



**Slavery-like Working Conditions
and deadly Pesticides on
Brazilian Coffee Plantations**

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DANWATCH

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Coffee workers in Brazil work under conditions that contravene both Brazilian law and international conventions. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

I: You may be drinking coffee grown under slavery-like, life-threatening conditions

Brazil's coffee industry has serious problems with working conditions that are analogous to slavery, life-threatening pesticides and scarce protective equipment. Danwatch has confronted the world's largest coffee companies with the facts of these violations. Jacobs Douwe Egberts admits that it is possible that coffee from plantations with poor labour conditions ended up in their products, and coffee giant Nestlé acknowledges having purchased coffee from two plantations where authorities freed workers from conditions analogous to slavery in 2015.

Debt bondage, child labour, deadly pesticides, a lack of protective equipment, and workers without contracts. Danwatch has been on assignment in Brazil and can prove that coffee workers in the world's largest coffee-growing nation work under conditions that contravene both Brazilian law and international conventions.

Danwatch has confronted some of the world's largest coffee companies with the facts surrounding these illegal working conditions. Two coffee giants admit that coffee from plantations where working conditions resembled slavery according to the Brazilian authorities may have ended up in their supply chains.

This means that when you buy coffee in the supermarket, you risk taking home beans that were picked by people whose accommodations lack access to clean drinking water, or by workers who are caught in a debt spiral that makes it practically impossible for them to leave the coffee plantation.

Conditions analogous to slavery

Danwatch accompanied the Brazilian authorities on an inspection and was able to trace the sale of coffee from some of the other plantations where the authorities has characterised conditions as analogous to slavery.

– Read reporting from the inspection Danwatch participated in where

seventeen men, women and children were freed from slavery-like conditions (chapter 10).

Danwatch can therefore document that coffee from plantations with slavery-like conditions was purchased and resold by middlemen who supply the world's largest coffee companies.

Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts corporations together account for about 40 % of the global coffee market. Their brands include Nescafé, Nespresso, Dolce Gusto, Taster's Choice, Coffee Mate, Gevalia, Senseo, Jacobs, Maxwell House and Tassimo. Both companies admit that coffee from plantations where working conditions resembled slavery may have ended up in their products.

Brazil is the world's largest source of coffee

Brazil is the world's largest exporter of coffee. In 2014, Brazil exported 2,185,200 tonnes of coffee in all. This accounts for just under 32 % of the worldwide total of 6,833,640 tonnes that year, according to the International Coffee Organization (ICO).

www.ico.org/historical/1990%20onwards/PDF/2a-exports.pdf

Nestlé also admits to having purchased coffee from two plantations where the Brazilian authorities freed workers from conditions analogous to slavery in July 2015.

Both Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts have adopted codes of conduct in which they require suppliers to adhere to a variety of international human rights conventions and to core conventions of the International Labour Organisation.

Nestlé and JDE's ethical guidelines

The world's two largest coffee companies, Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts, both have ethical guidelines with which their suppliers are obliged to comply. Both sets of guidelines require the protection of human rights and reject the use of both child labour and forced labour. Suppliers must also ensure proper working conditions, in which regulations regarding working hours are respected, and workers do not receive less than the minimum wage. Nestlé's guidelines also specifically require that workers have access to clean drinking water and that the supplier ensure a safe and healthy working environment.

www.jacobsdouweegberts.com/globalassets/about-us/ethics--integrity/supplier_code_of_conduct_july2015.pdf

www.nestle.com/asset-library/documents/library/documents/suppliers/supplier-code-english.pdf

Following Danwatch's investigation, both companies acknowledged that there is a need to do more to resolve the labour issues that affect Brazilian coffee cultivation.

"We are determined to tackle this complex problem in close collaboration with our suppliers, whom we have contacted", Nestlé said in a written statement.

Jacobs Douwe Egberts stated that in the wake of Danwatch's enquiries it had been in touch with all its suppliers to ask them to explain what steps they are taking to ensure that they do not purchase coffee from plantations with slavery-like working conditions.

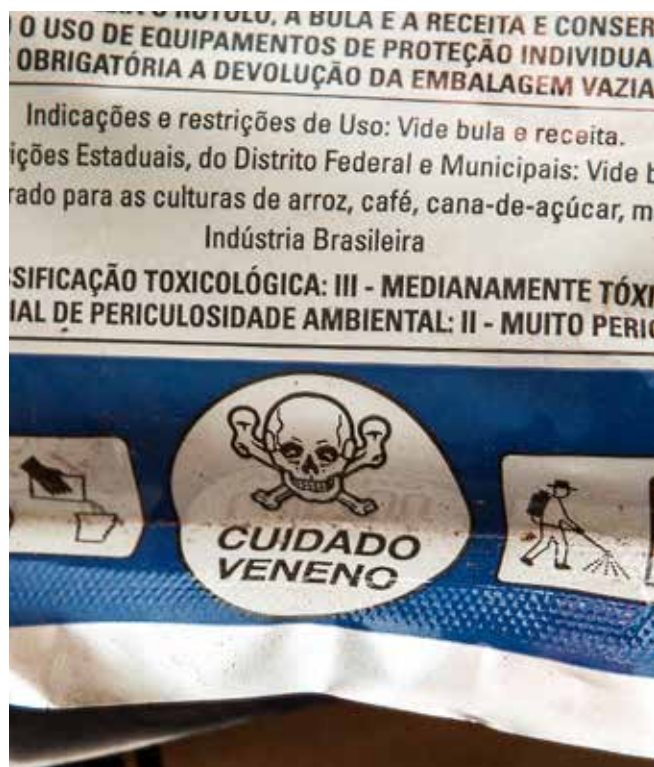
– Read Nestlé's and Jacobs Douwe Egberts' reactions, and get the whole story of the coffee's journey from the plantations with slavery-like conditions onto the world coffee market (chapter 15).

Applying deadly pesticides

Aside from the problem of slavery-like working conditions, the most serious problem for coffee workers on Brazilian plantations is that it is legal to spray the coffee with pesticides that cause illness and are potentially lethal – and that are forbidden in the EU.

Some of the pesticides are so toxic that merely getting them on your skin can kill you. Nevertheless, many workers spray the coffee bushes with pesticides without using the protective equipment that is required by law.

"These chemicals are outlawed in Denmark and the EU because they are extremely toxic and can cause serious acute and long-term health problems", says Erik Jørs, a senior consultant on the



Brazilian coffee may be sprayed with deadly pesticides that are illegal in both Denmark and the EU. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

Clinic of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University Hospital and the University of Southern Denmark in Odense.

Erik Jørs has studied the use of pesticides in developing countries for many years, and explains that researchers suspect that the substances damage reproductive systems and cause Parkinson's-like symptoms such as coordination problems and trembling hands.

Danwatch has interviewed Brazilian coffee workers who have applied pesticides without sufficient protective equipment, and who today complain of hands that won't obey them and feet that feel as though they are asleep.

– Read the story of coffee picker Ronaldo Vicente Antonio. He applied pesticides for years without sufficient protective equipment. Today he has trouble controlling his hands, and can't button his own shirt (chapter 14).

– Read more about the potentially lethal pesticides that are legal for use on Brazilian coffee plantations (chapter 13).

Children pick coffee in Brazil

Danwatch's investigation also shows that child labour is still a problem on Brazilian coffee plantations. At an inspection observed by Danwatch in July 2015, two boys aged 14 and 15 were found to have been picking coffee and freed from slavery-like working conditions.

Brazilian authorities lack statistics showing how many children work on coffee plantations, but in Minas Gerais, Brazil's largest coffee-producing state, 116,000 children aged 5-17 years old worked in agriculture in 2013. Of these, 60,000 were under 14 years old, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), a government agency.

– Read more about the problem of child labour in Brazilian coffee cultivation (chapter 12).

In addition to the serious issues of child labour, deadly pesticides and slavery-like working conditions, Brazil's coffee industry is beset by a number of other problems. Brazilian labour organisations estimate that as many as half of all coffee workers work without

Violations of international conventions

ILO: The right to a safe and healthy working environment

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has formulated in Convention 155 a series of minimum health and safety requirements for workplaces. The convention specifically mentions the obligation of the employer to ensure that chemicals like pesticides do not pose a health risk to employees by, for example, making the necessary safety equipment available. Both Denmark and Brazil have ratified this convention.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

According to the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 32, children have the right "to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." Both Brazil and Denmark have ratified this convention.

The ILO's conventions on child labour

The International Labour Organization's Conventions 138 and 182 on child labour declare that children ought not to work until they are beyond the age of compulsory schooling. Furthermore, children may not do work that can harm their health or development, nor may they be subjected to debt bondage or to practices similar to slavery. Both Denmark and Brazil have ratified these conventions.

contracts, and mention other challenges, such as underpayment and serious workplace injuries, as well.

Brazilian Law

Conditions analogous to slavery

It is illegal to subject a person to conditions analogous to slavery, according to Article 149 of the Brazilian criminal code. This includes subjecting a person to forced labour, subjecting a person to degrading working conditions, and restricting a person's freedom of movement because of debt to an employer or agent.

www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/Del2848compilado.htm

Child labour

It is illegal for children under 16 years old to work on coffee plantations, although children between 16 and 18 years old may do so as long as it does not interfere with their schooling. See the Brazilian labour code (CLT, Article 403).

www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/Del5452.htm

Pesticides and protective equipment

According to a regulation by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment, employers are responsible for providing workers with protective equipment that corresponds to the level of risk to which the employee is exposed. The employer is also responsible for ensuring that the protective equipment is properly cleaned and in good working order before being used again; for prohibiting workers from applying pesticides while wearing their own clothes; and for educating workers about the correct handling of pesticides.

www.guiatrabalhista.com.br/legislacao/nr/nr31.htm#31.8_Agrotoxicos,_Adjuvantes_e_Produtos_Afins__

Contracts

It is illegal for both permanent and temporary employees to work without a formal contract in their official employment document, the *Carteira de Trabalho*, according to the Brazilian labour code, known as the CLT.

www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2008/Lei/L11718.htm



Newly-picked coffee berries ready to be packed into 60-litre sacks. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

How Danwatch uncovered the conditions of Brazilian coffee workers

Danwatch travelled to Brazil's largest coffee-producing state, Minas Gerais, where half of Brazil's coffee is grown. We visited coffee plantations, interviewed coffee workers, trade unions, experts and local authorities.

- Danwatch accompanied the police and the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment on an inspection of a Brazilian coffee plantation where seventeen men, women and children were found to be victims of human trafficking and were freed from conditions analogous to slavery. Two children, ages 14 and 15, had also worked picking coffee on the plantation.
- We obtained access to more than fifteen confidential reports from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment describing the liberation of workers on other coffee plantations from slavery-like conditions.
- Danwatch obtained documents from legal proceedings, clippings from the publications of coffee cooperatives, export records, etc., that show how coffee from plantations on which slavery-like conditions were found was sold to international coffee exporters.
- Danwatch sent surveys to Brazilian coffee cooperatives, international coffee exporters, as well as Danish and international coffee companies and brands to document where the coffee from the plantations with slavery-like conditions ended up.
- Danwatch has therefore been able to trace the coffee's path step by step, from the plantations where authorities freed workers from conditions analogous to slavery, to cooperatives, middlemen, and onward in the international coffee market.
- Danwatch has examined the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture's database of pesticides approved for coffee cultivation and researched how their active ingredients are classified by the EU.
agrofit.agricultura.gov.br/agrofit_cons/principal_agrofit_cons
ec.europa.eu/sanco_pesticides/public/?event=homepage&language=EN.
- Danwatch can therefore confirm that many of the pesticides that are approved for use on Brazilian coffee plantations are classified as acutely toxic and are prohibited in the EU.
- Danwatch also obtained access to a database kept by the authorities in the coffee state of Minas Gerais that tracks the sale of pesticides, and can document that tonnes of dangerous pesticides were sold in the three areas of Minas Gerais where the majority of coffee plantations are located.
- Danwatch has interviewed experts, trade unions and coffee workers, all of whom confirmed that many coffee workers apply pesticides without protective equipment.
- Danwatch has interviewed workers who applied pesticides either entirely without protective equipment, or with inadequate equipment, and who are today seriously ill.



More and more harvesting machines are replacing coffee pickers on Brazilian plantations. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

2: Coffee's journey to your cup

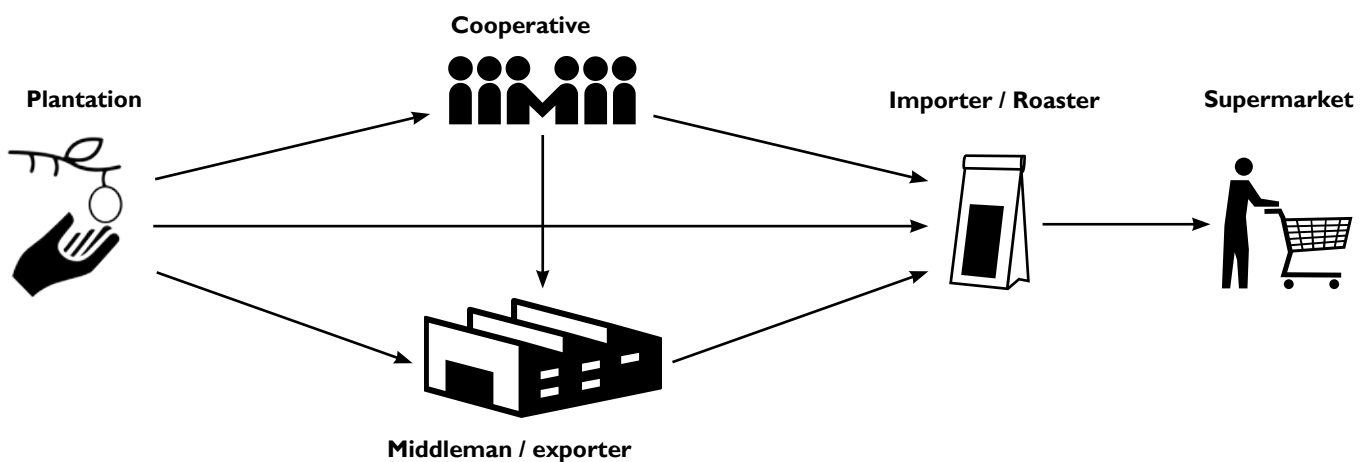
A coffee bean takes a long and winding road between being picked off a bush and being tossed into your shopping basket. This is why many coffee brands don't know which plantations they are buying their coffee from.

Before coffee is poured into your cup, it has passed through many different stages. First, coffee workers, using either a machine or their own hands, pick the red coffee berries from the bushes. Then the berries are washed, dried, processed and classified, usually on the plantation itself. At this point, the different varieties of green coffee beans are ready for export.

Some Brazilian plantations sell green coffee beans directly to roasters and coffee importers abroad, but most sell their beans

to middlemen and exporters. Some plantations are organized into cooperatives that gather coffee from several hundred plantations; these cooperatives then manage the coffee's distribution to exporters and roasters. The roasters sort, roast and grind the coffee before it is packaged and distributed to stores.

Because of the many and varied links in this chain, many large coffee brands do not know the names of the Brazilian plantations that grow their coffee.





On many plantations, coffee is picked by hand. The majority of Brazilian coffee pickers are seasonal workers, and about half work without contracts. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



After the coffee is picked, the pulp is separated from the seeds – the coffee beans. One of the ways to do this is to wash and sort the berries according to quality, depending on whether they float or sink. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



The coffee beans are spread out on the ground and dried in the sun. The beans must be raked regularly to promote even drying. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



The dried coffee beans are now ready to be shipped from the plantation in 60-kg sacks. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



The coffee is shipped to middlemen, cooperatives, and exporters, or directly to buyers in importing countries. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



The coffee is packed into smaller bags and is ready to be sold in supermarkets and other retail outlets. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



Many coffee pickers don't receive contracts or protective equipment as required by law. Photo: Maurilo Claretto Costa.

