

A Legal and Economic Assessment of the Alignment Between Regional Wage Levels and Living Income in Agriculture: The Case of Seasonal and Permanent Employment

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Abstract

In this study, the average regional wages paid to seasonal and permanent workers employed in the agricultural sector in Türkiye were examined, and the alignment of these wage levels with living income thresholds was evaluated. The analysis was based on the Turkish Statistical Institute's (TÜİK) data for the period 2010–2024 on “average daily wages paid to seasonal workers” and “average monthly wages paid to permanent workers.” These indicators were compared with the hunger and poverty thresholds reported by Türk-İş, as well as the minimum wage data published by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

The findings reveal that seasonal workers in many regions are employed at wage levels even below the hunger threshold, while permanent workers also remain below the poverty line. Within this context, regional distributions were presented using basic statistical methods and graphical illustrations; ratio analyses were conducted, and trends in wage levels over time were examined.

Moreover, based on the data obtained, the legal status of seasonal and permanent workers was compared within the framework of labour law.

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Legal evaluations were carried out with reference to the relevant legislation (Labour Law No. 4857), Supreme Court case law, and key issues such as social security notification obligations, severance and notice pay entitlements, and annual leave rights. In particular, the lack of social security coverage and contractual insecurity faced by seasonal workers were analyzed through concrete examples.

In this study, statistics were not only used as a technical tool of analysis, but also as an explanatory instrument that enhances the socio-economic visibility of agricultural workers and quantitatively exposes social inequalities. In this respect, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach that bridges statistics, law, and economics, offering an original contribution to the existing literature.

INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector is one of the cornerstones of the Turkish economy and plays a significant role in shaping both the economic and social structure. The fact that a large portion of the country's land is suitable for agriculture, the presence of different climatic regions, and rich biodiversity place Turkey in an advantageous position in terms of agricultural production (Seven, 2020). The agricultural sector directly affects many areas, especially food security, employment, exports, and rural development.

A significant portion of the rural population is engaged in agricultural activities, which is crucial for maintaining the economic vitality of rural areas (Davran and Naciye, 2018). Agricultural production is, by its nature, a labor-intensive activity and, particularly in developing countries, is highly dependent on the workforce (Solmaz, 2023). Despite technological advancements, Turkey's agricultural sector still largely relies on human labor. In many regions where mechanized farming is not widespread, processes such as soil preparation, planting, maintenance, irrigation, and harvesting are carried out manually (Baş, 2019). This increases the sector's dependence on both the availability and quality of labor in ensuring continuous production.

This labor dependence in agriculture becomes even more pronounced due to the sector's seasonal nature. During harvest periods, the demand for labor significantly increases, leading to the employment of seasonal agricultural workers (Bayramoğlu and Bozdemir, 2020). However, these workers often face structural issues such as low wages, insecure working conditions, and a lack of social protection (Kaya and Yılmaz, 2021). This working model, which heavily involves women and child labor, exacerbates socio-economic inequalities and social injustices.

The labor dependency in agricultural production is also directly related to rural development and demographic structure. As the younger population moves away from agriculture and migrates to urban areas, the rural population becomes increasingly older, leading to a labor crisis in agriculture (Adıgüzel, 2016). This poses a serious threat to the sustainability of production and highlights the need for structural transformation in the sector. Enhancing the quality of agricultural labor, attracting young people to the sector, and aligning technological transformation with human resources are critical to managing this dependency effectively.

Rural employment remains a fundamental pillar of the agricultural sector in Turkey, but it is often characterized by low-skilled, informal, and insecure labor (Akbiyık, 2008). A large portion of the rural population earns a living from agricultural activities; however, this employment is mostly family-based, low in productivity, and lacks social security (Akbiyık, 2008). Many individuals working in small-scale enterprises are not included in official employment statistics, creating a significant information gap in developing social policies. Comprehensive structural reforms are needed in areas such as education, organization, and access to technology to improve the quality of rural employment.

Seasonal agricultural work is one of the most fragile and problematic areas of rural employment (Baş, 2019). This labor force, which migrates between cities based on the agricultural calendar, contributes to production during specific times of the year under challenging conditions, such as long working hours and low wages. The widespread use of women and child labor in seasonal work raises serious issues not only in economic terms but also in the contexts of social justice, the right to education, and child labor (Parin and Çakar, 2022).

