

# Stop the exploitation of migrant agricultural workers across Italy: doctors

March 27 2019

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A group of Italian doctors are calling for urgent action to stop the exploitation of thousands of migrants working in agriculture across Italy.

Writing in *The BMJ* today, Dr. Claudia Marotta and colleagues say more than 1,500 [agricultural workers](#) have died as a result of their work over the past six years, while others have been killed by the so-called "Caporali" who are modern slave masters.

These people work to make it possible for people from London to Shanghai to buy and eat Italian tomatoes at a low cost any day of the year, they explain. But what is the human cost of these products?

The authors are part of Doctors with Africa CUAMM (the first non-governmental healthcare organisation to be recognised by the Italian government) that has been providing basic [health services](#) to these workers in partnership with local institutions since 2015.

Workers are paid according to the amount of vegetables they collect rather than the time spent at work, or paid 12 euros for 8 hours of work, under the supervision of Caporali, and they live in the so-called "Ghetti," they write.

These are shantytowns, which are isolated from city centers, without water, or proper standards of hygiene, sanitation or [health](#) services. There are an estimated 50-70 of these settlements in Italy, accounting for approximately 100,000 low-wage migrant workers.

A specific law has been passed to recognise the existence of "Agromafia" (a criminal sector exploiting agricultural workers) but Marotta and colleagues argue that the exploitation continues.

If we are to deal with this phenomenon and achieve fair, working hours and salaries for low-wage workers, then strong cultural change and collective actions are required, they write.

They believe the [health sector](#) should voice their concerns and make a stand.

"Health, migration, the economy, [sustainable development](#) and justice are all interlinked facets of our world, and we feel a duty for the science and health community to care, and give voice to the voiceless," they write.

"All of us need to stand up and fight against exploitation, discrimination, racism, and egotism, however disguised their forms might be," they conclude.

**More information:** Opinion: Stop the exploitation of migrant agricultural workers in Italy, [blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2019/03/27/s...-ral-workers-in-italy](https://blogs.bmj.com/bmj/2019/03/27/s...-ral-workers-in-italy)

Provided by British Medical Journal

Citation: Stop the exploitation of migrant agricultural workers across Italy: doctors (2019, March 27) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-03-exploitation-migrant-agricultural-workers-italy.html>

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