Supply Chain and Forced Labor Study in the Sugarcane Industry of the Dominican Republic

Report

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASR	American Sugar Refining
CAC	*Consorcio Azucarero Central* (Central Sugar Consortium)
CAEI	*Consorcio Azucarero de Empresas Industriales* (Sugar Consortium of Industrial Companies)
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
CEA	*Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (State Sugar Council)
CSO	civil society organization
DOP	Dominican pesos
DR	Dominican Republic
GDP	gross domestic product
HS	Harmonized System
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
IFC	International Furan Chemicals
INAZUCAR	*Instituto Azucarero Dominicano* (Dominican Sugar Institute)
ILO	International Labour Organization
KII	key informant interview
MT	metric tons
MY	marketing year
TRQ	tariff rate quota
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WRO	Withhold Release Order

Key Terms

Ajusteros: Administrators who coordinate the harvest in the *bateyes* (settlements or communities that developed around the sugar industry). Their job is to supply the *ingenio* (sugar mills/refineries) with sugarcane as well as to pay salaries.

Amba fil: Creole term meaning "under the wire." Used to refer to undocumented migrants in the Dominican Republic.

Barracón: Worker housing in the *bateyes* (settlements where sugar cutters live).

Bateyes: Settlements or communities that developed around the sugar industry.

Bienes Nacionales: A Dominican government body charged with safeguarding the assets of the country.

Braceros: A term used in the Dominican Labor Code (Law No. 16-92, Article 145) to refer to foreign workers employed in agricultural field work. This term was, however, historically used in the Dominican context primarily to refer specifically to temporary foreign workers employed in cutting sugarcane and continues to be used in this way in colloquial speech today.

Buscones: Human smugglers who work on the Dominican-Haitian border and sometimes work as labor brokers.

Capataz: A person who supervises a group of workers.

Carreteros: Workers responsible for gathering cut sugarcane and transporting it in carts to the weighing station or the crane.

Cédula: Personal identity document.

Central Romana: Central Romana Corporation Ltd.

Collective agreement: Legal agreement between a company union and the company regarding wages and working conditions, beyond those established by law.

Colmado: Small convenience stores selling food and supplies in the *bateyes,* which often serve as the main food retailers.

Colonos: Small independent sugarcane producers, who grow and harvest sugarcane for sale to large sugar mills.

Consejo Estatal del Azúcar (State Sugar Council) (CEA): A state-owned entity initially holding 12 state-owned *ingenios* (including their plantations and *bateyes*). Now exists as an autonomous body responsible for managing state-owned mills and their lands (including *bateyes*) that have been leased to private investors (domestic and international) or managed directly by the CEA.

Cultivadores: Workers responsible for planting sugarcane.

Field workers: According to the Dominican Labor Code, field workers are regular workers of agricultural, agro-industrial, livestock, and forestry businesses, except those who exercise their industrial or commercial activities.

Forced labor: All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily (Art. 2, International Labour Organization Convention No. 2).

Instituto Azucarero Dominicano (Dominican Sugar Institute) (INAZUCAR): A state body advising the executive branch on policies and practices related to the sugar industry and enforcing compliance, regulations, and standards for the industry.

Ingenio Barahona: Owned by *Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (CEA) and leased to *Consorcio Azucarero Central* (CAC).

Ingenio Cristóbal Colón: *Owned by Consorcio Azucarero de Empresas Estatales* (CAEI).

Ingenio Porvenir: Owned by *Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (CEA).

Ingenios: Sugar mills and refineries where sugarcane is processed for the production of sugar.

Kongó: Term originally used to designate Haitians brought to the Dominican Republic through bilateral contracts. Now used to refer to recent Haitian migrants who do not speak any Spanish.

Marketing year: Runs from the end of October to the beginning of September.

Mayordomo: A supervisor of *braceros.*

Mechanical harvesting: Harvesting using machinery.

Metric ton: 1,000 kilograms or 2,205 pounds.

Temporary workers: A group of workers who are, according to Migration Law No. 285-04, non-resident workers who are hired to "provide services for a specific period and under contract, either individually or as part of a group [...] (Art. 36.5)." Traditionally, the term "temporary" was used to designate *braceros* brought under intergovernmental agreements who were repatriated at the end of the harvest.

Vale: Promissory note traditionally used as payment in the sugar industry and other agricultural plantations and used to buy food or other items.

Zafra**:** Sugarcane harvesting season, which spans six to seven months every year, running from December to June.