3: About half of Brazil's coffee harvesters work without a contract

Labourers in the world's largest coffee nation are accustomed to dangerous transport, wretched accommodations, and long working days for little pay. According to workers' organisations, however, the most common problem for coffee pickers in Brazil is that nearly half of them work without a contract, and thereby forfeit basic social security benefits.

Death threats, lawsuits and bribery attempts are just a few of the ordeals that Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho has experienced in connection with his attempts to secure the rights of coffee workers in Brazil's largest coffee-producing region, the state of Minas Gerais.

Santos once worked on the coffee plantations himself. Today he is a coordinator for the social movement *Articulação dos Empregados Rurais de Minas Gerais*, known as *Adere*, and his days are spent driving around coffee plantations, speaking with workers, and informing authorities when he discovers breaches of law.

"The biggest problem is that so many coffee workers have no contract. Because of this, they miss out on the social benefits they are entitled to", he says.

According to Brazilian law, work on coffee plantations must be registered in each employee's *Carteira de Trabalho*, an official work document that guarantees their rights to social benefits like sick pay, vacation pay, pension, and unemployment compensation. This registration is far from universal, however.

Forfeiting social benefits

Half of Brazil's coffee is produced in the state of Minas Gerais, where about half of agricultural workers do not have a contract, according to Santos. He believes that close to the same percentage of coffee workers work without a contract.

Vilson Luiz da Silva, head of Minas Gerais's largest agricultural workers' union, FETAEMG, agrees that a large percentage of the state's coffee workers work without a contract.

"During the harvest, about 40-50 percent of labourers work informally, without being registered", says Silva. He reports that plantation owners frequently offer workers a higher wage to work without a contract.

"The workers don't realise how vulnerable they are when they don't have a contract", Silva says.

But even the workers who have official contracts can miss out on social benefits to which they are entitled, according to Roni Barbosa, director of the research institution Instituto Observatório Social, which is affiliated with Brazil's largest umbrella organisation for trade unions, the *Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT)*.

"Forty percent of those with official contracts still experience violations of their rights. Typically they can neither read nor write, and so they lose out on things like vacation pay and overtime pay. They simply sign the documents without knowing what they are agreeing to", says Barbosa.

He goes on to explain that the employer is supposed to pay a percentage of employees' wages into an unemployment insurance programme, so the employees can receive benefits if they lose their jobs. The employers often don't, however.

Paid by the sack

Coffee plantations usually employ a limited number of year-round workers, who are in charge of planting new coffee bushes, maintaining buildings, spraying pesticides and fertiliser, etc. When the harvest begins around June, the plantation owner hires a larger number of seasonal workers, who work on the plantation for the approximately three months that the harvest lasts.

According to Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho from Adere, migrant workers make up just under 30 percent of coffee pickers. Most come from poorer states north of Minas Gerais, where jobs are scarce, and drought makes agriculture difficult. The majority of seasonal workers, however, come from the local area.

The year-round employees tend to receive a set salary, while the harvest workers are paid for each 60-litre coffee sack they fill. The price for filling a coffee sack is set by the individual plantation owner and usually depends on the quality of the harvest that year. The price per coffee sack varies therefore from year to year and from plantation to plantation. Indeed, it can even vary from coffee bush to coffee bush on certain plantations, because some bushes are more productive than others, depending on when they were planted.

Illegally low wages

João Newton Reis Teixeira owns a plantation with 380 hectares of coffee bushes. He says he pays anything from 12 to 20 reais (about \$3-5) to fill a 60-litre sack, depending on whether the bushes in that area of the plantation are productive or not. His coffee plantation is certified by 4C, UTZ and the Rainforest Alliance, whose objectives are to guarantee that coffee is produced in a sustainable way. The prices he quotes here are on the high end of the spectrum of prices that were communicated to Danwatch by workers during the 2015 harvest.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, according to Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho, a large proportion of coffee workers are paid under the monthly minimum wage of 788 reais (about \$190).

“Forty percent of agricultural workers in Minas Gerais are paid less than the minimum wage”, says Santos, who believes this also applies to coffee workers in particular.

According to Santos, women are especially vulnerable to low

Living expenses for a Brazilian family

The Brazilian research organisation Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos (DIEESE) has calculated how much a family consisting of two adults and two children needs to earn each month in order to afford the most basic necessities. In July 2015, a Brazilian family of four needed 3,325 reais (about \$810) per month in order to cover these fundamental expenses, according to DIEESE.

The amount a coffee worker earns depends upon how many sacks they can fill with coffee, which varies greatly depending on age and sex. To put the earnings question in perspective, a 29-year-old single mother of three we encountered during the 2015 harvest told Danwatch that she earns 800-900 reais (about \$195-220) per month working weekdays on a coffee plantation. In addition, she works on another plantation on the weekends, where she can earn another 50-70 reais (\$12-17) each Saturday. In all, she can earn about \$285 per month.

www.dieese.org.br/analisecestbasica/salarioMinimo.html

Brazilian Law

- The Brazilian workweek is limited to 44 hours by the Brazilian Constitution, Chapter 2, Article 7.
- www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/constituicao/constituicao.htm
- Overtime is limited to two hours per day according to the Brazilian labour code (CLT, Article 59).
- www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/Del5452.htm
- Transport time to a workplace shall be included in hours worked if the workplace is difficult to access, or if it is not possible to reach it via public transport. This is true of the vast majority of coffee plantations in Brazil (CLT, Article 58).
- www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/Del5452.htm
- All agricultural workers must have access to treated drinking water at the workplace, according to a regulation issued by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. See 31.23.9.

[portal.mte.gov.br/data/files/8A7C816A4295EFD0143067D95B-D746A/NR-31%20\(atualizada%202013\).pdf](http://portal.mte.gov.br/data/files/8A7C816A4295EFD0143067D95B-D746A/NR-31%20(atualizada%202013).pdf)

- It is illegal for both permanent and temporary employees to work without *carteira assinada*, that is, without an official contract registered to the employee's work document, the *Carteira de Trabalho*. This is specified in Brazilian labour code, the *Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas*, or CLT. Workers cannot be penalised for working without a *carteira assinada*, but employers can be fined if they do not ensure that their employees' documentation is in order.
- In addition, a law was passed in Brazil in 2008 specifically regulating temporary employment. It made clear that temporary employees must also work with *carteira assinada*, but that they have fewer rights to social security benefits than permanent employees.

www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2008/Lei/LI1718.htm

pay. “During the harvest, wages are determined by how much coffee you pick. Most of the women who take part in the coffee harvest are between 35 and 40 years old, and they are usually less productive than the men”, he says.

The rate for filling a 60-litre coffee sack can vary a great deal, Santos says, but he believes that 8 reais (about \$2) is a typical price. Many of the coffee workers we meet report that they are earning between 8 and 15 reais (between \$2-4) per sack for the 2015 harvest.

Santos also reports that, in his experience, coffee plantation owners often think up various ruses that permit them to pay their employees less than they have earned. On his computer screen, he displays a picture of a rectangular yellow plastic box with holes in the sides for handles.

“If you fill the yellow box up to the holes, it's 60 litres. But the plantation owner blocks the holes, so they have to fill the box up to the rim. That makes 20 litres extra, so it's suddenly a third more”, says Santos.

Long days with few to rest

According to union leader Wilson Luiz da Silva from FETAEMG, seasonal workers often work very long days during the coffee harvest because they are paid for each sack they fill.

“The workers' pay is based on how much they produce. So they often work 10 or more hours per day”, he says.

According to Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho from Adere, workers from the local area typically leave their homes at 5:30 in the morning and return home from work at about 6:00 at night.

“Sometimes they work 14-hour days, which is much more than the law allows”, says Santos.

According to Brazilian law, agricultural workers may not work more than 44 hours per week, and never more than 10 hours per day.

Migrant workers generally have poorer working conditions than seasonal workers from the local area, and they often work long hours seven days a week.

Dangerous transport leads to accidents at work

Coffee workers are usually transported to the plantation as a group, often in old, poorly maintained busses, in tractors pulling wagons, or in open truck beds.

“There are many serious accidents”, says Santos, who reports that the ride to the plantation can be deadly. According to the latest numbers available to Adere of accidents occurring during transport to coffee plantations, four different accidents caused 22 deaths in Minas Gerais state in the year 2011.

One of the coffee workers Danwatch met during the 2015 harvest was in a serious bus accident in 2014 while being transported to a coffee plantation. The union staff at FETAEMG also raise the issue of transportation accidents as a serious problem.

Labourers and cows drink the same water

Usually, seasonal workers from the local area don't live on the coffee plantation, but instead travel each morning from their own homes. Year-round and migrant workers, on the other hand, tend to stay on the plantations, where living conditions can be wretched.

“Walls and roofs are often ready to fall in. In many places, there is no access to clean drinking water”, says Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho, explaining that in some places, workers must drink from the same small streams used by cows.

“It's illegal. The plantation owner must provide treated water”, he says.

The houses used by migrant workers are often only sparsely furnished, and sometimes workers sleep on thin mattresses on the floor or in improvised bunk beds.

“Sometimes the owner just takes some wood and nails it to the wall, so the bunks are liable to collapse”, says Santos.

According to him, conditions for the coffee workers have not improved significantly over the last five years.

“It is still common to find workers sleeping on the floor”, says Santos.

Danwatch has asked the umbrella organisation for plantation owners in Minas Gerais, the Federação da Agricultura e Pecuária do Estado de Minas Gerais (FAEMG), for a response to the criticisms raised with respect to the conditions experienced by coffee workers. Danwatch has also asked how the organisation plans to ensure that its members offer their employees contracts, protective equipment, legal wages, legal working hours, as well as the suitable housing prescribed by labour regulations. FAEMG declined to answer Danwatch's questions.

Better conditions on certified plantations

According to the union leader at FETAEMG, Vilson Luiz da Silva, workers are often reluctant to complain about the poor working conditions on plantations.

“Today, many workers are being replaced by machines. So they don't dare to complain about conditions to the plantation owner. Some owners threaten their employees, saying, ‘Accept the conditions, or you'll be replaced by a machine’”, says Silva.

Silva believes that conditions on certified plantations are signifi-

cantly better than those on non-certified coffee plantations. Some of the most common coffee certification schemes in Brazil are 4C, UTZ, the Rainforest Alliance and Fairtrade. Only a very small percentage of coffee production in Brazil is certified organic.

“The certified plantations know that if they don't observe the rules and ensure good working conditions, they will lose their next order. So certification does make a big difference”, says Silva.

According to him, it can be lucrative in the long run for plantation owners to become certified. But it is a cumbersome process that is at odds with both the widespread desire for fast money and the tendency for short-sighted solutions that, in Silva's opinion, are widespread in Brazil.

The struggle for rights requires sacrifice

Although Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho from Adere thinks improvements are still a long way off, he continues undaunted in his struggle to secure the rights of the coffee workers of Minas Gerais. The work is dangerous. In addition to threats of violence, he is often sued by plantation owners angered by his reports of violations of coffee workers' rights.

Santos recalls a time when he went to the police station to report a plantation he had visited where conditions did not meet legal standards. According to Santos, the police officer was a friend of the plantation owner, and threatened him so that he would not file a report. Later, the plantation owner filed a suit against Santos for trespassing on his property. The case dragged on for years until he was finally acquitted, but, according to Santos, it is only one of many examples of legal proceedings and threats designed to prevent him from doing his work.

A look at coffee certification

The most common coffee certifications in Brazil are 4C, UTZ and the Rainforest Alliance. Only a very small portion of Brazilian coffee is certified organic.

4C (Common Code for the Coffee Community)

The coffee industry has collaborated to create the 4C certification scheme, which serves as an introduction to sustainable production. 4C establishes minimum requirements for production, working conditions and environmental protection, including the prohibition of certain pesticides. The standards for 4C are coordinated with other certification schemes, especially UTZ, so that 4C can serve as a stepping-stone to more comprehensive certification systems.

UTZ Certified

UTZ is one of the largest sustainability programmes for coffee and cacao in the world. The UTZ certification requires sustainable production methods, prohibits certain pesticides, and includes a system enabling coffee to be traced from the bush to the supermarket.

Rainforest Alliance

The Rainforest Alliance focuses on efficient production, protection of animal species, improvement of working conditions, and the prohibition of certain pesticides. Only 30% of the beans in a bag of coffee need to be certified, however, in order to carry the Rainforest Alliance seal.



José Maria picks coffee with an electric rake, protective glasses and hearing protection at a certified coffee plantation in Minas Gerais. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

4: “You can talk to the owner”

Sixty-five-year-old José Maria worked for many years without a contract on different coffee plantations in Brazil. That meant he had no right to social security benefits, and had to work even when he was sick. Today he works under very different conditions on a plantation certified by UTZ and the Rainforest Alliance.

José Maria uses an electric rake to remove the last coffee berries from the coffee plant. The big harvesting machine has already come by, and he goes over the bush again to make sure no berries are wasted. José Maria is wearing both protective glasses and headphones.

“The plantation supplied my boots and safety equipment”, he says.

José Maria works year-round on the plantation, but right now he is taking part in the coffee harvest.

“The rest of the year, I earn the minimum wage (788 reais, or about \$190, ed.). But during the harvest I can earn more”, he explains.

The 65-year-old is happy to be working on this plantation, which is certified by UTZ and the Rainforest Alliance, among others.

“You can talk to the plantation owner. If you have back pro-

blems, you can say, ‘I can’t do this or that kind of task.’ And if you are asked to apply pesticides, you can say, ‘I can’t, I’m allergic,’ and someone else will do it”, he says.

Used to work without a contract

José Maria began working at the age of ten. Until eight years ago, he worked on other plantations without official contracts in his *Carteira de Trabalho*.

Carteira de Trabalho is an official document that guarantees Brazilian labourers their rights to social security benefits like pension, sick pay and unemployment compensation.

“It was difficult. If you became sick, you got nothing. So I had to work even though I was sick, and they can do whatever they want with the money”, he says.

5: Less than 2 % of the supermarket price goes to the coffee picker

From the moment it is picked on a Brazilian plantation until the moment it is poured into your cup, coffee goes through many different stages. It is processed and roasted, and often passes through the hands of multiple middlemen. The percentage of the final, retail price is different in the supply chains of different countries, but The Coffee Exporter's Guide, a publication of the International Trade Centre (ITC), suggests that about 80 % of the price for which coffee is sold in stores goes to coffee roasters and retail chains. Danwatch was unable to find reliable calculations specific to Brazilian coffee, but presents here an example of how the price

of Brazilian coffee can develop along the way from plantation to supermarket, based on information collected by Danwatch. This is therefore a sample pricing process, and not a presentation of statistically valid figures. Danwatch's price example shows that less than two percent of the retail price goes to the coffee worker. It is worth remembering that this pricing example does not include the supermarket's expenses like rent and wages, or national sales taxes, just as there will be many expenses in every link of the chain that cannot be accounted for here.

Sample Price



Coffee picker:

In Brazil, coffee pickers are paid for each 60-litre coffee sack they fill with red coffee berries. The price they are paid varies a great deal from plantation to plantation, and can even vary on a single plantation depending on how productive the coffee bushes are. During the 2015 harvest, coffee workers interviewed by Danwatch earned:

8-15 reais (\$1.98-3.71)¹ per 60-litre sack of fresh coffee berries (33,6 kg)².

This would mean that a coffee picker earns approximately:
\$0.06-0.11 per kilo of fresh coffee berries.

Which is equivalent to:

\$ 0,14-0,26 per kg of roasted coffee beans³.



Plantation owner:

On the plantations, the coffee berries are washed, dried and processed into green coffee beans, which the plantation owner sells in 60-kg bags to consolidators, coffee exporters, or in some cases, directly to coffee importers abroad. The plantation owners interviewed by Danwatch in the summer of 2015 received:

420-500 reais (\$104-124) per 60-kg sack of green coffee beans.

