ In some countries, child labor is seen as a way to teach children interpersonal skills in the sense of working with others and contributing to society, but in other countries it puts children in some of the most dangerous working conditions.

There have been many efforts to decrease the number of child labor in agriculture. One of the more established efforts in The International Partnership for Cooperation of Child Labor in Agriculture (IPCCLA). As of 2007 this partnership has brought together five major players to work cohesively in order to eliminate child labor globally within the agricultural field. Those five major organizations are the FAO, International Labor Organization (ILO), the International

Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Science for Humanity's Greatest Challenges (CGIAR) and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).²⁰

IPCCLA works on national, regional and global scales to promote safe employment practices for children in agriculture by promoting stronger policies, programs and practices used by agricultural and labor organizations, as well as working to “[improve] rural livelihoods and income-generating activities.”²¹

Besides playing a vital role within the IPCCLA, the Food and Agriculture Organization has taken other steps to work on eliminating the number of children within the agricultural industry. “FAO supports the integration of child labor considerations into national policies and strategies for rural development. As part of its wider approach to eliminate child labor in agriculture, it also promotes efforts to boost the incomes of rural families so that they have the means to send their children to school rather than work.”²² FAO's approach includes fostering cooperation between national ministries, such as labor and agriculture, so that they can coordinate policies on child labor in agriculture. FAO also develops courses and guidelines that governments and agencies can use to identify and monitor practices harmful to children.²³

Case Study One:

Ethiopia has a significant problem with child labor which has led the international community to intervene to offer solutions. Ethiopia is located in in the Horn of Africa, bordered by Eritrea to the north, Kenya to the south, Somalia and Djibouti to the east along with Sudan and South Sudan to the west. According to the CIA World Facebook, Ethiopia has a population of 76,511,887—out of which 33,2010,967 are children aged 0–14.²⁴ Among those aged seven to fourteen, 41.5% (10,202,669) are working. There is a high rate of children in this age group who

attend school (73.1%) but 30.8% attend school and work. Overall, only 54.3% of children aged seven to fourteen complete school.²⁵

Among the ways that children are employed in Ethiopia's agricultural sector are in the planting and harvesting of crops like apples, bananas, coffee, cotton, and *khat*. Children are also employed in herding livestock and fishing. Coming into contact with *khat* is particularly



dangerous because it is a stimulant which can cause addiction from bodily contact with the crop.²⁶

FAO recognizes that agriculture is a major factor in employing Ethiopians, mostly as small, private farmers.²⁷ A 2016 report by the FAO

shows that child labor in Ethiopia has not been

<https://geology.com/world/ethiopia-satellite-image.shtml>

accurately counted because surveys usually count hired help, not children who work for their families. Even with this method:

The average proportion of employment in the precarious category to the total labor is 0.06 in Ethiopia...low values [that] may be explained by the limited use of hired labor among smallholders in the sample, who are mainly subsistence producers and may rely on family members, and thus only limited labor is outsourced.

Research shows that Ethiopian law does not include free basic education, which leaves children vulnerable to being recruited as child laborers. The Somali and Afar regions have the lowest attendance rates in Ethiopia, with only 38.6% of children are enrolled in the Somali region and 50.2% in the Afar region.²⁸ Ethiopian children may still “face barriers to education, including the distance rural children must travel to reach school; a lack of sanitation, which

especially affects adolescent girls; sexual harassment; the requirement to pay for uniforms and supplies; and a lack of teachers.”²⁹

As of 2018, Ethiopia’s laws were still not in compliance with international standards, which are based on offering protections to all children. Some domestic laws follow international standards relate to prohibitions on hazardous occupations or activities for children, forced labor, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children, using children for illegal activities and recruiting children as soldiers.³⁰

Specific domestic laws that do not align with international laws concern the minimum age for children to work or engage in hazardous work, a mandatory education age and access to free public education. Rather than protecting all working children, domestic law only protects children in a contractual relationship with an employer. Laws allowing children to begin apprenticeships makes it possible for them to leave school before completion to begin working.³¹

Ethiopia’s domestic laws on monitoring forced labor by children in agriculture fall under the responsibility of government and law enforcement agencies (see Table 1).