Executive Summary

Purpose and Context of Study

A broad body of evidence points toward the use of forced labor in the production of sugarcane in the Dominican Republic (DR). The U.S. Department of Labor has listed sugarcane from the DR as a good produced using child labor and forced labor since 2009. Individuals of Haitian origin or descent make up the majority of the sugarcane workforce in the DR. Most of these individuals are particularly vulnerable to labor exploitation because they are undocumented or stateless and have high levels of illiteracy, low levels of education, and language barriers, factors which can impede their understanding and exercising of labor rights. Moreover, these individuals face risks of deportation and racial discrimination. Various sources have reported indicators of forced labor among sugarcane workers in the DR, including abusive working and living conditions, isolation and restrictions on movement, withholding of wages, excessive overtime, abuse of vulnerability, exploitation, and deceptive recruitment practices. Many of these workers are also indebted to their local convenience stores or private lenders. Although labor conditions in the DR sugarcane fields have been studied and reported on, there is limited information on how the forced labor conditions during sugarcane production impact the sugarcane supply chain.

This study aimed to both revisit past evidence on labor conditions in the DR sugarcane supply chain and address research gaps regarding the sugarcane supply chain in the DR and sugar-importing countries. Using qualitative interviews with sugarcane workers and sector experts, the study sought to assess whether all sugarcane produced in the DR can reasonably be assumed to be at risk of being produced by workers experiencing forced labor indicators. The study was guided by two main objectives: (1) to identify and characterize forced labor in the DR sugarcane industry, including examining the demographic and job characteristics of those who experienced forced labor conditions, and the government and industry actions that contribute to these conditions; and (2) to map the supply chain of sugarcane products in the DR, tracking exports of identified domestically produced downstream products through trade and shipping data and identifying downstream processing and uses of imported sugarcane products for major trading partners. Further, the study compared trade statistics and used qualitative findings to examine the impact of the 2022 Withhold Release Order, issued by the largest sugarcane producer in DR, Central Romana Corporation Limited, on the DR sugarcane industry. (CBP 2022 WRO).

This study was carried out by ICF and *Centro para la Observación Migratoria y el Desarrollo Social en el Caribe*, a migration and development think tank based in Santo Domingo.

Methodology

The study was conducted using qualitative interviews with sugarcane workers and key informant interviews with sector experts. Data collection occurred between July 2023 and January 2024. The study employed purposive, non-probability methods to select respondents. An extensive literature review was also conducted, and the primary data were used to corroborate existing literature on labor conditions in the DR sugarcane industry.

Interviews with 25 sugarcane workers took place in the Eastern and Southwestern regions of the DR, specifically in the provinces of Independencia, Bahoruco, Barahona, La Romana, La Altagracia, El Seibo, Monte Plata, Hato Mayor, and San Pedro de Macorís. Two interviews were conducted with individuals working in *colonos,* small, independent sugarcane producers that grow and harvest sugarcane for sale to

large sugar mills. Of the workers interviewed, 23 were working in the sugarcane sector at the time of data collection, and 2 were former workers. Those interviewed were between the ages of 19 and 77. Twenty-four workers were men, and one was a woman. Interviews were conducted in Haitian Creole and Spanish.

In addition, the study conducted 18 key informant interviews with sector experts to shed light on the sugarcane supply chain and worker experiences in the sector. Due to the sensitivities around the Dominican sugarcane supply chain, many potential respondents refused to take part in this study. However, this report includes perspectives from a diverse group of respondents representing industry, government, civil society, and academia. One government respondent provided written answers to research questions; however, no additional government interviews were secured despite efforts to do so.

Along with the interviews, the study used trade data and other publicly available sources to trace sugarcane and downstream sugarcane products from the DR, including the processing and downstream use of DR sugarcane in importing countries.

Due to the limited sample size, study findings are not statistically representative of all workers at the selected sites, within the selected provinces, or the sector. However, given the range of workers interviewed in various sugarcane-producing areas of the DR, the findings serve to highlight common themes in the experiences and views of the individual sugarcane workers interviewed across the country. They also corroborate and contribute to the existing findings in the extensive body of literature discussing the overall labor conditions in the DR sugarcane industry.

The research design was guided by ICF's established research protocols, forced labor definitions developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the legal and social context of the sugarcane industry, and workers' rights in the DR. Researchers prioritized the safety and privacy of respondents at all stages of the research process.