Which is equivalent to:

\$2.06-2.46 per kg of roasted coffee beans.

¹ Rate of exchange on January 27, 2016 as per <http://valutaomregneren.dk/>

² Volume density of fresh coffee calculated using 0.56 kg/litre as indicated at www.aqua-calc.com/calculate/volume-to-weight and confirmed by an industry expert.

³ Conversion factor 0.5 from dried cherry to green bean equivalent and 1.19 from roasted coffee to green bean equivalent. Source: *The Coffee Exporter's Guide*, 3rd ed. page xviii.



A coffee worker gathers dried coffee beans that are ready to be packed and shipped from the plantation to middlemen, exporters, or directly to importers abroad.
Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



Coffee importers:

The companies behind coffee brands buy raw coffee from Brazil via coffee exporters. The coffee is traded on commodity exchanges in New York and London, where its price is determined. To get a sense of what importers pay for their coffee, Danwatch has used the import price, a so-called indicator price, for Brazil Natural, the variety of coffee that makes up more than 70 % of Brazil's coffee exports⁴. In July 2015, the average indicator price for Brazil Natural was:

\$3.27 per kg roasted coffee beans⁵.



Store price:

Coffee importers sort, roast, blend and pack the coffee to be sold on store shelves. Coffee roasters are increasingly able to roast different kinds of coffee beans so they taste the same; this makes roasters less reliant on obtaining specific varieties. They can therefore use more blends, selling coffee that consists of beans grown in many different countries and regions. Since there is no requirement that coffee be labelled with its country of origin (at least in Denmark), it is hard for consumers to determine where their coffee comes from. On a randomly chosen online Danish supermarket, it was not possible to find coffee raised exclusively in Brazil, but the closest we could come was Gevalia Red, which consists of beans from Columbia and Brazil, and which sells for:

\$13.97 per kg⁶ in Denmark.

In this example, then, the coffee picker's pay per kilogram of roasted coffee comes to \$0,14-0,26, while the consumer pays \$13.97, making the coffee picker's share less than 2% of the retail price.

⁴. ICO's data regarding Brazilian exports: infogr.am/brazil-4166040754

⁵. The indicator price for Brazil Natural green coffee beans in July 2015, according to ICO, was 123,64 US cents per pound: www.ico.org/prices/p1-July.pdf. This was converted to its roasted coffee equivalent using conversion factor 1.19.

⁶. www.nemlig.com/produkt/kolonial/kaffe-the-og-cacao/malede-kaffebonner/rod-gevalia-500-g.aspx



A weekend worker picks coffee without gloves or other mandatory protective equipment. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

6: On weekends, coffee is harvested without contracts or protective equipment

On Saturdays, Brazilians in the coffee state of Minas Gerais take extra work on plantations where they harvest coffee with neither contract nor protective equipment. The practice is illegal, and workers lose social security benefits to which they are entitled.

Mariana Oliveira takes hold of the branches of the coffee plant with her bare hands and firmly pulls off berries and leaves so they land on a cloth spread out on the ground below. Despite the risk of stepping on snakes and scorpions, the 36-year-old woman wears only flip-flops on her otherwise bare feet.

“This morning, when the branches were wet, it hurt my hands a bit, but now they’re totally numb. It feels like when you get anaesthetised at the doctor’s”, she explains.

On weekends, together with about thirty others from the area, Oliveira picks coffee on a so-called Mutirão: a plantation that is only harvested on weekends. Often, as on this plantation, they work with neither a contract nor any kind of protective equipment.

“No one here is registered, because we only work here on Saturdays”, says Oliveira.

“Everything is done by verbal agreement”

According to Brazilian law, plantation owners must give their workers a contract and register their employment on the *Carteira de Trabalho*, an official work document that ensures that workers earn social security benefits like pension, sick pay, and unemployment compensation. In addition, the law requires that coffee workers must wear gloves, protective goggles, boots, and a hat while harvesting. Employers must provide this equipment free of charge to their employees.

Other workers on the plantation confirm that they have not

been given protective equipment, and that the work on the “weekend plantation” is carried out without a contract. The coffee harvesters are organised by a so-called *gato* (cat, ed.), who assembles and supervises the workers. The *gato* on the weekend plantation confirmed to Danwatch that the work is neither contracted nor registered in the workers’ *Carteira de Trabalho*.

“No papers are signed, everything is done by verbal agreement”, says *gato* Marcos Pereira, who also explains that the workers must buy their own equipment.

“The workers buy the gloves themselves. They pay 3 reais a pair (about \$0.70, ed.)”.

Union leader: It’s illegal

The labour union FETAEMG organises coffee and other harvest workers in the coffee state of Minas Gerais. Flávia Heliene de Castro is the president of FETAEMG’s branch in Santo Antônio do Amparo, where the weekend plantation is located.

“The work here is illegal”, she says, “but it is difficult to prevent, because it takes place on Saturdays, and the inspectors (from the Ministry of Labour and Employment, ed.) don’t come on Saturdays”.

De Castro explains that many of the harvesters work during the week on other plantations, where they have official contracts and the work is registered in their *Carteira de Trabalho*. If they have an accident while working illegally on the weekend plantation, they have no right to government-funded sick pay, and their

employer may fire them without compensation because they are unable to work.

\$4 to fill a 60-litre sack

Despite the risks of working illegally, 32-34 locals from Santo Antônio do Amparo go with *gato* Marcos Pereira every weekend in the harvesting season to different weekend plantations to earn a little extra money. He calls the members of the group every Friday to hear if they want to come out and work on the weekend.

Plantation owners in the area know that Pereira has a group of about 34 workers, so they call him to get workers into their fields. At the beginning of the season, the group goes out to the plantation and harvests a small amount to see how productive its coffee plants are. They then negotiate a price per sack.

On this plantation, the workers earn 15 reais (about \$4) for every 60-litre sack they fill with coffee berries. The most productive workers can fill four or five sacks in a day, earning about 60-75 reais (\$15-18) per day. The least productive only manage to fill about three sacks per day, earning about 45 reais per day (about \$11).

According to *gato* Pereira, on many other plantations, the group's workers are paid only 8 reais (about \$2) per 60-litre sack. The day's work is interrupted only by a short coffee break and the lunch break.

"At about 10:30, I begin to heat up the workers' food. We sit in the shade of a tree and eat together. Some of the workers eat their food in 10 minutes and hurry back to the harvesting again", explains Pereira.

Prices change constantly

The owner of the weekend plantation would not provide his name, but said that he rents the property's nine hectares. He was once a coffee harvester himself, but hurt his knee and could no longer manage the physically demanding work.

"I earn about 420 reais (about \$102, ed.) per sack of coffee", he says, explaining that the prices fluctuate from day to day. Since he does not have access to a location where he can store the coffee, he is forced to sell it at whatever price he is offered.

"I sell the coffee right down there", he says, pointing to a large storage facility that can be glimpsed from the elevated plantation.

The harvest this year has been poor because of drought, so he will barely earn enough to make the investments required to guarantee next year's harvest.

Began working as a teenager

With her bare hands, Mariana Oliveira has pulled leaves and berries branch by branch off the coffee bush, so that the cloth on

the ground is now full. A young man wearing jeans and a baseball cap helps her separate out the leaves and transfer the red coffee berries into a sack.

The young man, Antônio Nascimento, is 18 years old. During the week he is employed as a construction worker in the town, and on weekends he works here to save a little extra money.

He says that he has worked on weekend plantations for the last two years. In Brazil, teenagers as young as 16 may work the coffee harvest as long as the work does not interfere with their schooling. It is illegal for children under 16 to work on the coffee plantations.

According to union leader Flávia Heliene de Castro, the problem of child labour on Brazilian coffee plantations has in general become less acute. It is more common to find children and teenagers working on weekend plantations like this one, in part because the work here is unregistered.

The names of the workers and of the gato have been changed to protect their identities. Their real names are known to the editors.

Danwatch obtained access to the plantation by omitting to disclose that we were journalists. Danwatch only uses this kind of undercover technique when it is not possible to obtain information by another method, which was the case here.

Brazilian labour law

Coffee pickers must be provided with protective equipment free of charge – including gloves, boots, protective goggles and a hat that protects against sun and rain – according to regulations from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. See sections 31.20.1 and 31.20.2.

portal.mte.gov.br/images/Documentos/SST/NR/NR31.pdf

It is illegal for both permanent and temporary employees to work without *carteira assinada*, which means that an official contract is registered to their official work document, the *Carteira de Trabalho*. This is specified in Brazilian labour code, the *Consolidação das Leis Trabalhistas*, or CLT. Workers cannot be penalised for working without a *carteira assinada*, but employers can be fined if they do not ensure that their employees' documentation is in order. In addition, a law was passed in Brazil in 2008 specifically regulating temporary employment. It made clear that temporary employees must also work with a *carteira assinada*, but that they have fewer rights to social security benefits than permanent employees.

www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2007-2010/2008/Lei/L11718.htm



*Carolina Santos separates leaves from coffee berries before pouring them into a 60-litre coffee sack.
Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.*

7: “I want to give my children a better life”

Twenty-nine-year-old Carolina Santos works illegally every weekend on a coffee plantation where, despite labour laws, she has been given neither a contract nor protective equipment. The work allows her to provide for her three children.

It is Saturday, and a young woman with bright red nail polish is separating leaves from coffee berries so she can fill a 60-litre sack and collect the 15 reais (about \$4) she is paid per sack. With her work gloves off, her exposed fingers move quickly and expertly.

According to Brazilian law, her employer should have provided her with the gloves, but work on this Mutirão – a plantation where local residents pick coffee illegally on weekends – goes on without labour contracts or employer-provided protective gear. So Carolina Santos bought the gloves herself in town.

Prefer to work with a contract

Santos has worked on coffee plantations since she was seven years old. Her family lived on a plantation, and she and the other children went to school in the morning and helped with the coffee harvest in the afternoon. The children worked as a group, side by side, and she liked it.

Today – twenty-two years later – she still works for coffee plantations six days a week during the harvest. From Monday to Friday, she works for a plantation where she has a contract, and where her employer has filled out her official work document, the *Carteira de Trabalho*, which is used to earn social security benefits. On Saturdays, however, she works illegally on the weekend plantation, without any paperwork at all.

“It’s much better when your work is registered”, she says, reeling off a list of social benefits like sick pay, pension, and unemployment compensation that are available to those with a completed *Carteira de Trabalho*.

Still, Santos works every Saturday from seven in the morning until four in the afternoon without a contract on the weekend plantation. She needs to earn money to support her three sons, who are 4, 10, and 12 years old. Their father is in prison, and she is the family’s main breadwinner.

It’s hard to earn enough money to get by, she says. “We live one day at a time”.

Cannot afford her own home

On the coffee plantation where she works during the week, she earns 800-900 reais (about \$207) per month, and on Saturdays, she can usually earn 50-70 reais (about \$15).

The Brazilian research organisation Departamento intersindical de estatística e estudos socioeconômicos (DIEESE), which compiles socioeconomic statistics, has calculated how much a family consisting of two adults and two children needs to earn each month in order to afford the most basic necessities. In July 2015, a Brazilian family of four needed 3,325 reais (about \$810) per month in order to cover these fundamental expenses.

“It’s not an ideal situation”, says Carolina Santos. She can afford to feed the children, but they all live with Santos’s mother.

“I wish I could give my children a better life, and that we could afford our own home”, she says, while her experienced hands continue the work of separating leaves from coffee berries.

The name of the worker has been changed to protect her identity. Her real name is known to the editors.



8: Freed from debt spiral and conditions analogous to slavery

Every year, Brazilian authorities liberate coffee workers who live under conditions analogous to slavery. The workers can be forced, for example, to sleep on coffee sacks on the floor, or may be trapped in a debt spiral that prevents them from leaving the plantation. Authorities only have the resources to free half of the affected workers.

Even though it is Sunday, two workers are in full swing picking coffee in Patrocínio, a municipality in Minas Gerais, Brazil's largest coffee-producing state. They have been at it since sunrise, and their workday will not finish until 5:30 or 6:00 in the evening. A slim man wearing a dirty blue and white striped polo shirt and a green baseball cap introduces himself as José.

"We have to work on Saturday and Sunday", he says. The other worker, who introduces himself as Lucas, chimes in. "Just like we are doing now. We can't stop. Sometimes we work even when we are sick. I don't feel well right now. My back hurts", he says.

The two coffee pickers are migrant workers from Irecê in the state of Bahia, over 1200 km from here. In part because of drought, it is difficult for the residents of Bahia to find work, so many have to travel to other parts of Brazil in order to provide for their families.

Working conditions for migrant workers are typically markedly worse than for local coffee pickers. They often work seven days a week with no day off, and many of them become trapped in a debt spiral: they may, for example, owe money to the plantation owner for food and for the journey to the plantation. This prevents them

from travelling home again in spite of the poor conditions.

"If I could leave here, I would", says José, explaining that he doesn't have enough money for the bus ticket home.

Hundreds liberated

Every year, the Brazilian authorities free migrant workers on coffee plantations who are living under what Brazilian criminal code calls "conditions analogous to slavery". Some workers are freed because they live under what are called degrading conditions: for example, they may sleep on coffee sacks on the floor because they are not provided with a bed. Other workers are freed because they are trapped in a debt spiral that makes it impossible for them to leave the plantations.

In July and August 2015, the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment completed sixteen inspections of coffee plantations in southern Minas Gerais state. On five of them, inspectors found conditions that the Ministry described as analogous to slavery. In all, 128 workers, including six children and teenagers, were liberated. Over the last five years, several hundred workers have been



A migrant worker picks coffee in the morning mist on a Sunday in Patrocínio, Brazil. In spite of horrible working conditions, he cannot leave the plantation, since he cannot afford the bus ticket to his hometown, more than 1200 kilometers away. Photo: Danwatch.

freed from Brazilian coffee plantations.

Danwatch has obtained more than fifteen confidential inspection reports from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment that describe circumstances on coffee plantations where authorities have found conditions analogous to slavery. In July 2015, Danwatch participated in one of these inspections and interviewed some of the liberated workers.

The details vary from case to case, but in a typical scenario, migrant workers are transported by bus from their hometown to plantations in southern Minas Gerais at the beginning of the coffee harvest in June. The bus ride typically takes one or two days. When the workers arrive at the plantation, they are told that they must pay back the cost of the journey with their earnings. Their wages will not be paid until the harvest is complete three months later, but until then they can buy food on credit. This is how a debt spiral begins.

“The worker ends up in a situation in which he owes the plantation owner money, and therefore is obliged to keep working under these terrible conditions. He has no cash, and therefore cannot buy a bus ticket back to his hometown”, says Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho, coordinator of the organisation *Articulação dos Empregados Rurais de Minas Gerais*, known as *Adere*, which helps migrant workers report conditions analogous to slavery to the authorities.

Lured into debt bondage

Migrant workers typically come from northern Minas Gerais or

from nearby states to the northeast, like Bahia, where drought has made agriculture difficult, and where job prospects are few. The head of the International Labour Organization (ILO)’s Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour in Brazil, Luiz Machado, explains that workers usually leave home believing that they have been hired for an ordinary job in the coffee harvest.

“They think that they will live on a plantation for a few months, get paid, and go home. But sometimes they end up in debt bondage instead”, says Machado.

In their hometowns, the migrant workers are typically contacted by a so-called *gato* (cat, ed.) who is hired by the plantation to recruit coffee pickers. The *gato* visits the workers and asks if they are interested in working that year’s harvest.

“The *gato* is paid for each worker he recruits to the plantation.

Brazilian law regarding conditions analogous to slavery

According to the Brazilian criminal code, Article 149, it is illegal to subject a person to conditions analogous to slavery. This includes subjecting a person to forced labour, subjecting a person to degrading working conditions, and restricting a person’s freedom of movement because of debt to an employer or agent.