The structural role of seasonal labor in agricultural production is undeniable. Seasonal workers are heavily relied upon in the cultivation of labor-intensive crops such as cotton, hazelnuts, fruits and vegetables, and sugar beets (Baş, 2019). Therefore, improving the working and living conditions of seasonal labor is essential for the sustainability of agricultural production.

In Turkey, most workers in the agricultural sector work under difficult conditions for low wages (Yigit et al., 2017). Seasonal workers, in particular, can only find temporary jobs during certain periods of the year and thus cannot ensure a steady income, making them economically very vulnerable. These workers often live in inadequate shelters and face significant difficulties in accessing clean water, electricity, basic health services, and

safe transportation. Temporary tent settlements established near agricultural areas lack hygiene and infrastructure and do not offer a standard of living worthy of human dignity (Yıldırımaltın and İslamoğlu, 2014). Therefore, this is not only an economic issue but also a serious problem of social justice and human rights.

There are also significant inequalities between seasonal and permanent workers in agricultural labor. Permanent workers generally earn more stable incomes and may, in some cases, be included in the social security system (Yiğit et al., 2017). In contrast, seasonal workers are mostly employed informally and are not entitled to any social insurance (Gülçubuk, 2017). This inequality directly affects the education access of rural children, the social participation of women, and the long-term social security rights of individuals. The employment of two different groups under vastly different conditions despite performing the same job due to differences in contract duration and structure is a clear sign of both social and structural injustice.

The economic, social, and legal consequences of these inequalities are deep and multilayered. Economically, insecure seasonal labor leads to income instability and the entrenchment of rural poverty. Socially, limited access to basic services such as housing, education, and healthcare increases intergenerational inequality; problems like child labor and early marriage become more common. Legally, current legislation does not sufficiently define the rights of seasonal workers nor clearly outline employer responsibilities. Legal gaps, lack of oversight, and inconsistencies in implementation make it difficult to protect workers. Solving these structural issues requires strengthening social protection mechanisms, combating informal employment, and developing inclusive legislation specifically for seasonal labor.

The labor market in Turkey's agricultural sector contains pronounced wage disparities between seasonal and permanent workers. According to TÜİK data, daily wages for seasonal workers significantly differ from the monthly salaries of permanent workers. For instance, in Adana, seasonal female workers earn 676 TL per day, while permanent workers can earn up to 19,246 TL per month (TÜİK, 2024). Similarly, daily wages for male seasonal workers remain lower than those of permanent employees. This demonstrates that seasonal workers, due to their temporary and insecure employment status, struggle to make a living on much lower incomes. The low wages of seasonal workers also negatively affect the sustainability of the sector and the quality of the workforce.

Regional inequalities further exacerbate wage differences. For example, in Giresun, daily wages for female seasonal workers are 1,358 TL, while male seasonal workers earn 1,594 TL. However, these wages are significantly lower compared to the monthly salaries of permanent workers, which can reach up to 37,333 TL in Giresun (TÜİK, 2024). Such regional disparities are further accentuated by differing living costs between rural areas and large cities. In particular, the wages received by seasonal workers in rural areas often fall short of meeting local living standards, reinforcing income inequality. In Antalya, for instance, male seasonal workers are paid 1,245 TL per day, while permanent workers earn up to 18,267 TL monthly (TÜİK, 2024). Considering Antalya's high cost of living, it is questionable whether these wages are sufficient for subsistence.

These wage disparities do not only create economic differences but also deeply affect the socio-economic structure (Goldthorpe, 2010). Low wages make it difficult for seasonal workers to meet their basic needs and maintain a decent standard of living. Additionally, seasonal workers are at a significant disadvantage regarding social security rights. Compared to permanent workers, their participation in the social security system is low, which negatively affects their quality of life (Yiğit et al., 2017). The challenges faced by seasonal agricultural workers due to low wages and insecure working conditions deepen class inequalities and widen the gap between urban and rural areas.