Key Findings

Forced Labor Indicators in DR Sugarcane Production

According to the ILO's definition, a worker is subject to forced labor if they experience at least one indicator of menace of penalty and one indicator of involuntariness (see Appendix 6 for forced labor definitions and Appendix 7 for a description of forced labor terminologies in the DR context). All but one of the 25 sugarcane workers interviewed in this study reported experiencing indicators of involuntariness in their workplace, and 16 of these 24 workers also reported experiencing indicators of menace of penalty. Thus, 16 of the 25 workers interviewed were experiencing forced labor.

The forced labor indicators reported by respondents are listed below. Details about these indicators can be found in Section 4 of this report. The indicators listed below were reported by respondents from both the Eastern and Southwestern regions of the DR.

The involuntariness indicators experienced by the workers are as follows:

- Work in hazardous conditions to which the worker has not consented, with or without compensation or protective equipment (n=24)
- Work with very low or no wages (n=9)
- Degrading living conditions (n=8)

- Abusive requirements for overtime that were not previously agreed with the employer (n=5)
- Limited freedom to terminate work contract (n=1)

The menace of penalty indicators reported by the workers are as follows:

- Abuse of workers' vulnerability through threats of dismissal or deportation (n=11)
- Withholding of wages or other promised benefits (n=10)
- Restriction of movement (n=4)
- Withholding of valuable documents (n=2)

Sugarcane Supply Chain in the DR and Importing Countries

During the 2021–2022 marketing year (MY), the DR sugarcane harvest totaled 5,618,097 metric tons. Sugarcane in the country is produced by two main groups of producers: 70% is grown by the three large private enterprises and a state-owned entity, namely Central Romana, *Consorcio Azucarero de Empresas Industriales* (CAEI, or Sugar Consortium of Industrial Companies), *Consorcio Azucarero Central* (Central Sugar Consortium), and *Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (State Sugar Council) (state-owned entity); and 30% is produced by small landholders called *colonos*. Four sugar mills in the country process sugarcane into raw sugar. The three private sugarcane-producing entities have their own mills, and a fourth mill is operated by the government. The *colonos* sell most of the sugarcane they produce to Central Romana and CAEI for processing.

In MY 2021–2022, 31.2% of the raw sugar produced in the DR was consumed in local sales.

When the sugarcane is processed into raw sugar, the mills produce byproducts like molasses and bagasse. Molasses is commonly used in livestock feed and rum production, and bagasse is used as an energy source in the sugar mills.

The raw sugar is also used to make downstream products like refined sugar and furfural. In MY 2021–2022, 66.8% of the refined sugar produced in the DR was consumed in local sales. Furfural is not consumed domestically at all.

The sugar products exported from the DR include raw sugar (41.7%), rum (48.5%), molasses (6.4%), and furfural (3.4%) (UN Comtrade, Appendix 3). The DR accounts for 7.5% of the global exports for rum, 2% of the global exports for molasses, and 1% for raw sugar. The United States is the main importing market for raw sugar and molasses from the DR. The main end uses for sugarcane from DR include beverages and animal feed.

This study found that when sugarcane is harvested and sent to one of the four sugar mills in the DR for processing into raw sugar, sugarcane from multiple plantations and farms is co-mingled at three of the four sugar mills, Central Romana, CAEI, or *Consejo Estatal del Azúcar*. The exception is Consorcio Azucarero Central, which does not source sugarcane from *colonos*. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the sugarcane products from the mills Central Romana, CAEI, and Consejo Estatal del Azúcar could be produced with sugarcane that was harvested with forced labor from *colonos*. This risk, as well as direct risks at some sugar mill sites, reverberates across the supply chain of downstream products produced from sugarcane in the DR.

Conclusion and Key Recommendations

The study findings are in line with a broad body of evidence that sugarcane workers in the DR, particularly Haitian workers and workers of Haitian descent, work and live under conditions that meet the ILO's definition of forced labor.

Based on primary and secondary data documenting widespread indicators of forced labor in the sugarcane sector in the DR, the study finds that it can be reasonably assumed that all sugarcane produced in the DR is at risk of being produced by workers experiencing indicators of forced labor.