The workers are paid for each 60-litre coffee sack they fill with coffee. At some plantations, however, workers' salaries are withheld until the harvest is over, forcing them to buy food on credit from the plantation owners.

Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

Often, the *gato* stays on the plantation for the whole harvest and oversees the work”, says labour attorney and public prosecutor Elaine Noronha Nassif, who has investigated slavery-like working conditions in Minas Gerais. According to her, it is usually men in their thirties or forties with little or no education who agree to the *gato*'s offer to leave their hometowns and work as coffee pickers.

“The money they earn during the harvest is intended to support their families back home”, she explains.

Even though most of the migrant workers are young men, a sizeable number are women, and even entire families accept the *gato*'s offer of travel to the coffee plantations during the harvest.

“The *gato* promises them all sorts of things: free food, nice accommodations. But when the workers arrive at the plantation, what they find there is far from what they were promised,” says Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho from Adere.

Only half get help

Several hundred workers have been liberated from Brazilian coffee plantations in the last five years, but many more end up in conditions analogous to slavery.

According to the ILO's Luiz Machado, the number of workers freed by the inspectors do not reflect the real number of workers working under conditions analogous to slavery.

“Only about half of the cases in which workers report conditions analogous to slavery are inspected. The last fifty percent are never reached by the authorities”, he says.

The inspections take place when the Ministry of Labour and Employment gets a tip that there are problems on a plantation – usually when a worker manages to escape and report the conditions.

“The workers don't usually go to the police. There is a lot of corruption in some areas, and there have been reports of police taking workers back to plantations”, says Machado.

Instead, the coffee pickers go to organisations like Adere, where Santos helps them make a report to the Ministry of Labour and Employment. According to him, the numbers are even larger than Luiz Machado from the ILO estimates.

“If the authorities inspected every reported case, two or three times as many workers would be liberated”, he says.

Plantation owners are usually fined

Inspectors find conditions analogous to slavery most often on medium-sized plantations, and according to Santos, their owners often have local political connections and high incomes.

Elaine Noronha Nassif, the public prosecutor and expert in slavery-like conditions, says that the punishments imposed on the plantation owners are usually on the lenient side.

“Technically, the plantation owners could go to jail for two to eight years, but that rarely happens. They usually pay a fine instead”, says Nassif.

Previously, owners of coffee plantations where inspectors found slavery-like conditions were also put on the *lista suja*, a “dirty list” published by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. Listed plantation owners could not obtain loans from large state-owned banks and were boycotted by firms that were signatories to the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labour. On December 22, 2014, the dirty list was temporarily removed from the website of the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment because the service organisation of the Brazilian construction industry (Associação Brasileira de Incorporadoras Imobiliárias) sued for its removal in the Supreme Federal Court of Brazil. As long as the suit is in progress – which could take years – the list will not

be published on the website of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Nevertheless, an alternative dirty list, based on exactly the same information about the labour ministry's inspections, is still published by the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labour and Repórter Brasil, a Brazilian NGO.

And yet, according to Luiz Machado from the ILO, when it comes to combating forced labour and slavery-like conditions, Brazil is ahead of other countries in South and Central America.

“Brazil has its limitations, but it is the only country that has a dirty list, an action plan, and regulatory inspections. However, the authorities cannot respond to every complaint because they lack personnel and resources”, says Machado.

A vicious circle

When workers are liberated by inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and Employment, they are usually housed in a local hotel, where they can stay until the authorities complete the paperwork necessary to ensure they receive the wages they are owed by the plantation owner. In addition to their pay for work they have already completed, the workers receive compensation in the amount of three months' minimum wage, or 2364 reais in all (about \$580).

Many of the workers that are freed by the Brazilian authorities end up working in conditions analogous to slavery again, says internationally-recognised human rights advocate Xavier Jean Marie Plassat from the organisation Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT). Like Adere, CPT helps workers report cases of slavery-like conditions to the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

“The usual problem is that workers don't find anything different when they return to their hometown. The probability that they will migrate once more and end up in bad labour conditions again is therefore very high”, Plassat says.

Often, the *gatos* who take workers to the problematic plantations are able to continue their work uninterrupted.

“The *gato* usually comes from the workers' local area. If a worker complains about a *gato*, he won't take that person to the next harvest and he will tell the other *gatos* not to use him, either. So the worker ends up on a dirty list and can't get work at harvest time any more”, says Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho.

Unable to go home

On the plantation in Patrocínio, the two migrant workers continue to pull leaves and berries off the coffee bushes. They dream of going home to Bahia, but can't afford the bus ticket, which they say costs between 170-220 reais (about \$40-55).

The meeting with the two workers is short. The *gato* is somewhere nearby, and they might get in trouble for talking to Danwatch.

The names of coffee pickers in Patrocínio have been changed to protect their identities.

Forced labour and slavery-like conditions are widespread in Brazil

Conditions analogous to slavery are not only found on Brazilian coffee plantations. Every year, inspectors from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment liberate workers from plantations growing other crops, as well as from other kinds of workplaces, like the textile industry. Slavery-like conditions are especially widespread in Brazil's sugar, construction, livestock and charcoal industries.





9: “I couldn’t afford to leave”

Five years ago, migrant worker Wellington Antonio Soares and his son were freed by authorities from conditions analogous to slavery on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The workers were receiving illegally low wages, and were made to live with their children among large piles of garbage. Even though the workers wanted to leave the plantation, they were unable to do so because they did not have enough money for the bus fare home.

The red earth in Wellington Antonio Soares’s little kitchen garden is bone dry. Only a few things grow here – a bit of sugar cane, some onions, some tea – far from enough to feed his family. São João da Ponte in northern Minas Gerais is known for its long periods of drought that year after year drive its inhabitants southward to find work.

So season after season, for thirty years, 49-year-old Soares has journeyed to the south of Minas Gerais state to pick coffee during the three-month harvest from June to August. When he went to the harvest with his 18-year-old son in 2010, he imagined that conditions would be as they had been in previous years. Instead, he found himself working for half the wages he usually earned, while also forced to pay the plantation owner and overseer – the so-called *gato* – for both transportation and food. This meant that he and his son had to continue working on the plantation, since they did not have enough money for a bus ticket home to São João da Ponte.

“If we wanted to travel back home, we would have had to take

the bus, and a ticket would have cost about 100 reais (about \$24, ed.)”, he says.

Soares was relieved, therefore, when inspectors from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment showed up on the Fazenda Bom Jardim Santa Rita plantation, liberating its thirty-nine workers and making sure they could travel home again.

“It was a good feeling”, he says. “Someone came to help us and get us out of there”.

Wanted to leave

The confidential inspection report by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment regarding the Fazenda Bom Jardim Santa Rita plantation, which Danwatch has obtained, confirms that the workers were unable to leave the plantation despite their dissatisfaction with the working conditions.

“The majority of the workers wanted to go home, but were unable to do so because they could not afford transportation”, the inspection report states.



Drought makes it almost impossible to grow anything in São João da Ponte, where Wellington Antonio Soares lives. For 30 years, therefore, Soares has travelled to the south of Minas Gerais to pick coffee during the harvest season. Photo: Maurilo Claretto Costa.

The inspectors found seven different breaches of the Brazilian labour code on the coffee plantation. The workers received illegally low wages; machinery did not meet safety standards; living quarters were unsanitary; there was no organised waste disposal system, and so large piles of rubbish accumulated outside workers' sleeping quarters; and the drainpipe from the kitchen was not connected to a sewer.

"Water with scraps of food in it flowed around and combined with other refuse. The garbage attracted many flies and other insects to the living areas, where several children – the sons and daughters of the workers – spent their free time", the report recounts. It also observes that the plantation owner had failed to provide the employees with any kind of protective equipment.

"Many of the workers wore sneakers that were in such tatters, their toes stuck out", the inspection report declares.

The Ministry of Labour and Employment classified the conditions at Fazenda Bom Jardim Santa Rita as analogous to slavery, and put the plantation on the dirty list in December 2012.

Left without knowing the terms

Wellington Antonio Soares knew nothing of the conditions on the plantation before he left home. As the coffee harvest approaches, plantation owners hire so-called *gatos* (cats, ed.) to go from house to house in São João da Ponte asking whether the residents would like to work as coffee pickers. This was how Soares and his son ended up at Fazenda Bom Jardim Santa Rita in 2010.

"The *gato* didn't tell us anything about the prices or the condi-

tions at the plantation", says Soares, whose story was described as typical by other coffee workers in the city. It is so difficult to find any job at all in São João da Ponte that workers accept the *gato's* offer without knowing the terms of their employment.

"There's no work here at all. Only a day's worth here and there", says Soares, explaining why he agreed to the *gato's* offer.

"We were transported in a very tightly-packed bus. My son had to stand almost the whole way. Sometimes we switched, so I stood, and he could sit for a while", he says.

They drove all night to reach the plantation. As Soares recalls, they left at about 7:00 in the evening and arrived at about 9:00 the next morning. When they arrived, they were informed that the price of the transport would be deducted from their pay.

Brazilian law regarding conditions analogous to slavery

According to the Brazilian criminal code, Article 149, it is illegal to subject a person to conditions analogous to slavery. This includes subjecting a person to forced labour, subjecting a person to degrading working conditions, and restricting a person's freedom of movement because of debt to an employer or agent.

Owed money at the supermarket

Wellington Antonio Soares also had to pay the *gato's* wife for food. According to the inspection report, the cook charged 140 reais (about \$34) per month for meals.

The workers received 5 reais (about \$1.20) for each 60-litre coffee sack they could fill.

“The price was about half of what I am used to getting”, says Soares. He began to worry, as did his wife, Dorimar Ferreira da Silva, at home in São João da Ponte. The family, including four children in all, already owed money at their local supermarket when Soares and his son left for the harvest, and Silva continued to buy goods on credit while they were away.

“It was hard”, she says, explaining that she didn’t know how to deal with the situation except to think, “God will help us”.

She was not able to telephone her husband and son because the mobile phone signal at the plantation was so weak. From time to time, her son climbed a tree to get reception, and called home to tell her how they were doing.

“Once in a while he would call and say that they were in a bad way, and couldn’t send money home”, she remembers.

Finally, one of the other coffee pickers had enough of the bad conditions on the plantation. He managed to run away and report the coffee plantation to the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Everyone wanted out

Wellington Antonio Soares was standing in the living area when he first caught a glimpse of the inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and Employment. He had gone up to the house to get some water, and could hear one of the inspectors questioning another coffee worker, who was telling him about the bad conditions.

The inspectors gathered all the workers together. They asked who wanted to stay on the plantation. No hands were raised. Then



Entry from Fazenda Bom Jardim Santa Rita in Wellington Antonio Soares’ official working document, the so-called Carteira de Trabalho. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

they asked who wanted to leave.

“Everyone put their hands in the air”, recounts Soares, lifting his hands with a smile.

It took a few days for the inspectors to arrange everything; documents had to be put in order, papers signed, buses organised, etc.

As Soares recalls, he was paid about 2500 reais (about \$610) in all. The amount included both the plantation owner’s compensation for their illegally low wages and the public assistance that is paid to all liberated workers.

It was good to come home, he remembers. “I was very happy. When you’ve been away from your family, it’s really nice to be back and be close to your wife, children and friends”, he says.



When Danwatch visited Fazenda Bom Jardim Santa Rita in July 2015, the coffee plantation’s buildings were empty. Photo: Danwatch.



FAZENDA
DO JARDIM
SÍTIO
DE JOSÉ QUEIROZ
RUA SÃO INSIPIAS



Police officers with automatic weapons and bulletproof vests break the coffee plantation's lock with a crowbar. Photo: Danwatch.

10: Men, women and children pick coffee without pay

In July and August 2015, Brazilian authorities freed 128 workers from conditions analogous to slavery on five coffee plantations in southern Minas Gerais. Danwatch came along on one inspection that led to the liberation of 17 men, women and children. According to the inspection report issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, the workers were victims of human trafficking, picking coffee without pay while they incurred debt to the plantation owner.

A cloud of red dust shrouds the four cars that race down the gravel road at 80-90 kilometres per hour. The caravan halts at a metal gate. Two police officers armed with automatic weapons and wearing bulletproof vests climb out of a four-wheel drive Mitsubishi. The inspectors from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment and the public prosecutor follow suit, but stay back while one of the officers breaks the coffee plantation's lock with a crowbar.

Danwatch has obtained permission to accompany the Brazilian authorities as they liberate a group of workers from a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais.

Before the inspection began, the lead inspector gathered the team at a parking lot to brief them on the situation: the Ministry of Labour and Employment has received a tip that a group of migrant workers are being held under conditions analogous to slavery on a coffee plantation. Children are among them.

It will emerge that the workers have been victims of human trafficking. They have been picking coffee without pay, incurring debt to the plantation owner in the meantime; they have been harvesting without protective equipment; they have been living with their children in unsanitary conditions without access to clean drinking water; and two of the children have been missing school in order to pick coffee.

Garbage and food scraps everywhere

Now the metal gate is forced open, and the cars enter the property. One of the police officers catches sight of a man at the

main building and runs in that direction as the cars drive deeper into the plantation. A beat-up black car, missing its license plate and one of its headlights, drives toward us. The workers in the car direct us to the building where the coffee pickers are housed. Discarded plastic and other kinds of garbage are strewn around the house where the inspectors ask the workers to be seated so they can begin their interrogations.

Seventeen men, women and children live in the house. The unmarried men share a little room just large enough for three bunk beds. The families live in two larger, open rooms. The worn-out bunk beds and hole-riddled mattresses are pushed together in little islands to create a bit of privacy for each family. On the gas stove next to the beds are pots containing rice and fish heads. In another room, the door can barely be opened. The upper level of a double bunk bed is filled with pots and pans holding pigs' ears and other food. In the lower bunk, a little girl hides behind a curtain. She covers her mouth with her hands and looks up, terrified, as the curtain is pulled to one side.

Instructed to lie

Outside, the inspectors have finished questioning the first few workers, who unanimously claim to have arrived at the location only a couple of days earlier. The public prosecutor comes running up from the main building with a signed statement from the plantation owner confirming that the workers just arrived. The inspectors are bewildered. It is July 14, and the coffee harvest has been underway for a month and a half. Who has been picking the

coffee until now, if these workers just got here?

The questioning of a worker in orange shorts has just concluded. He is about to sign his witness statement when he begins to shake. He breaks down. The team of workers has been here the whole time, he says. The lead inspector, Marcelo Campos, is almost finished questioning a worker in green shorts when he gets the message.

“You’ve just made a fool of me”, he says to the worker in the green shorts.

Campos’s brown eyes blaze as he asks the worker whether he plans to start telling the truth.

The interview begins again, and the worker tells Campos that

the whole group left the neighbouring state of Bahia on May 22 and arrived at the plantation on May 23.

The plantation owner assembled all the workers the day before the inspection. “He told us that if any inspectors came, we should say that we just started to work on the plantation”, the worker says.

He says that until that week, the plantation owner had not asked for the workers’ *Carteira de Trabalho*, the official papers that guarantee access to social benefits like pension, sick pay, etc., and that they had been working without official contracts until then. Similarly, it was only in the week before the inspection that the plantation owner supplied the workers with the required



Little children play amid garbage that litters the ground near the building where the workers live. Photo: Danwatch.



In the room where the families live, the mattresses are worn and full of holes. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

safety equipment, such as gloves, hats and protective glasses.

Children picked coffee

The lead inspector, Marcelo Campos, begins to re-interview a worker wearing a Messi t-shirt.

“You lied to me. You lied in front of your children. You signed your name to false testimony. That is a crime, but I will give you one more chance”, he says.

The worker in the Messi t-shirt gives in and agrees to tell the truth. He confirms, as do the other coffee pickers on the plantation, that they have received no pay for their work. Instead, they have been given receipts for each 60-litre coffee sack they filled, and were told that their wages would not be paid until the end of the harvest. In the meantime, the workers have been buying goods from the local supermarket on the plantation owner’s credit. They were also told that they owed money for their bus ride to the plantation.