The differences between seasonal and permanent employment are not limited to income levels; they also manifest in social security, living conditions, and legal protection (Collins and Krippner, 2019). These inequalities lead to a structural imbalance in the agricultural sector and place seasonal workers in a highly vulnerable economic, social, and legal position. The inability to ensure income continuity entrenches rural poverty, while limited access to essential services such as housing, healthcare, and education exacerbates intergenerational inequality (Yerli, 2022). Especially for children access to quality education is limited during the agricultural season due to frequent migration, and many children are deprived of their right to education or forced into child labor. Seasonal agricultural labor often results in early school dropouts, further deepening social inequalities.

Moreover, the widespread use of women in seasonal labor presents another critical dimension. Female seasonal workers are exposed to significant risks, such as working without social security, lack of maternity leave and childcare services, long working hours, and low pay. Despite their significant contribution to production, women are not adequately

recognized or valued in terms of labor rights (Yerli, 2022). Gender-based wage disparities are also evident; male seasonal workers typically earn more than female workers for the same job. For example, according to TÜİK data from 2024, in regions like Hatay, Adana, and Giresun, male workers' daily wages surpass those of female workers. This not only reflects wage inequality but also the intersection of gender and labor injustice.

From a macro-level perspective, these labor inequalities contribute to increased regional and social disparities in the country. Low wages, informal employment, lack of social protection, and limited access to services prevent rural populations from achieving upward mobility. This situation negatively affects the overall quality and sustainability of agricultural production. As rural youth increasingly migrate to cities and refrain from engaging in agriculture, the sector faces an aging labor force, production difficulties, and a risk of losing traditional agricultural knowledge (Adıgüzel, 2016).

As a result, seasonal agricultural labor represents a deeply entrenched structural problem that reflects wage inequality, informal employment, limited access to social rights, and gender injustice. These conditions harm not only the individuals involved but also the productivity, sustainability, and social justice of the agricultural sector. The improvement of the conditions of seasonal workers should therefore not only be addressed as an economic measure but also as a requirement of human rights and social equity.

To improve this situation, policy recommendations include increasing legal protections, expanding social security coverage, improving housing and hygiene conditions, increasing education and awareness efforts, and taking steps to reduce gender inequality. Additionally, ensuring permanent and secure employment through rural development and agricultural policies, facilitating mechanization in labor-intensive areas, and providing support for cooperatives and producer unions can reduce dependency on seasonal labor and enhance employment quality.

Addressing the issue of wage inequality and structural labor injustice in seasonal agricultural work requires comprehensive social policies, inclusive legal regulations, and strong inter-institutional cooperation. Otherwise, the persistence of these inequalities will pose serious threats to both agricultural production and social justice in Turkey in the long run.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Material

The data utilized in this study primarily consist of regional wage levels, hunger and poverty thresholds, minimum wage statistics, and employment figures related to seasonal and permanent agricultural workers in Turkey. These data were obtained from official sources, including the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, and the Social Security Institution (SGK). The scope of the material allows for a multidimensional analysis of wage structures and income adequacy within the agricultural labor market.

Methods

The data utilized in this study primarily consist of regional wage levels, hunger and poverty thresholds, minimum wage statistics, and employment figures related to seasonal and permanent agricultural workers in Turkey. These data were obtained from official sources, including the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), the Ministry of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, and the Social Security Institution (SGK). The scope of the material allows for a multidimensional analysis of wage structures and income adequacy within the agricultural labor market.

RESULTS

The hunger limit refers to the minimum income required for an individual to meet their basic nutritional needs. This threshold is typically calculated based on the total cost of food necessary for an individual to maintain a healthy life and offers important insights into a country's economic conditions. Comparing the income levels of agricultural workers with the hunger limit provides valuable information regarding their living standards and subsistence challenges. The table below explores the relationship between the hunger limit and the wage levels of agricultural laborers.