Table 1: Institutions monitoring Ethiopia’s laws on child labor in agriculture³²

Organization/Agency	Role
Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MOLSA)	Conducts labor inspections of formal worksites at the regional level through its regional Bureaus of Labor and Social Affairs. (4) Through its National Referral Mechanism, coordinates victim referral to social services providers. (17)
Ethiopian Federal Police Commission	Enforces criminal laws against the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. (4) Through its Special Child Protection Units in Addis Ababa and other major cities, combats child trafficking and assists vulnerable children. (4,14,29)
Office of the Attorney General	Prosecutes criminal violations of child labor laws, including through its Special Investigative Unit for Women and Children. (4)
Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs	Develops and implements programs to protect vulnerable children and monitor alleged violations of child protection laws, including the worst forms of child labor. (1,30) Maintains foster families and rehabilitation centers for children rescued from the worst forms of child labor. (4)

In addition to these institutions, Ethiopia's National Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Task Force received cooperation from the ILO to make it easier for migrants to find services. Other measures taken by the Ethiopian government included a quadruple increase in the budget for inspectors of labor issues and a partnership with the World Bank and UNICEF to distribute textbooks and build nearly 260 primary school classrooms.³³ Ethiopia is also implementing the regional initiative Africa's Renewed Partnership to End Hunger by 2025.³⁴

Bloc Positions:

I recommend that developing countries stick together in order to generate support for more effective measures to be carried out in relation to poverty and overall protection of children. Whether this means improving measuring children working in agricultural sector to improve policy making or finding ways to increase school attendance to reduce children's vulnerability from working.

Developing countries may be especially interested in figuring out which developed countries would be willing to contribute funds to help developing countries increase their resources and work globally towards eliminating child labor. Developing countries would also need to consider what contribution and perceived benefits might come from child labor and how that would change due to policies passed to eliminate it.

International organizations like the ILO have worked with Ethiopia to outline certain policies to address child labor. While these policies have been suggested (Table 2), they have not been adopted. The chart below, which lists these policies, can act as a guide for delegates to select a suggested policy and use it as the basis of debate and potential resolutions.

Table 2: “Section VI. Suggested Government Actions to Eliminate Child Labor”³⁵

Area	Suggested Action	Years Suggested
Legal Framework	Ensure that all children are protected by child labor laws, including children working in non-contractual employment.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that the types of hazardous work prohibited for children are comprehensive, including hazardous tasks in traditional weaving.	2016 – 2018
	Establish, by law, free basic education and an age up to which education is compulsory that is consistent with the minimum age of employment.	2012 – 2018
Enforcement	Strengthen the labor inspectorate by permitting labor inspectors to assess penalties.	2013 – 2018
	Ensure that labor inspectors have sufficient training and resources to conduct inspections in all sectors, and are able to coordinate adequately with other agencies.	2009 – 2018
	Ensure that penalties are severe enough to deter violations and that both domestic and transnational child trafficking cases are investigated.	2013 – 2018
	Gather, disaggregate, and publish information on the number of child labor violations found and penalties applied and collected, as well as the number of investigations conducted, prosecutions initiated, and convictions obtained.	2009 – 2018
	Significantly increase the number of labor inspectors to meet the ILO’s technical advice.	2015 – 2018
Coordination	Ensure that established coordinating mechanisms to combat child labor have adequate funding to fulfill their mandates and are able to effectively coordinate between committees.	2015 – 2018
Government Policies	Integrate child labor elimination and prevention strategies in the Education Sector Development Program, the National Technical & Vocational Education & Training Strategy, and the National Youth Policy.	2013 – 2018
	Ensure existing policies are implemented as intended.	2018
Social Programs	Increase access to education for all children by decreasing the distance to schools in rural areas, hiring additional teachers, constructing sanitation facilities, eliminating school-related costs, and addressing the sexual abuse and harassment of girls.	2010 – 2018
	Develop or expand social protection programs to prevent or withdraw children from all relevant sectors of child labor, including agriculture and domestic work, and ensure that social services, such as rehabilitation and reintegration centers, are available throughout the country.	2009 – 2011

Guiding Questions for Delegates:

1. How does the FAO reach out to countries and convince them to join the fight to end eliminate child labor within the agricultural industry?
2. Would developed countries would be willing to contribute funds to help developing countries lower poverty rates in order to eliminate child labor?