Campos tells the worker in the Messi t-shirt that it is illegal for his teenage son to be harvesting coffee – but if he had done so, it would be the plantation owner, and not his son, who would be punished. The father admits that his son took part in the harvest.

Now the teenage boys must be questioned. Campos sits opposite a boy wearing a pink t-shirt and white shorts. His mother stands beside him while the lead inspector explains that it is illegal for a boy his age to work, but that it is the plantation owner, and not the boy himself, who has committed a crime. Campos also assures him that the law guarantees that he will be compensated for his work, just like all the others, if only he tells the truth.

In his papers, Campos notes that the boy was born March 2, 2000.

The 15-year-old boy says that he came to the plantation on Sa-

Hundreds of coffee workers are liberated

The internationally recognised human rights advocate Xavier Jean Marie Plassat from the organisation Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), which helps workers to report cases of slavery-like conditions, is in possession of the most widely accepted statistics regarding the prevalence of these conditions on coffee plantations. According to Plassat, these numbers represent a conservative estimate, but they indicate that several hundred coffee workers have been freed from conditions analogous to slavery on Brazilian plantations in the last few years:

2014: 195 workers from six coffee plantations, including 11 children and teenagers, of whom 5 were under 16 years old and 6 were between 16 and 18 years old.

2013: 71 workers from six coffee plantations.

2012: 26 workers from two coffee plantations.

2011: 129 workers from seven coffee plantations, including 2 children and teenagers under 16 years old.

2010: 204 workers from nine coffee plantations, including 4 children and teenagers, of whom 2 were under 16 years old and 2 were between 16 and 18 years old.

It is illegal for children under 16 years old to work on coffee plantations, although children between 16 and 18 years old may do so as long as it does not interfere with their schooling.



Kitchen and toilet facilities in the building where the workers live. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

turday, May 23, with his family and the other workers from Bahia, and that he began to pick coffee with the others the following Monday. The boy worked in his own leather boots; the plantation owner did not give him the required protective equipment until that week, when the owner knew the inspectors would be coming. There were no tables on the plantation where they could sit and eat their lunch, and they had to go to the toilet in the bushes.

While the questioning of the 15-year-old boy continues in the shade of the house, the plantation owner becomes visible alongside his suit-clad attorney on a hilltop above the house. They keep their distance and observe the proceedings.

The 15-year-old boy explains that he goes to school in his hometown. He is working on the plantation during his vacation, but missed a month of lessons at home.

A tall inspector with glasses comes over to Marcelo Campos to say that the attorney is going to call the police. Campos, unmoved, continues his questioning of the boy.

“Do you want to go back to school?” he asks.

“Yes”, answers the boy.

“What do you want to do with your life?” asks Campos.

The boy answers that he wants to go to university and become a doctor or a lawyer. But what he really wants to do is become a professional football player. Sometimes they play matches here on the plantation, he says. He’s a defender.

The 15-year-old boy signs his witness statement.

Misses friends and school

The tall inspector with the glasses has started to interview the other teenage boy, who is wearing a blue-black shirt with a yellow Adidas logo on the back. The boy says that he usually stayed near the living quarters while the others picked coffee. It was his job to



A 14-year-old boy who had been picking coffee at the plantation is interrogated by one of the inspectors from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



A little girl, the daughter of one of the workers, plays with a teddy bear in front of the building where the coffee pickers live. Photo: Danwatch.

mind his three-year-old sister and two-year-old cousin, changing their diapers and bottle-feeding the littlest one during the day.

The inspector notes in his papers that the boy was born December 18, 2000. He is fourteen. At home in Bahia, his mother takes care of the small children, but while they are here, they are his responsibility, he says. He did pick coffee on two days, though. The boy forgets for a moment that he no longer needs to repeat the lies of the plantation owner, and he tells the inspector that everyone wore all the necessary safety gear. When the inspector reminds the boy that he already knows that the others did not receive safety equipment, and that he doesn't have to lie any more, the boy admits that he picked coffee in his own tennis shoes, gloves and hat.

The inspector asks the boy how he felt after the first day he spent picking coffee.

"I felt tired. I wanted to sleep, and my arms hurt", he says.

"What about the next day? Did it feel the same, or was it not as bad?"

"The second day I was a little less tired", says the boy.

"Which do you prefer, working or playing?"

"Playing."

"Why do you have to work?"

"To earn money."

"If you didn't have to earn money, would you rather play?"

"Yes."

"Did you get money for your work?"

"No."

"Do you have any idea when you're going to get the money?"

"No."

"Do you like it better being here, or being at home?"

"I like it better at home."

"Do you miss your friends and your school?"

"Yes."

The boy says that he is enrolled in the 8th grade at a school in Bahia. He hasn't been to any classes while he has been on the plantation, but he brought a schoolbook with him from home. He's on vacation now, but he missed a month of school, he says. The inspector asks whether it will cause problems for him when he returns to school.

"They said it wasn't so good, but that I don't have to repeat the year", he says.

The boy signs his witness statement.

Inspectors: "Slavery-like conditions"

Lead inspector Marcelo Campos has gone up to the plantation owner with the public prosecutor to obtain a new statement, since it is now clear that the owner lied in the first one.

Later, Campos gathers the workers in front of the house where they have been living and tells them that the working conditions on the plantation are illegal.

"The conditions here are degrading", he says, explaining that Brazilian law characterises them as analogous to slavery.

The lead inspector tells the workers that they will stay on the plantation until the morning, at which point they will be housed at a hotel in the town until the paperwork is completed and they receive the money they are owed by the plantation owner as well as three months' assistance from the government.

A worker asks how they will be paid. "In cash", answers Campos.

Before the inspectors leave, they exchange telephone numbers with the workers and tell them to call if anything happens.

“Remember, sign nothing unless you’re with us”, says Campos before the inspectors leave the plantation.

Victims of human trafficking

The confidential report issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment following the inspection declares that the workers on the coffee plantation were the victims of human trafficking. The workers were hired under false pretences by a so-called *gato* (cat, ed.), and believed that they would be working under totally different conditions. They picked coffee without a contract and without being paid, while they incurred debt for food and transport to the plantation owner.

The living conditions on the coffee plantation are described in the report as degrading, unsanitary, and unsuitable for the large number of workers being housed. The workers did not have access to filtered drinking water, and had therefore been drinking contaminated water, exposing them to the risk of illnesses like hepatitis and diarrhoea, as well as a host of different parasites.

The inspection report by the Ministry of Labour and Employ-

ment makes clear that the treatment of the workers constitutes a breach of the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) conventions on forced labour (Conventions 29 and 105), and that the conditions on the plantation are punishable according to a variety of articles in the Brazilian criminal code, including Article 149, which makes it illegal to subject persons to conditions that resemble slavery.

Brazilian law regarding conditions analogous to slavery

According to the Brazilian criminal code, Article 149, it is illegal to subject a person to conditions analogous to slavery. This includes subjecting a person to forced labour, subjecting a person to degrading working conditions, and restricting a person’s freedom of movement because of debt to an employer or agent.



Inspection leader Marcelo Campos tells the workers that the working conditions at the plantation are analogous to slavery. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.



Five coffee workers who were just liberated from slavery-like working conditions at a coffee plantation in Southern Minas Gerais. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

II: Trapped in debt bondage

In July 2015, 31-year-old worker Antônio Rocha was freed from a coffee plantation by Brazilian authorities. The inspectors determined that he and his fellow migrant workers were victims of human trafficking who were living under conditions analogous to slavery. Although Rocha had never before in his fourteen years of picking coffee ended up in debt bondage, he had encountered even worse living conditions on other coffee plantations.

On a coffee plantation in southern Minas Gerais state, five workers sit with their backs against the outer wall of their dormitory. They are over 1000 kilometres from their homes. For the last month and a half, they have been picking coffee without contracts or protective equipment, and without receiving pay for their work. They owe money to the plantation owner for the bus ticket that brought them here, and when they arrived, they were told that they would have to buy food on credit until they were paid at the end of the harvest several months later.

Inspectors from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment have just finished questioning the five workers, and now they sit and smoke cigarettes in near silence. A lanky man introduces himself as Antônio Rocha. Since he was seventeen, he has been travelling from his home in Bahia to the neighbouring state of Minas Gerais to work every June to August in the coffee harvest.

Even though he has worked on many coffee plantations, he has never before encountered a plantation owner who withheld workers' pay until the end of the harvest.

"The payment system here is not normal", he says, explaining that he is paid every two weeks on most other plantations.

No other job prospects

Antônio Rocha is thirty-one years old. When he is not working on coffee plantations, he lives with his parents on a small piece of property where they plant beans and corn to eat. In his home town of Aracatu, Bahia, there is very little work to be had. "There is no industry and no jobs", he says.

From time to time, Rocha has other short-term farm jobs. At the end of last year, for example, he worked for two months harvesting corn.

“The conditions there were much better”, he says, explaining that the workers didn’t have to pay for their transportation to the plantation. They also had lockers where they could keep their personal belongings, and they were given sunglasses and sunscreen to wear.

Rain through the roof

Rocha has also worked on coffee plantations with better conditions. He remembers one in particular where his employer provided all the necessary safety equipment, and he was given a contract.

But that was back in 2001. Since then, he has worked on many coffee plantations where conditions were substandard.

“The living conditions here are not so bad compared to some of the other places I’ve been. Here we’re just a little cramped”, he says. “I’ve lived in many places that were worse, where it was hard to sleep because the raindrops fell right through big holes in the roof”.

The name of the 31-year-old worker has been changed to protect his identity. His real name is known to the editors.

Brazilian police liberate workers from a coffee plantation in Southern Minas Gerais. Photo Danwatch.



12: Children pick coffee on Brazilian plantations

In July 2015, Danwatch attended an inspection during which the Brazilian authorities liberated two children picking coffee under conditions analogous to slavery. Even though Brazilian children are still picking coffee in 2015, the problem of child labour has been reduced by more than half in the last ten years, in part because of government social policies.

In May 2015, two boys, aged 15 and 14, arrived at a coffee plantation with their families in southern Minas Gerais, Brazil. The boys were lodged in an unsanitary house that had no access to clean drinking water and was much too small for the seventeen men, women and children living there during the coffee harvest.

When the Brazilian authorities liberated the two boys in July 2015, they had been picking coffee without proper protective equipment and without receiving pay for their labour. In addition, they were missing school while working on the plantation. The authorities concluded that the conditions on the plantation resembled slavery, and that the workers were victims of human trafficking.

The case of the two boys shows that children are still picking Brazilian coffee in 2015, even though the problem of child labour on Brazilian coffee plantations has been significantly ameliorated over the course of the last decade.

60,000 children under 14 years old

In July and August 2015, Brazilian authorities freed a total of 128 workers from conditions analogous to slavery on five coffee plantations in southern Minas Gerais, including six children and teenagers under 18 years of age.

The children, who were freed by the Brazilian authorities in their struggle against slavery-like conditions in the country, account for only a tiny fraction of the children who work picking coffee on Brazilian plantations.

Brazilian authorities lack precise figures to document how many children are actually working on the country's coffee plantations. The largest coffee-producing state, Minas Gerais, is third in the national rankings of children working in agriculture, according to statistics from 2013 by the Brazilian government research agency, IBGE.

In the same year, however, the state of Minas Gerais tied for first place in the number of children under 14 working in agriculture. In all, according to IBGE, in the year 2013, 116,000 children aged 5 to 17 years worked in agriculture in Minas Gerais, where half of all Brazil's coffee is farmed, including 60,000 children under 14.

Illegal for children under 16 to pick coffee

It is illegal for children under 16 years old to work on coffee plantations, although teenagers between 16 and 18 years old may do so as long as it does not interfere with their schooling. See the Brazilian labour code (CLT, Article 403): www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/De15452.htm

A declining problem

Many of the coffee pickers Danwatch encountered during the 2015 harvest in Brazil began working on coffee plantations when they were children, some when they were as young as 7 years old.

Elaine Noronha Nassif is a labour attorney and a public prosecutor in Brazil who has investigated labour conditions for coffee workers. She says that children often used to help their parents with the harvest on coffee plantations, causing them to miss school.

In the last ten years, the number of children working in the agriculture sector in Minas Gerais has decreased by more than half. In 2003, IBGE estimated this number at 264,000 children aged 5 to 17; in 2013, it was only 116,000. "Since the government social programme Bolsa Família was introduced, the number of child labourers has decreased significantly", says Nassif.

Bolsa Família was begun by the Brazilian government in 2003 under President Luiz Inácio da Silva, also known as Lula. The programme gives financial help to Brazil's poorest families on the condition that their children attend school and receive vaccinations.

"Parents are now much more focused on keeping their children in school", says Nassif.

Child labour still exists

Even though the problem is abating, child labour is far from eradicated on Brazilian coffee plantations.

"The problem still exists", says Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho, coordinator for the social movement Articulação dos Empregados Rurais de Minas Gerais, known as Adere. His work consists of driving around to coffee plantations, speaking with workers, and notifying the authorities when he uncovers breaches of law. According to Santos, children work on about one out of every five plantations he has visited.

"It's not as bad as it was five years ago", he says, explaining that the incidence of child labour on coffee plantations varies from municipality to municipality depending on how active the local labour union is and on how many inspections are carried out by authorities in the area.

Fewer children under sixteen

Santos says that children are typically brought to the plantations by their parents, who are working in the coffee harvest. Some parents pay for a babysitter, but other times the children work alongside their parents.

"Some of the children go to school while they work the harvest, while others work instead of going to school", says Santos.

Usually the children are given the job of picking coffee, since that is the easiest task. But sometimes they do other jobs as well, like drying the coffee beans.

"Yesterday, five children under the age of 16 were found working on a coffee plantation", says Santos. The youngest child he



Two boys, aged 14 and 15, are liberated from slavery-like working conditions on a coffee plantation in Southern Minas Gerais. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

remembers encountering in recent years was 9 years old and worked drying coffee on a plantation in 2013.

The labour union FETAEMG organises coffee and other harvest workers in the coffee state of Minas Gerais. According to Flávia Heliene de Castro, president of FETAEMG's local branch in Santo Antônio do Amparo, child labour is most prevalent on so-called Mutirões, plantations that are only harvested on weekends, often without contracts or protective equipment. These days, according to de Castro, most children that work the coffee harvest, whether on weekend plantations or regular plantations, are over 16 years old.

Combating child labour

The reasons that child labour has fallen on coffee plantations, according to Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho, are that unions have begun to take the problem more seriously, and that government social programmes like Bolsa Família encourage parents to keep their children in school.

He believes that in order to combat child labour on Brazilian coffee plantations, the government should both develop additional

social programmes to help the country's poorest families and see to it that plantation owners who employ children are punished more severely.

"If they are caught employing children, they should get a steeper fine than they do today", says Santos.

The current fine is 788 reais (about \$190) per child found working on the plantation. The amount is equal to one month's minimum wage.

Child labour in Brazilian agriculture

IBGE (The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), a Brazilian government research agency, suggests that in 2013, 997,000 children between the ages of 5 and 17 worked in Brazilian agriculture. Of these, 464,000 were under 14 years old. www.sidra.ibge.gov.br



Warning sign at the entrance to the pesticide storage facility at a Brazilian coffee plantation. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

13: Brazilian coffee is sprayed with deadly pesticides

In Brazil, coffee may be sprayed with pesticides that are illegal in the EU because they are acutely toxic and cause disease. Many workers apply pesticides without sufficient protective equipment, and pesticide poisoning is widespread. Even the drinking water contains traces of these dangerous pesticides.

Skin contact with the chemical known as terbufos can kill you. Symptoms of poisoning are involuntary muscle contractions, drooling, visual disorders, reduced coordination, dizziness, vomiting, difficulty breathing and loss of consciousness. In the EU, it is illegal to use pesticides that contain terbufos because the chemical is so toxic. On Brazilian coffee plantations, however, it can be used to fight insects.