The Relationship Between Wage Levels and the Hunger Limit

Region	Seasonal Female Worker Wage (TL/ Month)	Seasonal Male Worker Wage (TL/ Month)	Permanent Worker Wage (TL/ Month)	Hunger Limit (TL/ Month)
Marmara	25.791	31.335	33.978	21.083
Aegean	24.150	31.806	24.588	21.083
Mediterranean	25.386	31.644	19.791	21.083
Central Anatolia	23.811	27.744	31.872	21.083
Black sea	39.888	42.978	32.343	21.083
Eastern Anatolia	29.970	36.900	32.940	21.083
Southeastern Anotolia	31.530	35.250	29.646	21.083

When examining the monthly wages of seasonal and permanent workers across different regions of Turkey, it is generally observed that wages exceed the hunger limit. However, this situation may not be sufficient to improve the quality of life. In the Marmara Region, seasonal female workers earn 25,791 TL, male seasonal workers earn 31,335 TL, and permanent workers receive 33,978 TL; these wages are significantly above the hunger limit, indicating a lower likelihood of economic hardship for these workers. In the Aegean Region, although seasonal worker wages are above the hunger limit, the relatively lower permanent worker wage of 24,588 TL may negatively affect the living standards of employees. In the Mediterranean Region, while seasonal worker wages exceed the hunger limit, permanent worker wages amounting to 19,791 TL fall below the hunger limit, suggesting that workers in this region may face difficulties meeting their basic needs. In the Central Anatolia Region, seasonal worker wages are above the hunger limit, and permanent worker wages reach a higher level of 31,872 TL. The Black Sea Region stands out with comparatively higher wages; seasonal female workers earn 39,888 TL, male seasonal workers earn 42,978 TL, and permanent workers earn 32,343 TL. This indicates that workers in the Black Sea Region may have a higher quality of life compared to other regions. In the Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia Regions, seasonal worker wages are above the hunger limit, and permanent worker wages generally exceed the hunger limit as well; however, these wages are still considered insufficient to maintain a decent living standard.

In conclusion, although the wages of seasonal and permanent workers in Turkey exceed the hunger limit, regional disparities exist, and wage increases

are necessary to improve living standards. To ensure equity in the labor market, regional inequalities must be taken into account.

Additionally, Article 55 of the Turkish Constitution emphasizes that wages are the return for labor and that it is the state's responsibility to ensure fair wages. In this regard, the fact that permanent workers in some regions receive wages below or barely above the hunger limit constitutes a violation of the constitutionally guaranteed principle of "a decent living standard."

Moreover, although seasonal workers in the agricultural sector earn wages above the hunger limit, they generally need to work uninterruptedly for the entire month, i.e., 30 days, to reach this income level. Since agriculture is subject to natural conditions, weather events such as rain, extreme heat, and storms directly affect working days and hinder workers from earning income. This situation makes it difficult for workers to achieve a stable income level. Furthermore, seasonal workers often work without basic rights such as social security, insurance, and paid leave, which causes economic and social insecurity. Therefore, the wages that appear to be above the hunger limit do not practically reflect the actual living conditions of the workers.

The poverty line is an important indicator that determines the total income required to meet a person's basic needs and evaluates economic inequality and living standards. This line covers not only food expenses but also essential living needs such as housing, education, and health. Comparing the wage levels of agricultural workers with the poverty line helps us understand their living conditions, quality of life, and ability to cope with economic hardships. The following table examines the relationship between wage levels and the poverty line over the years, shedding light on how close agricultural workers' incomes are to meeting basic living standards.

Relationship Between Wage Levels and the Poverty Line

Region	Seasonal Female Worker Wage (TL/ day)	Seasonal Male Worker Wage (TL/ day)	Permanent Worker Wage (TL/ day)	Poverty Limit (TL/ day)
Marmara	859,7	1044,5	1132,6	2199,9
Aegean	805	1060,2	819,6	2199,9
Mediterranean	846,2	1054,8	659,7	2199,9
Central Anatolia	793,7	924,8	1062,4	2199,9
Black sea	1329,6	1432,6	1078,1	2199,9
Eastern Anatolia	999	1230	1098	2199,9
Southeastern Anotolia	1051	1175	988,2	2199,9

When examining this table, it is observed that the daily wages of seasonal workers, particularly female and male workers, in different regions of Turkey remain significantly below the poverty line. In the Marmara, Aegean, and Mediterranean regions, seasonal worker wages range between approximately 37% and 48% of the poverty line, indicating that these workers may face considerable difficulties in meeting their subsistence needs. In regions such as Central Anatolia, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia, the wages of seasonal workers remain well below the poverty line, although the disparity is somewhat less pronounced in the Black Sea region. Notably, the daily wage of seasonal male workers in the Black Sea region reaches about 65% of the poverty line, which is relatively higher compared to other regions.