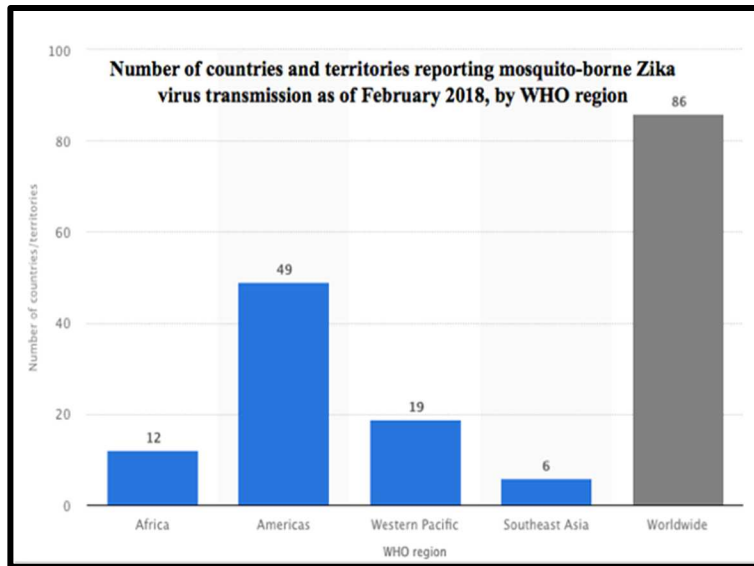
3. After reading about the Ethiopian case study, what can other developing countries learn from their example?

Topic 2: The Zika Virus

The Zika virus affects humans by weakening their immune system, which could later result in long-term health concerns such as birth defects during pregnancy or blood disorders. The first case of the Zika virus discovered in Uganda in 1947 affected monkeys, but the first human cases were discovered in 1952 in Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.³⁶ Outbreaks of Zika have spread globally since then, with cases reported in tropical Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.³⁷

Similar to yellow fever and the West Nile virus, the Zika virus is transmitted by bites from *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos.³⁸ If the virus is present in humans it can be spread "...from mother to fetus during pregnancy, through sexual contact, transfusion of blood and blood products, and organ transplantation."³⁹ What makes this virus so dangerous is the fact that there is no way to completely kill the virus once it enters the body. One in every five people that are affected will showcase symptoms including a rash, headache, fever, or itchy eyes.⁴⁰ Since there is no cure for the virus, the CDC states the best ways to protect yourself is to use an Environmental Protection Agency-approved bug-spray, wear long sleeves and long pants, along with staying indoors.⁴¹

Doctors diagnose patients with the Zika virus based on an evaluation of person's travel



www.statista.com/statistics/582270/zika-virus-transmission-reported-number-of-countries-and-territories-by-region/

history, symptoms, and test results and/or a blood or urine test.⁴² As of 2018, there are eighty-six countries that have reported transmission of the mosquito-borne Zika virus. In Europe, Germany is the country with the most documented cases, while in South America, it is Brazil.⁴³ “In 2017, it was estimated

that over 120 million people in Brazil were at risk of Zika virus infections, compared to 32 million people in Mexico and 29.5 million in Columbia.”⁴⁴ In 2016, Rio de Janeiro alone reported approximately 71,000 cases and in 2018 there were approximately 2,952 confirmed cases in regard to new-born children.⁴⁵ Within the United States the number of cases are generally much lower, but fluctuating over time. In 2015 there were 62 reported cases, while there were 5,000 cases reported in 2016 and 452 cases in 2017.⁴⁶

One of the more popular and successful solutions that have been implemented by the FAO and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the Sterile Insect Technique (SIT). SIT is “A method of pest control using area-wide inundative releases of sterile insects to reduce reproduction in a field population of the same species.”⁴⁷ In non-scientific terms it can be defined as a type of birth control used to control the number of insects produced. The technique was first discovered in the 1930s and 1940s in the United States, and since then it has been used in Africa,

