



2023 Harvest Season Worker Support Program

Balsu actively worked in the field during the 2023 hazelnut harvest season to provide support to the farmers in the provinces of Sakarya, Düzce, Kocaeli, Ordu, Samsun, and Giresun, with the aim of improving the living and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers and implementing a children protection program.

Our social workers team gathered with seasonal agricultural workers who were involved in hazelnut harvesting in the Black Sea Region after their working hours, in accommodation areas. During evening training sessions, information was provided on topics such as working hours, wages, and the agricultural labor certification. Additionally, the roles and responsibilities of agricultural intermediaries and orchard owners, as well as the concepts of child and young laborers, were covered as part of these training sessions.

The training sessions conducted for seasonal agricultural workers are of great importance in supporting quality and safe working conditions. At the end of these sessions, workers were provided with personal protective equipment and hygiene kits. Furthermore, by collaborating with public institutions and providing guidance to areas in need, we enhance the effectiveness of our activities.





2023 Harvest Season

We continued our mission to protect the educational rights and contribute to the physical, psychological, social, and academic development of the children of seasonal migrant agricultural workers through the ["In a Nutshell Project"](#) we conducted in collaboration with the Young Lives Foundation. Throughout the harvest season, we established summer schools and on-site educational safe spaces for the children of seasonal migrant agricultural workers, providing them with education. As the 2023-2024 school year began, the summer schools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education concluded on September 2nd, while our on-site education model will continue until September 8th. Efforts to refer seasonal migrant agricultural workers' children who remain in the region and face challenges in attending school to formal education as guest students will be carried out.

Partnerships

During the 2023 harvest season, we conducted ["focus assessments"](#) together with Fair Labor as part of our children protection program. These assessments involved one-on-one and focus group meetings with the children of seasonal agricultural workers who continued to attend summer schools and on-site education sessions, their families, Young Lives Foundation officials, teachers, agricultural intermediaries, and representatives from public institutions.

Audits and Assessments

Since 2014, we have been a founding member of the Rainforest Alliance Turkey Hazelnut Program. We conduct integrated risk analysis related to land and the supply chain and continue our efforts to address risks in areas such as child labor, gender equality, and environmental protection. In the 2023 harvest season, we successfully completed the audit cycle within the program framework.

Stakeholder Visits

Additionally, during the harvest season, we hosted our customers and other stakeholders in the factory and supplier fields. Our programs involved field visits to hazelnut farmers in their orchards, visits to seasonal agricultural workers during the harvest, discussions with agricultural intermediaries, on-site education sessions and summer schools as part of the In a Nutshell Project, and visits to Balsu procurement centers to observe Balsu's responsible procurement principles.



RVO Sustainable Hazelnut Villages Project 2023 Harvest Updates

On June 20, 2023, just before the 2023 harvest, we held the fourth Working Group Meeting in the Ferizli district of Sakarya. This meeting included decisions regarding improving the living and working conditions of seasonal agricultural workers and providing information to agricultural intermediaries.

In this context, on August 17, 2023, a meeting of Agricultural Intermediaries was organized at the Ferizli District Governorate. The meeting was attended by representatives from Sakarya Provincial Directorate of Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), Young Lives Foundation, agricultural intermediaries, farmers, and local authorities. During the meeting, discussions took place regarding rights, responsibilities, and requests.

In August, Balsu took action to document and certify 11 agricultural intermediaries in this region, following this meeting.

Furthermore, as part of the [project](#), it was decided to improve the tent area in the village of Ağacık in Ferizli, where seasonal agricultural workers stay. In line with this decision, a joint investment plan was created in collaboration with committee members. Groundwork was carried out in the area where approximately 5 tents are set up each year, and durable AFAD tents were provided by the District Governorate. Additionally, as part of the project, two containers with toilets and showers were purchased. The water and electricity infrastructure for the tent area was provided by the village headman. In line with the Project, during the harvest season, [a summer school was organized at Bakırlı Middle School](#) in collaboration with the Young Lives Foundation for the children of seasonal migrant agricultural workers, 73 children participated in the school during the harvest time for 6 days a week.



Soil, Leaf, and Water Analyses: Fundamental Steps for Agriculture

At Balsu, we encourage hazelnut farmers to enhance productivity and contribute more to sustainable farming practices. We have been successfully conducting essential analyses, such as soil and leaf tests, which play a crucial role in determining the necessary nutrients for hazelnut cultivation. In recent years, we have taken significant steps to emphasize the importance of water. Evaluating water quality goes beyond being a necessity; it is critical for assessing environmental impacts and risks. Water quality is closely related to factors like soil salinity and improper chemical usage. Hence, we conduct water analyses in regions with intensive hazelnut production, such as Düzce, Sakarya, Kocaeli, Ordu, and Giresun. Through these efforts, we aim to not only increase agricultural efficiency but also minimize our environmental footprint, ultimately leaving a healthier agricultural legacy for future generations.