Permanent worker wages, on the other hand, generally fall between 48% and 51% of the poverty line across most regions, suggesting that permanent workers may also experience subsistence challenges, albeit with relatively higher income levels compared to seasonal workers.

Furthermore, the data highlight not only the economic but also the social and legal disadvantages faced by agricultural workers in Turkey. A significant gender wage gap is evident between male and female seasonal workers, exacerbating existing inequalities. This wage disparity contradicts the equality principle enshrined in Article 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, which guarantees equality before the law regardless of gender. Additionally, Article 5 of Labor Law No. 4857 explicitly prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment relationships. Despite these legal protections, the systematic underpayment of female workers relative to their male counterparts violates both national legislation and international

obligations such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to which Turkey is a party.

The inconsistency between the legal framework and field practices indicates deficiencies in the enforcement of labor laws and the ineffectiveness of monitoring mechanisms. Consequently, female labor is undervalued, economic independence is undermined, and women's visibility in agricultural production remains limited. In addition to low wages, female workers often bear the burden of unpaid domestic labor, placing them at a dual disadvantage. This structural gender inequality adversely affects not only individual well-being but also broader societal development.

From a sociological perspective, low income levels impact not only individuals but also their families and communities. Income insufficiency contributes to structural issues such as educational inequality, child labor, forced migration, urban poverty, and social exclusion. A large proportion of seasonal agricultural workers lack social security, live in poor housing conditions, and have limited access to healthcare services, perpetuating rural poverty.

This situation reveals that seasonal agricultural workers—and even some permanent workers—in Turkey face significant challenges in sustaining their livelihoods. Wages below the poverty line reflect labor migration trends, income inequality, and regional disparities in development. Moreover, to improve workers' quality of life and living standards, regional wages should be raised to approach or exceed the poverty line.

A livable income is defined as the amount of income required for an individual to meet basic living needs and maintain a minimum standard of living. This income level includes not only fundamental expenses such as food and shelter but also other essential costs like healthcare, education, and transportation. Examining the relationship between agricultural workers' wages and livable income enables an assessment of whether workers can sustain themselves economically and live in a socially sustainable manner. The table below analyzes the relationship between wage levels over the years and the calculated livable income for a single individual, thereby revealing the extent to which workers' incomes align with acceptable living standards.

The Relationship Between Wage Levels and Livable Income (Single Individuals)

Region	Seasonal Female Worker Wage (TL/ Month)	Seasonal Male Worker Wage (TL/ Month)	Permanent Worker Wage (TL/ Month)	Livable Income-Single Individuals(TL/ Ay)
Marmara	25.791	31.335	33.978	27.365
Aegean	24.150	31.806	24.588	27.365
Mediterranean	25.386	31.644	19.791	27.365
Central Anatolia	23.811	27.744	31.872	27.365
Black sea	39.888	42.978	32.343	27.365
Eastern Anatolia	29.970	36.900	32.940	27.365
Southeastern Anotolia	31.530	35.250	29.646	27.365

When the monthly incomes of seasonal and permanent agricultural workers across different regions of Turkey are compared with the livable income level required for a single individual to sustain a basic standard of living (27,365 TL/month), significant regional disparities emerge. In the Marmara Region, the monthly wage of seasonal female workers is 25,791 TL, while that of male workers is 31,335 TL, and the income of permanent workers reaches up to 33,978 TL. This indicates that workers in this region generally meet the livable income threshold and are able to cover their basic needs. Similarly, in the Black Sea Region, seasonal workers’ wages range between 39,888 TL and 42,978 TL, while permanent workers earn approximately 32,343 TL, suggesting relatively higher living standards in this region.