Half of all the coffee produced in Brazil comes from the state of Minas Gerais. In 2014, over 364,000 kg of pesticides containing terbufos were sold in the three regions of the state that are home to the most coffee plantations. Terbufos is just one of thirty active pesticide ingredients that are prohibited in the EU, but approved by Brazilian authorities for use on Brazilian coffee plantations. Tons of chemicals like aldicarb, fenprothrin and carbuforan, which European authorities have determined to be too dangerous to workers and to the environment, were sold in 2014 in the three regions of Minas Gerais state where the majority of its coffee plantations are located.

“These chemicals are outlawed in the EU because they are extremely toxic and can cause serious acute and long-term health problems”, says Erik Jørs, a senior consultant on the Clinic of Occupational and Environmental Medicine at the University Hospital and the University of Southern Denmark in Odense, who has spent many years studying the use of pesticides in developing countries.

“Many of the chemicals are neurotoxins that affect both insects and humans”, says Jørs, explaining that researchers suspect that the substances damage reproductive systems and cause Parkinson’s-like symptoms such as coordination problems and trembling hands.

Risk of cancer

The chemicals that are sprayed on Brazilian coffee are not only acutely toxic; some of them may also cause cancer. One of the most common herbicides used on Brazilian coffee plantations is glyphosate, which is sold under the brand name Roundup and used around the world as a weed killer.

In the three regions of Minas Gerais state where most of its coffee plantations are located, 1,800 tons plus 18,000,000 litres of glyphosate were sold in 2014. In March 2015, the World Health Organisation (WHO) changed its classification of glyphosate to “probably carcinogenic to humans”, in part because the chemical has been shown to cause cancer in research animals.

Glyphosate’s dangers include damage to DNA, according to Fabio Gomes, an expert working at the Brazilian National Cancer Institute (INCA).

“Even in small doses, glyphosate can cause cancer twenty to thirty years later”, says Gomes.

The question of whether glyphosate causes cancer is still debated, and in November 2015, the European Food Safety Administra-



Even though protective equipment is required by law, many workers apply pesticides on Brazilian coffee plantations without it. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

tion determined that the chemical is unlikely to damage DNA or to cause cancer in humans.

Applying pesticides without protection

Even though workers on Brazilian coffee plantations are handling toxic, disease-causing pesticides, they often apply them without or with insufficient protective equipment, according to experts, coffee workers, and union officials.

Several of the coffee workers encountered by Danwatch during the harvest described how they applied pesticides wearing their own clothes and without necessary protective equipment.

Coffee worker Elisabete Vitor da Costa is helping to coordinate an awareness campaign about pesticides on coffee plantations in Minas Gerais. She lives in the city of Três Corações in southern Minas Gerais, in a neighbourhood that is home to many of the area's coffee workers. She says that it is very rare that workers wear all the necessary protective gear when they are applying pesticides.

"There are about 700 coffee plantations in Três Corações and São Bento Abade. I have seen only one plantation where the workers wore protective equipment", she says. Another problem, according to Costa, is that workers are not properly trained to use the pesticides before they are required to spray them on plants or soil.

Eduardo Garcia Garcia is a pesticide expert and researcher at the Brazilian research institute Fundacentro, which is affiliated with

the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. According to him, there are plenty of laws in place that require workers to wear protective equipment when applying pesticides.

"The problem is a lack of compliance", he says.

Handkerchiefs instead of masks

Proper protective equipment should primarily keep workers from inhaling the chemicals and from getting drops of it on their skin. Equipment regulations depend on the type of product being applied, how poisonous it is, and whether it is in powder or liquid form, as well as on the type of plant being sprayed (whether it is a tall or short plant, has many or few leaves, etc.). Pesticides are labelled with a description of the necessary protective equipment, but according to Garcia, these recommendations are very general and do not take the aforementioned considerations into account. Usually, the product labels recommend that workers should wear a long-sleeved shirt, gloves, hat, face mask, glasses and boots.

"The recommendations seldom take heat and the risk of dehydration into consideration. As a result, workers often fail to use all the equipment, and improvise instead", says Garcia.

Rodrigo Carvalho Fernandes, an inspector from Instituto Mineiro de Agropecuária (IMA), the state agricultural institute in Minas Gerais, agrees. IMA carries out inspections related to the use of pesticides on coffee plantations.

"The workers often don't want to use the safety equipment



Coffee worker Francisco Paulo Pereira applied pesticides without protective equipment for years at a Brazilian coffee plantation. Today he is very sick.
Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

because it has a tendency to be uncomfortable and hot”, says Fernandes.

According to Eduardo Garcia Garcia from Fundacentro, it's also a question of money. “Instead of using expensive gloves, they may use a plastic bag to cover their hand, or a handkerchief to cover their mouth and nose. This gives a false sense of security. The poison gets into the material. A handkerchief can actually do even more harm than good, since it spreads the poison around on the skin.”

Garcia thinks that it's problematic to focus only on the responsibility of workers to use the correct protective equipment.

Brazilian Law – pesticides and protective equipment

According to a regulation by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment, employers are responsible for providing workers with protective equipment that corresponds to the level of risk to which the employee is exposed. The employer is also responsible for ensuring that the protective equipment is properly cleaned and in good working order before being used again; for prohibiting workers from applying pesticides while wearing their own clothes; and for educating workers about the correct handling of pesticides. www.guiatrabalhista.com.br/legislacao/nr/nr31.htm#31.8_Agrotoxicos,_Adjuvantes_e_Produtos_Afins__

Meanwhile, workers' resistance to the equipment is not the only problem, if you ask the largest agricultural labour union in Minas Gerais, the Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura do Estado de Minas Gerais (FETAEMG).

“Some plantations simply do not offer it”, says FETAEMG's leader, Vilson Luiz da Silva.

Nothing protects 100 %

Even if the workers wear all the approved protective equipment, they cannot be sure they are safe.

“The problem is that no kind of safety equipment protects you 100 percent. The equipment reduces the impact of pesticides, but it does not eliminate it”, says Eduardo Garcia Garcia from Fundacentro.

“We don't believe that protective equipment solves the problem”, says Fabio Gomes from the Brazilian National Cancer Institute (INCA). He explains that when it comes to cancer risk, even small doses over a long period of time can be problematic.

Pesticide poisoning is widespread

The use of acutely toxic pesticides leads to pesticide poisonings and deaths in the coffee state of Minas Gerais. The latest numbers from Brazil's national toxicological information system, Sistema Nacional de Informações Tóxico-Farmacológicas (Sinitox), record 21 deaths and 817 poisonings caused by agricultural pesticides in Minas Gerais in 2012.

According to Dr Jandira Maciel da Silva from INCA, an expert in pesticides and farm workers, the hidden numbers are considerable. “Many cases are never reported”, she says.

A survey of coffee workers taken in southern Minas Gerais in 2011 hints at the scope of the problem. Out of a group of 412 workers, 59 percent experienced at least one typical symptom of pesticide poisoning. The study was carried out by researchers from the Universidade Federal de Itajubá in Minas Gerais.

“Many coffee workers complain of dizziness and stomach pain”, says Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho of the organisation Articulação dos Empregados Rurais de Minas Gerais (Adere), which works to improve conditions for coffee workers. Santos has also noticed an increasing incidence of rash on workers’ arms.

When she harvested coffee, the skin on Marluce Silva Braz’s hands began to burn and develop fluid-filled blisters that later turned into open sores.

Many of the other coffee workers in Braz’s neighbourhood in Três Corações in southern Minas Gerais have symptoms like dizziness, nausea, difficulty breathing and stomach pain.

Sixty-three-year-old Goncalo de Sousa Barbosa, who for years applied pesticides without protective equipment, reports difficulty breathing and episodes of dizziness. Others who worked with pesticides have trouble walking and describe feeling like their feet are asleep.

According to Dr Jandira Maciel da Silva, pesticides have been linked to a wide range of other serious health problems.

“A pervasive problem among farm workers, including coffee workers, who are exposed to pesticides is the incidence of children with birth defects”, she says, adding that miscarriages, suicide and fertility problems also appear to be correlated with pesticide exposure.

Coffee pickers get rashes on their hands and arms. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.





Coffee picker Marluce Silva Braz got a severe rash on her arms when she harvested coffee on a Brazilian coffee plantation. The fabric gloves she wore did not protect her. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

Increased risk of cancer

When coffee workers experience symptoms of acute pesticide poisoning like dizziness, stomach pain, tremors, sweating and headache while they are applying pesticides, it is not very difficult to demonstrate a connection between the pesticides and the symptoms. It is much more challenging to do so when illness first arises days, months or years later.

“It is very difficult to prove causality between the use of pesticides and cancer, because cancer takes so many years to develop”, says Eduardo Garcia Garcia from Fundacentro.

Fabio Gomes from INCA describes similar difficulties when trying to measure the connection between cancer and pesticides. He says that the number of unreported cases is very high because it is rarely noted that a cancer patient has a risk factor like pesticide exposure.

“When you speak to health personnel in agricultural areas where the use of pesticides is increasing, they report that the incidence of cancer is also increasing. They see a connection, but it is very difficult to prove it in a scientific way”, he says.

In 2007 his colleague at INCA, Dr Jandira Maciel da Silva, was able to show a correlation between cancer and the pesticides that are used by agricultural workers in southern Minas Gerais. Her study showed that workers who had been exposed to pesticides that are used on coffee and other crops were four times more likely to develop lymphoma.

“The study showed a significant correlation between cancer and work on coffee plantations, mainly among those who applied pesticides, but also among temporary workers who picked coffee at the harvest,” says Silva.

Family members also at risk

Workers on coffee plantations are not the only ones who risk illness as a result of contact with pesticides. They may also expose their families to small amounts of the dangerous chemicals when they come home from work in the same clothing they wore while applying pesticides.

“New research has shown that workers who bring their equipment home to wash it expose women (in the home, ed.) to the poisons. A lack of awareness about these things is a serious and widespread problem”, says Garcia from Fundacentro.

“The workers often put their pesticide-contaminated work clothes in with the rest of their laundry. They just take a bath when they come back from their plantation work, and usually don’t take any other precautions”, says Dr Silva from INCA.

Drinking water from pesticide containers

Another problem is that empty pesticide bottles are sometimes used for other, dangerous purposes.

Before Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho became a coordinator and advocate for coffee workers with the organisation Adere, he was a coffee worker himself. Today he travels around to coffee plantations, reporting irregularities to the authorities.

“Often, workers will take a five-litre pesticide container down to the river to get drinking water”, he says.

Years ago, when he worked on coffee plantations, Jorge Ferreira dos Santos Filho also used to drink from empty pesticide bottles. He didn’t know that it could be dangerous.

Rodrigo Carvalho Fernandes, one of the agricultural inspectors from IMA in Minas Gerais, says that, earlier, empty pesticide con-

tainers were frequently used to store drinking water without being properly cleaned first.

“This issue has improved somewhat,” but irregularities still remain, he says.

According to coffee worker and pesticide-awareness campaigner Elisabete Vitor da Costa, it is still quite common for people to use empty pesticide bottles to store drinking water or milk.

Traces of dangerous pesticides in waterways

Ordinary people who live near coffee plantations also risk ingesting small doses of dangerous pesticides. Once pesticides have been sprayed on plants, rain washes some of the chemicals into the earth and onwards into streams and rivers, where they pollute the environment.

In 2013, Alexandra Fátima Saraiva Soares, a Brazilian civil and sanitation engineer and PhD who studies pesticides and water contamination, published as part of a team of researchers an investigation into pesticide residues in waterways near coffee plantations in Manhuaçu, Minas Gerais. In their water samples, the researchers found traces of twenty-four different pesticides, including the acutely toxic substance terbufos, which is outlawed in the EU. Terbufos is used to kill insects. If the chemical is being rinsed into rivers and waterways, it will also kill insects and water-dwelling animals there.

The EU’s official classification says Terbufos is “very toxic to aquatic life with long lasting effects”.

According to Soares, water purification facilities are not able to remove pesticide residues, and she worries that they may pollute the drinking water in local homes.

“We do not know the health effects of exposure to low concentrations of pesticides over long periods of time”, she says.

How we investigated the use of dangerous pesticides

- In addition to interviews with coffee workers, experts and trade unions, Danwatch consulted the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture’s database of pesticides approved for coffee cultivation:

agrofit.agricultura.gov.br/agrofit_cons/principal_agrofit_cons

- Next, Danwatch compared the active ingredients in pesticides approved for Brazilian coffee cultivation with the EU’s classification of pesticides:

ec.europa.eu/sanco_pesticides/public/?event=homepage&language=EN.

- Danwatch is therefore able to say with certainty that many of the pesticides that may be used on Brazilian coffee plantations are classified by the EU as acutely toxic, and are forbidden in the EU.

- Danwatch was then given access to a database compiled by the authorities of the coffee state of Minas Gerais that documents pesticide sales, enabling us to see how much of the dangerous pesticides were sold in the three regions of Minas Gerais where the majority of coffee plantations are located.



Ronaldo Vicente Antonio has to use a cane when he walks. His feet are numb, and he cannot control the movement of his hands. For many years, he applied pesticides on a Brazilian coffee plantation without sufficient protective equipment. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

14: “My wife has to button my shirts for me”

For more than 20 years, coffee worker Ronaldo Vicente Antonio applied pesticides. From time to time, he got some on his hands, and wore the same work clothes for days at a time without washing them. He had to stop working when his feet became numb and his hands would no longer obey him.

Ronaldo Vicente Antonio used to live on a coffee plantation with his wife and four children. He worked there year-round, planting coffee bushes, picking coffee, and drying beans. Every April, he would apply pesticides.

“I sprayed every day, starting in the early morning”.

It took hours, and sometimes the whole day, he says. He carried the pesticides in a dispenser on his back. He was never given instruction in how to handle the chemicals, he says.

“There was no training. The plantation owner’s son just told me, ‘Here’s the sprayer, and here’s the product. Go ahead and spray’”.

He wore his own rubber boots, along with ordinary clothes and a cloth hat that covered his neck. The plantation supplied him with a pair of plastic dishwashing gloves and a paper hospital mask. He used the same mask several days in a row. Sometimes the plantation ran out of masks, and he had to buy his own.

“I wore the same clothes two or three days in a row”, says Antonio. “There wasn’t time to wash them because the employee who had the afternoon shift had to use them, too.”

Today he struggles to walk and to coordinate the movement of his hands.

Took off gloves to rinse the pump

Like several other coffee workers Danwatch encountered, Antonio doesn’t know exactly what kind of chemicals he was spraying. He remembers applying the herbicide Roundup, as well as two pesticides that were sometimes mixed together. He did not know the reason the individual products were applied, nor what they were meant to prevent. He did think they were probably dange-

rous, however.

“I had heard that there could be problems with the pesticides, but I had to work”, Antonio says.

The pump for the pesticides often became clogged, and nothing would come out.

“I had to take my gloves off to rinse the pump out, so I got the pesticides on my hands”, he explains.

Feet started to feel numb

After working for almost twenty years, Ronaldo Vicente Antonio’s feet began to feel numb.

“It felt like they were asleep”, he says. His legs weakened and hurt, and after a while the symptoms spread to his hands as well. He calls them ‘silly hands’. They won’t do what he wants them to. He has no strength in them and has a hard time coordinating their movement.

“Nowadays my wife has to button my shirt for me”, says Antonio.

When the symptoms began, he had a harder time doing his work on the coffee plantation, and became less productive.

“In the beginning, I didn’t worry, but then it became so painful that I couldn’t work. I was afraid that I might lose my job, because I had children to provide for”, he says.

“My bosses got mad.”

After many arguments, Antonio wanted to leave the plantation, but he didn’t know where to go or what to do, because he had lived there for many years and had no other home for his family. After several months of negotiations, he and his family left the

plantation in 2005. At that time, the youngest of his four children was 12 years old.