Asia, Australia, Europe and South America. SIT in four different applications as pest control; suppression, eradication, containment, and prevention.⁴⁸

Over time SIT technology has been modified and applied to a multitude of species that carry viruses dangerous to humans, including; moths, tsetse flies, screwworm flies and fruit flies. This is just one example of how the FAO is working towards controlling the spread of the Zika virus.⁴⁹

Case Study One



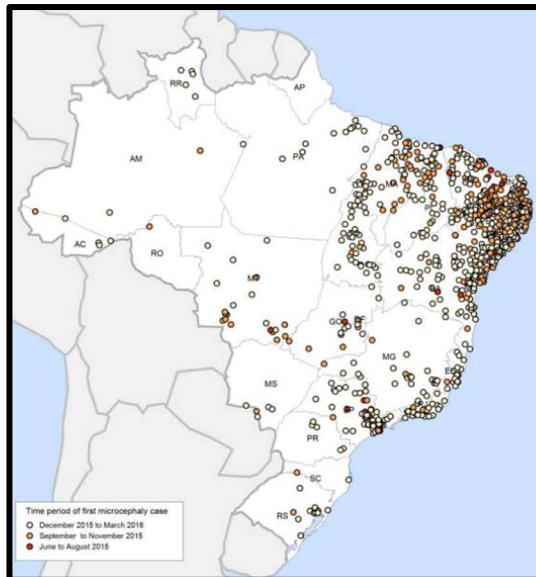
www.infoplease.com/atlas/south-america/brazil-map

“In 2018, a total of 8,680 probable cases of Zika virus were reported in Brazil, with up to 1,733 of them having occurred in the Central-West region of the country.”⁵⁰ Brazil is located the western hemisphere, in the eastern part of South America. Brazil shares its borders with Venezuela, Guiana, Suriname, Columbia, Paraguay, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay and the French Overseas territory French Guiana. Until

recently, the Zika virus was seen as a benign disease, but unfortunately in October 2015 that wasn't the case anymore for Brazil. The number of malignant cases increased as infants were being born infected with the virus. It was hypothesized that there was a correlation between the Zika virus and pregnancy.⁵¹

In February 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Zika virus to be a “public health emergency of international concern”, but initially stressed that, there was relationship between Zika transmission and pregnancy. However, global awareness of the virus

truly started when a significant number of children born with birth defects in Brazil brought attention to the seriousness of Zika transmission.⁵² Since the initial public health emergency declared by the WHO, the Brazilian government took measures into their own hands.



www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5800195/

The Brazilian government implemented a massive trap intervention for mosquitoes in Recife, a city located in Pernambuco with a population of 1.5 million people. This practice occurred for two years and the government's efforts succeeded at suppressing ninety percent of the mosquito's population.⁵³

The Brazilian government has also begun to implement SIT, as well as other approaches to reduce the mosquito population.

There are promising results regarding transgenic mosquitoes [those made sterile by SIT], with sustained release reducing field populations of [*Aedes aegypti*] by 81–95%. Mosquito-disseminated Pyriproxyfen [a pesticide] is another novel control strategy being used in Brazil, with promising results regarding the reduction of field populations of [*Aedes aegypti*] and the predicted number of dengue cases.⁵⁴

In July 2019, *The New York Times* coverage of the epidemic noted how since the initial statement made by the WHO about the Zika outbreak, the amount of media coverage has decreased, and the reporting of cases has been inconsistent, making it difficult to track progress in defeating Zika.⁵⁵ During 2018, there were approximately 20,000 cases reported and documented opposed to the initial peak during its outbreak in 2015 with 200,000 cases reported and documented.⁵⁶