Conversely, in the Mediterranean and Central Anatolia regions, permanent workers’ wages are 19,791 TL and 31,872 TL respectively, with the Mediterranean region notably falling well below the livable income level. In the Aegean, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia regions, both seasonal and permanent workers’ wages generally approximate or slightly exceed the livable income level. However, these figures are based solely on calculations for a single individual’s basic needs.

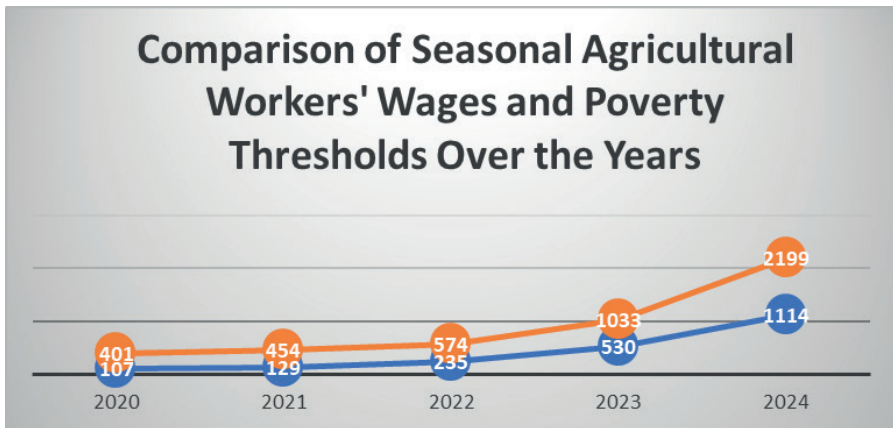
In reality, many agricultural workers support nuclear or extended families, sharing their incomes with household members. When family structure is taken into account, additional expenses such as housing, food, healthcare, education, transportation, and childcare place further strain on the household budget. Consequently, an individual worker’s income is often

insufficient to sustain the entire household, leading to substantial economic pressures on families.

Moreover, workers' ability to participate in social life is considerably constrained by their current income levels. Daily hardships, long and intense working hours, and the lack of social infrastructure in many regions hinder workers' opportunities for socialization and cultural participation, thus increasing social exclusion. Therefore, although current income levels may cover the basic needs of individuals, they fall short of providing a dignified standard of living once familial responsibilities and social needs are considered.

This situation clearly underscores the necessity for income support at the household level, enhanced social security, and inclusive social policies—not only for individuals but for entire families.

Furthermore, disparities between agricultural workers' incomes and the poverty threshold have been observed not only in recent times but also in previous years. The graph below presents data on the “Comparison of Seasonal Agricultural Worker Wages and the Poverty Threshold Over the Years.” It illustrates how seasonal agricultural workers' wage levels have evolved in relation to changes in the poverty threshold over time.

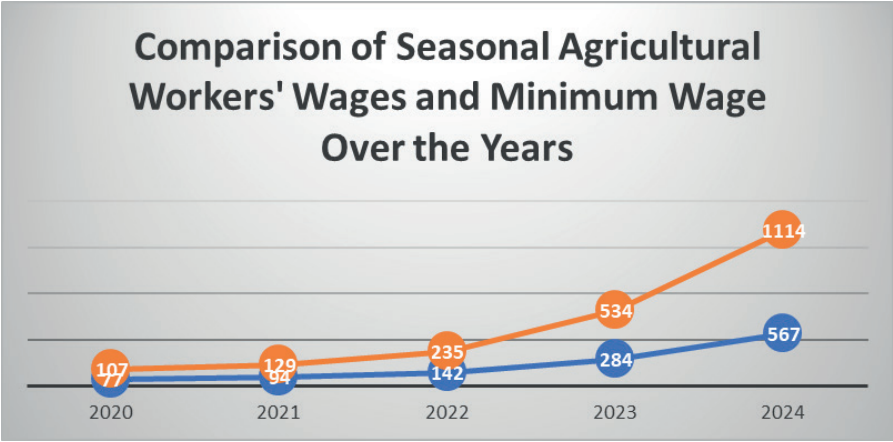


The graph illustrates the changes in the average daily wages of seasonal agricultural workers and the poverty threshold between 2020 and 2024. In 2020, the average daily wage of seasonal workers was 107 TL, while the poverty threshold was set at 401 TL. During this period, the income of agricultural workers remained significantly below the poverty line. However, from 2021 onwards, an upward trend is observed. In 2021, the average wage of seasonal workers increased to 129 TL, while the poverty threshold rose

to 454 TL. By 2022, seasonal workers’ wages showed a notable increase, reaching 235 TL, with the poverty threshold rising to 574 TL.