Roof sealed with garbage bags

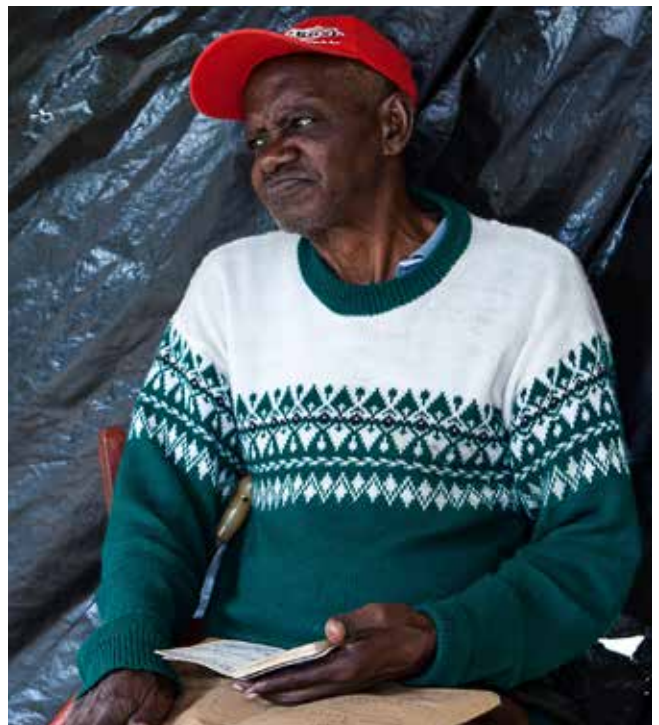
Today, ten years later, 74-year-old Ronaldo Vicente Antonio lives with his family in a dilapidated house where they have permission to live for free. In the bedroom, the roof is sealed with black garbage bags to keep out the rain and the cold, and the walls are covered in mould and mildew.

“It’s not a good house, but we don’t have any other home”, says his wife, Maria das Dores Antonio. She is angry that her husband worked for so many years on the plantation and now has nothing to show for it.

Antonio supports himself with a brown cane as he slowly and unsteadily puts one foot in front of the other. He says that he can no longer carry anything, because his legs give way underneath him.

Antonio’s doctor has told him that the problems in his legs are caused by osteoarthritis, but he has not ventured a diagnosis regarding Antonio’s hands. The doctor has never asked about his work with pesticides, and Antonio wonders to himself what could have caused his illness.

“I don’t know if it’s because of the pesticides,” he says. “I can’t help thinking that I might be healthy today if I hadn’t taken that job. But I had to do it to provide for my family. You have to accept what the gods give you”.



*Every year in April, Ronaldo Vicente Antonio applied pesticides on a coffee plantation. He never received training in how to apply the chemicals.
Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.*



Every year, the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment liberates workers from slavery-like conditions on Brazilian coffee plantations. Photo: Danwatch.

15: Slavery-like working conditions at suppliers to world's largest coffee company

Coffee giant Nestlé confirms it bought coffee from two plantations where Brazilian authorities liberated workers from slavery-like conditions in 2015. Furthermore, both Nestlé and its competitor Jacobs Douwe Egberts have sold coffee from suppliers who sourced from plantations with working conditions analogous to slavery. Coffee produced under slavery-like conditions may also have ended up in the supply chains of other major players in the coffee industry.

Debt bondage, IOUs instead of wages, non-existent work contracts, lack of protective equipment, and lodging in houses without doors, mattresses or access to clean drinking water.

Many coffee workers in Brazil work under illegal conditions, and every year authorities liberate coffee workers whose working conditions qualify under the Brazilian criminal code as “analogous to slavery.”

Danwatch has accompanied Brazilian authorities on inspections, gained insight via confidential inspection reports, and investigated the supply chains of some of the world's largest international coffee companies.

Based on this reporting, Danwatch can now document that coffee from plantations with slavery-like conditions has on several occasions been bought and re-sold by middlemen from whom international coffee companies purchase their coffee. In two cases, Danwatch can also document that the world's largest coffee company, Nestlé, bought coffee from specific plantations where workers were freed from conditions analogous to slavery in 2015.

Nestlé and JDE concede

Together, Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) make up about

40 percent of global retail coffee sales. Following Danwatch's investigation, both firms concede that beans from plantations that have been on the so-called “dirty list” may have ended up in their coffee. Plantations are placed on the dirty list when the Brazilian authorities discover that their employees are exposed to conditions analogous to slavery.

Nestlé has also confirmed to Danwatch that the company bought coffee from two specific plantations from which the Brazilian authorities freed workers from slavery-like conditions in the summer of 2015.

Nestlé, the global firm behind brands like Nescafé, Nespresso, Dolce Gusto, Taster's Choice and Coffee Mate, disclosed in a written reply to Danwatch that deliveries from the two plantations in question have been suspended “until the government investigation is closed.”

JDE: No guarantees

Both Nestlé and JDE purchase Brazilian coffee via exporters without knowing the names of all the plantations that grow their coffee. This makes it hard for the companies to ensure that they are not buying coffee that has been picked under conditions analogous to slavery.

By volume, JDE is the biggest player in the global coffee market and is known for brands such as Gevalia, Senseo, Jacobs, Maxwell House and Tassimo. In a written communication to Danwatch, JDE admits that the company cannot guarantee that their products are free from coffee picked under slavery-like conditions.

“Due to the nature of how coffee is traded, we cannot guarantee that there are no labour-related issues on each and every farm in Brazil from which coffee is sold to cooperatives, exporters, traders, and eventually to us.”

Contradictory statements from Nestlé

Danwatch also asked Nestlé if the firm can guarantee that coffee from plantations that have been on the “dirty list” because of slavery-like working conditions has not ended up in products sold by Nestlé. At first, Nestlé answered “Yes” to this question.

However, Nestlé sells some of its coffee to McDonald’s. After questioning from Danwatch, McDonald’s asked Nestlé to verify that the plantations with conditions analogous to slavery are not in their supply chain.

In its answer to McDonald’s, obtained by Danwatch, Nestlé writes, “Nestlé does not purchase coffee beans from ‘blacklisted’ plantations, but produce from these farms sold to sub-suppliers could form part of our supply chain.”

On the one hand, Nestlé guarantees Danwatch that coffee from plantations that have been on the “dirty list” has not ended up in Nestlé products, but on the other hand, it tells McDonald’s that this may indeed be the case.

When asked why it made these conflicting statements, Nestlé did not answer directly, telling Danwatch, “It is probably just a question of timing.”

The investigation carried out by Danwatch has documented that one of Nestlé’s own suppliers does not know whether its shipments contained coffee from one specific plantation on the dirty list. Danwatch asked how this fact conforms to its original guarantee that no beans from listed plantations have ended up in Nestlé’s coffee.

Once again, Nestlé did not answer directly, writing instead, “On the basis of this survey, we acknowledge that there remains more to do to address labour issues in Brazil’s coffee supply chain and are grateful to Danwatch for drawing these matters to our attention.”

McDonald’s and Dunkin’ Donuts

Other large international players in the coffee market, such as Starbucks, Illy, Mother Parkers, McDonald’s and Dunkin’ Donuts, have confirmed to Danwatch that they have purchased coffee via cooperatives and/or middlemen that have done business with Brazilian plantations where authorities have liberated workers from slavery-like conditions.

Starbucks and Illy affirm that they know the names of each in-

dividual plantation from which they purchase coffee via their middlemen. On that basis, the two companies guarantee that coffee from the plantations named by Danwatch with slavery-like working conditions has not ended up in their products.

Slavery-like conditions in 2015

Danwatch has studied one by one a number of coffee plantations where authorities found slavery-like conditions in an attempt to trace the coffee’s path from individual plantations, through cooperatives and exporters, to the international coffee market.

With the help of judicial rulings, publications from coffee cooperatives, and shipping data, Danwatch was able to assemble a detailed description of the route taken by coffee from plantations with slavery-like conditions to coffee companies.

One of these stories began during the coffee harvest, in July 2015, when inspectors from the Brazilian Ministry of Employment and Labour liberated workers on two coffee plantations in the country’s largest coffee-producing state, Minas Gerais.

On the coffee plantation Fazenda Lagoa, inspectors freed nineteen migrant workers from the neighbouring state of Bahia.

According to a confidential inspection report obtained by Danwatch, the migrant workers came to the plantation on June 12, 2015. The plantation owner collected their official work documents the same day, but he had not returned them to the workers when the inspectors arrived on the plantation a month later, which is illegal. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the withholding of identity papers is an indicator of forced labour. Even though the plantation owner had withheld

Danwatch’s documentation

- Danwatch participated in an inspection that liberated seventeen men, women and children from conditions analogous to slavery on a coffee plantation in Minas Gerais, Brazil, during the 2015 harvest. The Brazilian authorities determined that the workers were victims of human trafficking.
- Danwatch has obtained more than fifteen confidential reports from the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment describing instances of slavery-like conditions on Brazilian coffee plantations.
- Danwatch is in possession of materials, including documents from legal proceedings, export documents and coffee cooperative publications, that describe how coffee farmed under slavery-like conditions was sold.
- Danwatch sent surveys to Brazilian coffee cooperatives, international coffee exporters, and large international coffee companies and brands in order to document where coffee from the plantations with slavery-like conditions ended up.



*A coffee worker composes himself after being liberated from slavery-like conditions on a Brazilian coffee plantation during the coffee harvest in July 2015.
Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.*

the workers' documents, he had not completed and signed them, meaning that his employees were working without official contracts and without the ability to accrue the rights to social benefits like unemployment compensation and pensions. In addition, the workers were only supplied with some of the protective equipment required by law, and lacked access to clean drinking water.

On the other plantation, Fazenda da Pedra, inspectors freed twenty-two workers, many of them from Bahia state, according to the confidential report obtained by Danwatch. Here, the squalid living conditions on the plantation were the biggest problem. There were no doors to the workers' bedrooms. In two of the three buildings, there was no refrigerator, whereas in the third, the interior of the filthy refrigerator contained a large pool of blood. Lacking facilities to keep their food cold, the workers had hung pieces of meat with string in an attempt to cure them with salt. The workers had no access to clean drinking water. Only one of the buildings had a water purification filter, but it had not been properly cleaned, and the water in the tank was clouded with mud.

Nestlé confirms that it purchased coffee via export firm Carmo Coffees from both Fazenda Lagoa and Fazenda da Pedra, where Brazilian authorities found conditions analogous to slavery in summer 2015.

Nestlé has suspended sourcing from the two plantations until the authorities' investigation is completed.

Nestlé did not observe problems

Nestlé's agronomists visited Fazenda Lagoa in August 2015 and Fazenda da Pedra in August 2014, but according to Nestlé, these visits "did not reveal any misconduct". Danwatch asked Nestlé how it could be that its agents did not observe the problems

noted by the inspectors: the workers' lack of contracts, the withholding of employees' work documents, the lack of protective equipment, the lack of doors in employees' lodgings, and the lack of clean drinking water.

Nestlé responded, "Since the harvest season was already over, temporary workers were not present and houses were empty. Moreover, our August 2015 visit to the Fazenda da Lagoa farm did not reveal any evidence of misconduct as the farmer is very likely to have already taken corrective action to address the issues brought to light by the local authorities in their audit earlier in the year."

Coffee from the two plantations where inspectors found conditions analogous to slavery in 2015 may also have been purchased by other brands. The coffee cooperative Cocarive told Danwatch that it had sold coffee from the plantations in question until the farms were inspected by the Ministry of Labour and Employment; Cocarive has now suspended both plantations. Cocarive's clients include the coffee exporter Volcafe. Volcafe confirmed this, acknowledging that it cannot guarantee that it did not resell coffee from Fazenda Lagoa and Fazenda da Pedra, and assuring Danwatch that Volcafe will begin an internal investigation based on Danwatch's inquiries.

Danwatch's research shows that Volcafe supplies coffee to JDE. We therefore asked JDE whether it can guarantee that no coffee from Fazenda Lagoa or Fazenda da Pedra made it into the products sold by JDE and its brands.

JDE did not answer this question, instead stating generally that, "It is a long and complex supply chain, with an estimated 260,000 farmers and, despite our best efforts, it is possible that coffee from coffee farms in Brazil with poor labour conditions has found its way into our supply chain."

Placed on the dirty list by authorities in 2014

In 2014, Brazilian coffee plantation owner Eduardo Barbosa de Mello was placed on the dirty list for violating Article 149 of the Brazilian criminal code, which states that it is illegal to subject persons to conditions that resemble slavery. According to records of the fines assessed to Mello, Brazilian government inspectors freed twenty-seven workers from his plantation. The workers lacked both contracts and mandatory safety equipment. In addition, Mello violated regulations regarding both the monthly payment of wages and guidelines for suitable worker housing: employers must provide beds, mattresses, bed sheets and closets, as well as separate accommodations for men and women.

The plantation owner was also fined because the workers did not have access to clean drinking water, to toilets at their workplace, or to a place where they could eat their lunch that was sheltered from wind and rain. Finally, according to these records, machines without proper safety systems were used on the plantation, and the rules requiring the storage of pesticides were ignored (they must be at least thirty metres away from employee housing and from places where food, water and medicine are stored).

Sales continue despite listing

Danwatch's investigation revealed that Mello sells coffee via one of Brazil's largest coffee cooperatives, Cooperativa dos Cafeicultores da Zona de Três Pontas (Cocatrel), on whose audit committee he used to sit. Cocatrel confirmed to Danwatch in an email in September 2015 that Mello is still a member and is still selling coffee via the cooperative, despite the discovery of conditions analogous to slavery on his plantation and his subsequent placement on the dirty list in 2014.

The coffee collective Cocatrel resells its members' coffee to international coffee exporters that supply coffee brands around the world. Coffee from Cocatrel's members has been sold to several large international exporters that supply Brazilian coffee to Nestlé and JDE; Danwatch has confirmed with exporters Tristão Companhia de Comércio Exterior (Tristão), Cooperativa Regional de Cafeicultores em Guaxupé (Cooxupé) and Volcafe that they buy coffee from Cocatrel.

After questioning by Danwatch, Tristão contacted Cocatrel to find out if Tristão had bought coffee from Eduardo Barbosa de Mello via the cooperative. Based on these inquiries, Tristão can affirm that no coffee from Mello's plantation has been resold by Tristão in the last five years.

Neither Cooxupé nor Volcafe was able to make guarantees that they had not bought and resold coffee from the plantation owned by Mello where slavery-like conditions were found.

In their reply to Danwatch, Volcafe writes, "Cocatrel is one of the largest cooperatives in Brazil, comprising several thousand individual farmers and plantations. Cocatrel receives over a million bags of coffee each year from these several thousand farmers. I can confirm we bought coffee from Cocatrel between 2008 and 2015 but have yet to receive any evidence that the coffee we bought from Cocatrel included coffee from Eduardo Barbosa de Mello's plantation."

Volcafe, meanwhile, says it takes Danwatch's information regarding its supply chain "very seriously," and has initiated an internal investigation to shed light on the subject.

Cooxupé advises that it buys coffee from Cocatrel, but that it has no mechanisms in place to investigate which members of Cocatrel it buys its coffee from. Cocatrel is therefore not able to rule out that it may have purchased coffee from Eduardo Barbosa de Mello's plantation, where employees worked under conditions analogous to slavery.

In answer to Danwatch's question as to whether Cooxupé can guarantee that it did not resell coffee from Mello, Cooxupé said, "Cooxupé buys coffee from Cocatrel and not from individual members of this cooperative."

Cooxupé stated in addition that it will demand the ability to trace coffee bought from Cocatrel in the future, to ensure it does not come from coffee producers on Brazil's dirty list.