Doctors such as Dr. Lyle R. Peterson of the Centers for Diseases and Control Prevention (CDC) in the United States, as well as other Zika experts around the world, remain quite worried that the world is not properly prepared or properly preparing for the next global outbreak. For example, one of the often overlooked but simple ways to limit the spread of this disease is insect repellent or window screens. However, in large cities with high poverty rates, people cannot afford these simple prevention measures.⁵⁷ The *Aedes* mosquitoes that carry this disease have “...developed a particular fondness for human blood and has adapted so well to urban living that it can quickly breed in overturned bottle caps and other refuse after a rainfall.”⁵⁸

Bloc Positions:

Since the transmission of Zika can have global implications on populations, I recommend talking to neighboring countries about how they prevent disease transmission and how your country could potentially implement their practices, or adapt them further to fit your country’s needs. You also need to consider what underlying problems that are specific to your country, like poverty, that might limit access to prevention methods. I recommend working with countries who would be willing to fund effective prevention projects, such as The Sterile Insect Technique. You should also consider the possibility of funding that could be channeled through international non-profit organizations that help implement health consciousness within those countries that are in need.

Guiding Questions for Delegates:

1. Can effective health practices of one country be applied in other countries, possibly those with weaker economies or the need for substantial funding?

- How can the FAO facilitate cooperation among countries willing to implement reliable prevention practices?

Case Study Two

On the other side of the world, a country like Germany has different concerns when



www.planetware.com/map/germany-germany-the-lander-map-d-germany.htm

dealing with an outbreak of Zika, a disease that is not native to its land. The mosquitoes that typically carry the Zika virus (*Aedes aegypti*) are not naturally found in Germany. There is only one species of mosquitoes found in Germany that can carry Zika, the Asian Tiger mosquito, but they are not widely found across the country.⁵⁹

A private German company, GeneKam had

developed a highly-sensitive DNA test that would allow people to test for a Zika infection. GeneKam

shipped the first batch out to Brazil in 2016 and allowing people to test their blood for the Zika virus.⁶⁰ “Our test examines DNA and works with chemicals that react to the Zika virus only,” Sudhir Bhartia, one of GeneKam’s developers, said. “Similar pathogens like dengue fever won’t show up in the results.”⁶¹ Due to limited funding and the need for constant technological advances, access to these types of tests are very limited. Only certain professionals are allowed to medically deliver the test. This test has changed the playing field of the number of cases that are actually reported per year, which forced the World Health Organization to declare a “global emergency.”

Due to the long length of time that the Zika virus stays in a person's system, it is imperative that people know whether or not they are carrying it. "Serological analyses are also important for establishing whether long-term consequences, such as microcephaly and Guillain-Barre syndrome, are a result of a previous Zika virus infection."⁶² When it came to funding this newly founded research, from the standpoint of the American government, President Obama had requested \$6.2 billion dollars, with approximately \$157 million directed towards this type of research.⁶³

Bloc Positions:

Even though the Zika virus does not represent the same level of threat in each country at this time, it is still a worthwhile topic of discussion because the potential of Zika spreading globally means that every country needs to worry about it. In regard to bloc positions, it would be beneficial for developing countries to work with the G7 countries, which include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

When debating the Zika virus, I would like delegates to focus on how they work towards decreasing the number of people infected by it and how to improve knowledge of the infection. Whether this is through Brazil's methods of insect trapping and SIT or working with companies in the private sector to continue funding research to further knowledge about the disease. Delegates should be working alongside countries that line with their virtues and morals, but also consider the possibility of working with countries that they normally would not work with.

Guiding Questions for Delegates:

1. Would developed countries like Germany consider sharing research, preventative methods and vaccines with less-developed countries?
2. How can the FAO facilitate cooperation among countries willing to continue this research?
3. What other actions can the FAO take in order to educate people on this issue?

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⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Euroimmun a PerkinElmer company. “*News & Events.*” 2019. <https://www.euroimmun.us/press/first-commercial-serological-tests-available-for-zika-virus-detection>

⁶³ Whitman. International Business Times. “*As Zika Virus Spreads, Gap in Diagnostic Testing Present Opportunities For Drug Companies.*” 2016. <https://www.ibtimes.com/zika-virus-spreads-gaps-diagnostic-testing-present-opportunities-drug-companies-2292451>