As of 2023, this gap widened further, with the average wage of workers reaching 530 TL, whereas the poverty threshold increased to 1,033 TL. The year 2024 marks a remarkable rise; the average wage of seasonal workers rose to 1,114 TL, surpassing the poverty threshold. However, the poverty line itself also increased substantially to 2,199 TL. These data indicate that although the wages of seasonal agricultural workers have significantly increased over the years, it is essential to consider inflation and purchasing power when statistically assessing these improvements.

When comparing seasonal agricultural workers’ wages with the minimum wage over the years, it becomes evident that the income levels of agricultural workers lag behind general wage policies. Despite increases in the minimum wage, the daily earnings of seasonal agricultural workers continue to remain well below the poverty threshold. This situation highlights the economic vulnerability of workers in the agricultural sector and their lack of social security.



In 2020, the average daily wage of seasonal agricultural workers was significantly higher than the minimum wage, with a difference of approximately 30 TL. This trend continued in 2021, with seasonal worker wages exceeding the minimum wage by about 37%. However, this gap widened further in 2022 and 2023, and by 2023, the wages of seasonal workers nearly doubled the minimum wage. In 2024, this difference peaked, as seasonal agricultural workers earned an average of 1,114 TL per day, while the minimum wage remained at 567 TL.

This situation reflects a rapid increase in wages driven by labor supply challenges and inflationary pressures. Nevertheless, despite this wage growth, previous analyses have shown that the incomes of agricultural workers frequently remain below the poverty threshold. This indicates that livelihood difficulties in the sector persist.

RESULTS

This study evaluates the regional wage levels of seasonal and permanent agricultural workers in Turkey in relation to the living wage, hunger threshold, and poverty line from statistical, legal, and socio-economic perspectives. The findings reveal that a significant proportion of seasonal agricultural workers are compelled to live below the hunger and poverty thresholds due to their temporary and irregular incomes. Although the wages of permanent workers are relatively higher, they also remain below the poverty line in most regions, hindering their ability to achieve a sustainable standard of living.

Another notable finding is the wage disparity observed between seasonal female and male workers performing the same job. This disparity contravenes the constitutional principle of equality and the anti-discrimination provisions of the Labor Law. The economic devaluation of women's labor not only constitutes an individual injustice but also perpetuates societal inequality. The dual disadvantage faced by women seasonal workers exacerbates social exclusion and deepens gender inequality.

Statistical data indicate an increase in seasonal worker wages over the years; however, this rise has not kept pace with the increase in the poverty line, implying that income improvements have not translated into better real living conditions. Moreover, workers are economically disadvantaged not only individually but also in terms of family responsibilities and social participation. Due to its seasonal nature, this labor force lacks continuous employment, remains outside social security coverage, and faces precarious, contract-free working conditions, placing them at the center of structural vulnerability.

From a legal standpoint, Labor Law No. 4857 does not explicitly define seasonal work, and in practice, contract-free and insecure employment is widespread. This situation causes significant problems in accessing basic rights such as social security notifications, severance and notice pay, and annual leave, hindering workers' integration into the long-term social security system. Although efforts have been made to develop rights through

limited Supreme Court precedents, these measures fail to provide adequate practical protection.

In conclusion, for seasonal and permanent workers—who hold an indispensable position in the sustainability of Turkish agriculture—to attain a living wage, not only wage increases but also the expansion of social security coverage, clarification of legal protections, and resolution of regional wage disparities are required. Enhancing the socio-economic visibility of agricultural workers and grounding this visibility in rights-based frameworks is of strategic importance both for sectoral development and social justice. Accordingly, policymakers must develop a comprehensive social policy approach that addresses regional wage inequalities, combats gender-based discrimination, and includes regulations tailored to the unique circumstances of seasonal workers.

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