May have been sold to Nestlé and JDE

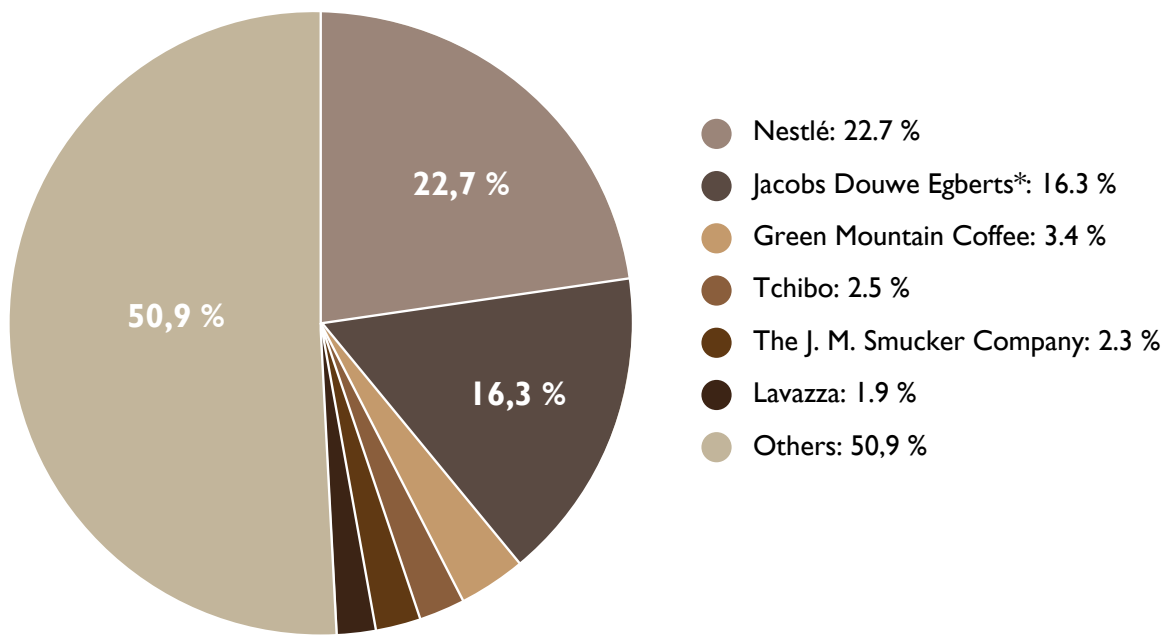
Nestlé has confirmed to Danwatch that it buys coffee from middlemen Cooxupé, Volcafe and Tristão, all of whom purchase from the Cocatrel cooperative, which has continued to sell coffee produced by Eduardo Barbosa de Mello despite the fact that inspectors found conditions analogous to slavery on his plantation, and despite his inclusion in 2014 on the dirty list by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Slavery-like conditions put you on the dirty list

Until December 2014, owners of coffee plantations at which the Brazilian authorities found conditions analogous to slavery were placed on a 'dirty list', called the *lista suja*, published by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. In December 2014, the dirty list was temporarily removed from the website of the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment because an organisation representing the Brazilian construction industry (Associação Brasileira de Incorporadoras Imobiliárias) sued for its removal in the Supreme Federal Court of Brazil. As long as the suit is in progress – which could take years – the list will not be published on the website of the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Nevertheless, an alternative dirty list, based on exactly the same information about the labour ministry's inspections, is still published by the National Pact for the Eradication of Slave Labour and Repórter Brasil, a Brazilian NGO. If after two years, a listed plantation owner has paid all court-ordered fines and has not subjected employees to slavery-like conditions again, the owner is removed from the list.

The dirty list: reporterbrasil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/listadetransparencia_setembro_20151.pdf

Coffee companies' share of global coffee sales, 2013



*Based on the combined 2013 market shares of Mondelez and D. E. Master Blenders, which merged to form Jacobs Douwe Egberts in 2015.
 Sources: Statista, Euromonitor, Quartz qz.com/2014/05/meet-the-family-behind-the-worlds-biggest-new-coffee-company
 blog.euromonitor.com/2014/05/mondelez-and-de-master-blenders-to-combine-for-a-brand-new-coffee-future.html

Following requests for comment by Danwatch, Nestlé contacted its suppliers to find out whether coffee from Mello’s plantation was present in coffee sold by Nestlé.

According to Nestlé, Volcafe guarantees that it did not sell coffee from Mello’s plantation to Nestlé in 2014. Nestlé did not, however, answer Danwatch’s corresponding question about Cooxupé. Danwatch asked how Nestlé could guarantee that it did not obtain deliveries of Mello’s coffee from Cooxupé, when Cooxupé itself does not know whether it has bought coffee from Mello.

Nestlé did not answer directly, but responded instead, “Nestlé has zero tolerance for slavery. It is illegal and against everything we stand for. We are thus very concerned by serious allegations regarding potential instances of forced labour and poor labour conditions in some of Brazil’s coffee plantations.”

Nestlé and JDE account for nearly 40% of global retail coffee sales

Coffee is one of the world’s most-traded commodities, but despite its enormous sales, just two companies make up a significant portion of the global market. Sales by Nestlé and Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) accounted for 39% of the value of all retail coffee sales in 2013, putting them well ahead of their nearest competitors: JDE, in second place, had sales nearly five times larger than Green Mountain Coffee, in third place. Nestlé’s considerable market share is due largely to the company’s internationally dominant instant coffee brand, Nescafé, as well as its strong position in the pod coffee market. When measured by volume, however, Nestlé must cede its first-place spot to JDE, who sold 15.3% of the world’s retail coffee. Nestlé, with 10.8%, was in second place.

Nestlé also conceded, based on the results of the investigation carried out by Danwatch, that there remains more to be done to address labour issues in Brazil’s coffee supply chain.

JDE shares Danwatch’s concerns

Coffee from Mello’s plantation may also have ended up with Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE). Like Nestlé, JDE sells coffee it acquires from exporters who are supplied by Cocatrel, including both Cooxupé and Tristão. Danwatch’s research also shows that JDE buys coffee from Volcafe.

Danwatch has asked JDE whether it can guarantee that no coffee from Mello’s plantation, where workers experienced slavery-like conditions, was present in the products sold by JDE or any of its coffee brands. JDE did not answer this question, but replied instead with a general statement explaining that it cannot guarantee the absence of labour problems on every single coffee plantation that sells beans to cooperatives, exporters, and finally to JDE.

JDE writes that the company shares Danwatch’s concerns, and highlights a series of initiatives it has undertaken to ensure JDE contributes to the resolution of these problems. For example, JDE has asked all of its suppliers to describe how they ensure that they are not buying coffee from plantations on the dirty list.

Weak link in the chain to fast-food giants

The list of potential consumers of coffee from Mello’s plantation includes fast food chains McDonald’s and Dunkin’ Donuts. Both buy coffee from Canadian coffee distributor Mother Parkers, which is supplied by the Brazilian firm Cooxupé; as we have seen, Cooxupé is unable to confirm that it did not purchase Mello’s coffee.

Danwatch asked Mother Parkers whether the exporter can guarantee that no beans from Mello’s plantation have ended up in the coffee sold by Mother Parkers.

Mother Parkers did not answer Danwatch’s question, but in-

stead sent a general reply, saying that Cooxupé's control mechanisms ensure that the coffee it delivers to Mother Parkers and their customers does not come from plantations "either under suspicion or convicted of any activities deemed illegal under Brazilian law."

However, Cooxupé's reply to Danwatch indicates that it bought coffee from the Cocatrel cooperative, and knew neither which of Cocatrel's plantations it was buying from, nor whether the coffee could have come from Mello's plantation, on which employees worked under conditions analogous to slavery.

Based on these conflicting reports, Danwatch asked McDonald's and Dunkin' Donuts directly whether they can guarantee that they did not sell coffee from Mello's plantation. Dunkin' Donuts marked neither 'yes' nor 'no', but instead answered that it will continue to communicate its code of conduct to coffee suppliers.

McDonald's did not answer the question either, writing generally that it has been advised by its suppliers that slavery-like conditions are not present in the McDonald's supply chain, and making reference to the same guarantee from Cooxupé as Mother Parkers.

Starbucks and Illy confirm to Danwatch that they also purchase coffee from Cooxupé. However, Starbucks and Illy know the names of each plantation from which they buy coffee via Cooxupé, and so are able to guarantee that no coffee from Mello's plantation is present in Illy or Starbucks products.

Illy cited the problem of slavery-like conditions on Brazilian coffee plantations as one of the reasons it has committed to buying coffee only from farmers the company knows and visits regularly.

IOUs instead of wages

A survey of some of the other coffee plantations on which inspectors had found conditions analogous to slavery turned up evidence that these plantations had also sold coffee via middlemen who exported coffee to large international coffee brands.

Danwatch's investigation shows, for example, that plantation owner Paulo Roberto Bastos Viana, who was put on the dirty list by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment in 2013, sold coffee to Tristão Companhia de Comércio Exterior (Tristão), an exporter. In 2010, inspectors from the Brazilian labour authorities freed seventeen workers from Bastos Viana's coffee plantation.

Danwatch has obtained the confidential inspection report that describes how workers on this plantation were not given their wages in cash, but instead received chits indicating how much they had earned. Meanwhile, they ran up debts buying food at a shop on the plantation itself. The promised wage was under the legal minimum, and workers were housed in dilapidated buildings without beds or mattresses; some of the workers slept on the floor. In addition, the plantation owner had neither provided them with the mandatory safety equipment nor with access to clean drinking water.

Inspectors also found two teenage boys, aged 14 and 15, who were picking coffee on the plantation. In 2013, Bastos Viana was put on the dirty list by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment because the working conditions on his plantation were analogous to slavery.

Danwatch obtained the transcript of a legal proceeding showing that in September 2010 – about one month after inspectors

Coffee produced under slavery-like conditions may have ended up in the supply chains of major players in the coffee industry. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.





Men, women and children are liberated from slavery-like working conditions on a coffee plantation during the coffee harvest in July 2015 in Minas Gerais, Brazil. Photo: Maurilo Clareto Costa.

liberated workers on his plantation – Bastos Viana delivered coffee to Tristão. Tristão told Danwatch that it subsequently ended its business relationship with Bastos Viana. However, the coffee that was delivered in 2010, after the slavery-like conditions were discovered may have been sold to Nestlé and JDE, which both purchase coffee from Tristão.

Nestlé confirms that it purchased coffee from Tristão in 2010. Danwatch asked Nestlé for comment on the possibility that coffee produced under conditions analogous to slavery was sold by Nestlé.

Nestlé replied, “We are working closely with our suppliers to address these allegations as well as to proactively tackle these complex social and labour problems in our value chain.”

JDE confirmed in a general answer to Danwatch that it is possible that coffee produced on Brazilian plantations under poor working conditions has made its way into JDE’s supply chain.

Debt bondage and missing contracts

Danwatch’s research has shown that coffee from a plantation where workers were kept in debt bondage has been sold to yet another exporter that supplies international coffee brands.

The coffee export firm Outspan Brasil Importação e Exportação Ltda (Outspan), which supplies coffee to both Nestlé and JDE, confirms that it purchased coffee from Neuza Cirilo Perão, a plantation that was put on the dirty list by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment in June 2013 because the authorities found conditions analogous to slavery.

In December 2011, Perão contracted with Outspan to deliver 4700 sacks of coffee. This agreement was made after Brazilian authorities found conditions analogous to slavery, as well as serious breaches of Brazil’s labour code, on Perão’s plantation in 2009, according to legal transcripts obtained by Danwatch.

The inspection led to the release of twenty-one workers from a system of debt bondage in which expenses related to protective equipment, food and lodging were deducted from their pay. According to the confidential inspection report obtained by Danwatch, even if employees were prevented from working and earning money because of weather conditions, they still had to pay for food. Some of the workers told inspectors that their foreman threatened to prevent them from leaving the plantation if they did not pay their bills.

Fifteen of the twenty-one workers lacked official contracts. The workers were housed in buildings where holes gaped in walls and roofs, and where some made do without beds, sheets, or blankets. Based on the seriousness of the offenses, one of the plantation’s owners was sentenced to a term of 7 years and 6 months in an open prison. He appealed the verdict, and in 2015 his sentence was reduced to 4 years and 6 months.

Outspan informed Danwatch that it bought coffee from Neuza Cirilo Perão until 2012 – that is, for several years after the original inspections that brought the slavery-like conditions to light in 2009. Outspan says that it stopped buying coffee from the plantation in 2013, when it was put on the dirty list by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Nestlé was in touch with their suppliers after being contacted by Danwatch, and denies that Perão’s coffee could have ended up in products sold by Nestlé.

Danwatch also asked JDE if it can guarantee that Perão’s coffee was not sold by JDE or its coffee brands. JDE did not answer this question, but in a general response said that it is unable to guarantee that each and every one of the Brazilian plantations that sell coffee to the cooperatives and exporters that sell to JDE are free from labour related problems.

Slept on coffee sacks on the floor

In June 2013, plantation owner Joaquim Reis da Silva was put on the “dirty list” by the Brazilian Ministry of Labour and Employment. During an inspection in 2010, the authorities liberated seventeen workers from Silva’s coffee plantation. The inspection report obtained by Danwatch notes that none of the workers were given employment contracts or mandatory protective equipment. The workers were housed in miserable conditions, where some lacked beds and slept on coffee sacks on the floor.

According to a 2008 list from the Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply, Silva is a member of the coffee cooperative Cooxupé. Cooxupé confirms that Silva is a former member who used to sell coffee to the cooperative, but that it has not purchased from him since 2010. Cooxupé also asserts that it has expelled four of its members in the last few years.

Even though Cooxupé ended its collaboration with Silva in 2010, coffee from his plantation where illegal working conditions were found was sold until then to Cooxupé, which sells coffee to a wide range of international coffee brands.

The tip of the iceberg

Even though Danwatch has documented several instances in which coffee from plantations with conditions analogous to slavery could have ended up in products sold by large international coffee brands, the investigation only hints at the true scope of the problem.

Part of the challenge is that authorities do not have anywhere near the necessary resources to help all the workers that experience slavery-like conditions. According to the director of the ILO’s Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour in Brazil, Luiz Machado, they lack personnel and resources.

“Only about half of the cases in which workers report conditions analogous to slavery are inspected. The last fifty percent are never reached by the authorities”, he says.

At the same time, the cases of slavery-like conditions represent only some of the many problems faced by coffee workers on Brazilian plantations. Danwatch’s investigation revealed that problems like sub-minimum wages, ten-hour workdays, workplace accidents, lack of protective equipment, and wretched housing arrangements are commonplace.

One of the most widespread problems, according to Minas Gerais’s largest agricultural labour union, FETAEMG, is that about 40-50% of coffee pickers work without contracts registered in their *carteira de trabalho*, the official document that ensures workers earn the right to social benefits like sick pay, vacation pay, pension and unemployment compensation.

Dangerous pesticides and deficient safety equipment

Another serious problem is that the coffee raised in Brazil is sprayed with dangerous pesticides that are outlawed in the EU in part because they are classified as acutely toxic. Some of these pesticides are so poisonous that they can be fatal upon contact with the skin; others may cause gene damage and cancer. Danwatch’s investigation showed that workers on Brazilian plantations often apply pesticides either partly or entirely without protective equipment, and that symptoms of pesticide intoxication are widespread.

Danwatch asked JDE and Nestlé, who together account for nearly 40% percent of global retail coffee sales, what they plan to do to ensure that coffee workers in their supply chain work under conditions that are not dangerous to their health.

JDE did not answer this question, but Nestlé wrote, “Nestlé supports the banning of dangerous chemicals and promotes the proper use of protective equipment.”

Nestlé also noted that the company has been involved in initiatives to distribute protective equipment, upgrade pesticide storage facilities, and provide training programmes for farm workers.

Brazilian law regarding conditions analogous to slavery

According to the Brazilian criminal code, Article 149, it is illegal to subject a person to conditions analogous to slavery. This includes subjecting a person to forced labour, subjecting a person to degrading working conditions, and restricting a person’s freedom of movement because of debt to an employer or agent.