Study Recommendations

Government of the DR:

- Provide a path to regularization for Haitian sugarcane workers in the DR. This would involve the provision of a legal document allowing Haitian sugarcane workers to work and live in the country without fear of deportation from their employer or the state. This action should be accompanied by government body coordination to ensure that workers can avail themselves of their rights and avoid exploitation due to irregular status. A legal document should allow sugarcane workers to seek employment in other areas of work in the DR, not solely within the sugarcane sector. In the interim, the government should require companies and *colonos* to register workers and provide them with an employment identification number that is valid during and after the harvest period. This ID should be kept by the worker and serve as a legal document for them to remain in the DR and work in other sectors during the off-season. This measure would be particularly useful for Haitian workers who are at risk of deportation due to a lack of documentation.
- Strengthen the labor inspectorate of the Ministry of Labor by dedicating the necessary resources and training. Inspectors should be granted the authority to independently assess labor law violations on sugarcane plantations. Labor inspectors should be hired to work in agricultural areas and be fluent in Haitian Creole so they can interact with Haitian workers who are most vulnerable to labor abuses. Inspectors must prioritize the assessment of working and living conditions in all sugarcane-producing companies and *colonos* in the country. Requiring regular in-person assessments by inspectors of sugarcane workers' working and living conditions—when housing is provided by the employer—would create a sense of urgency for sugarcane producers to improve these conditions. Labor inspectorate findings should be used to set effective goals for all sugarcane producers in the interim period before the next assessment.
- The Office of the Attorney General and Public Ministry should adequately sanction sugarcane producers who do not comply with the labor laws protecting vulnerable workers.
- Increase the minimum wage for sugarcane workers, as the current $400 Dominican pesos (DOP) per day minimum is insufficient for the work completed and does not cover daily expenses incurred by the workers. A wage increase would minimize workers' need to borrow money from local convenience stores, freeing them from this type of debt.

Industry:

- Ensure that workers fully understand their work contract before signing a written contract or understand their work duties and benefits before agreeing to work for their employer, if working under a verbal agreement. This should include tasks they will complete, protective equipment provided, work hours, pay, company-owned housing information, and benefits.

Many workers are Haitian and only speak Haitian Creole or may be illiterate and unable to read their contracts. An interpreter should be present when signing the contracts to ensure that workers understand what they agree to and can ask questions as needed.

- Ensure that workers are earning at least the legal minimum wage for the sugarcane sector of $400 DOP per day, or $2400 DOP per 6-day working week. Furthermore, employers should provide the legally required overtime pay to workers laboring more than 10 hours a day. Pay should be commensurate with the amount of work completed by the worker, not to fall below the legal minimum wage.
- Enforce strict penalties for wage theft during the weighing of the cane. To facilitate this requires the creation of a safe reporting mechanism for workers to report instances of wage theft and investigate these claims, enforcing appropriate measures based on findings.
- Improve employer-provided housing and living conditions for sugarcane workers. Improve access to potable water, electricity, sanitation facilities, and living quarters in company-owned *bateyes*. Reduce the number of workers assigned to each living area to eliminate overcrowding. Reduce or eliminate the cost of electricity, water, and other utilities to workers when living in this company-owned housing.
- Remove automatic worker pay deductions for union membership costs. Allow workers to choose whether to opt into union membership during the contract signing process and provide a mechanism to change this selection at any time during employment. Furthermore, unions should work with trusted civil society organizations to improve their communication and work with sugarcane workers.
- Provide workers full liquidation of their owed wages if they decide to quit working for the employer, ensuring that workers are also paid their pensions and any other owed benefits.
- Establish traceability programs to document the sale of sugarcane from *colonos* to sugarcane mills, to allow for transparent third-party audits.

U.S. Government:

- Exports of raw sugar, refined sugar, rum, molasses, and furfural from the DR are at risk of being produced with forced labor, and the U.S. Department of Labor should consider adding them to the List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor.
- Further research should be conducted on the industrial consumption of raw and refined sugar in the DR, and it should trace the international downstream consumption of these goods, especially in baked goods, confectionery, and juices.

1 Purpose and Context

A large body of evidence points toward the use of child and forced labor in the production of sugarcane in the Dominican Republic (DR) (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023a). In 2009, sugarcane from the DR was added to the U.S. Department of Labor's List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023b). Many media reports have noted the continued presence of forced labor indicators and inhumane living and working conditions of workers of Haitian origin or descent employed in the sugarcane plantations of the DR, particularly those without legal status in the country. However, the examination of how these conditions impact the sugarcane supply chain has been limited.

This study aimed to revisit the widespread reporting on forced labor in the DR sugarcane industry as well as address the gaps in knowledge around how these conditions impact the sugarcane supply chain in the DR, and the downstream uses of sugarcane and sugar products in importing countries. The study findings were then used to assess whether all sugarcane produced in the DR can reasonably be assumed to be at risk of being produced by workers experiencing forced labor conditions. Further, the study aimed to track exports of identified domestically produced downstream products of sugarcane through trade and shipping data and identify downstream processing and uses for imported downstream products in major destination markets. Moreover, the researchers examined the impact of the 2022 Withhold Release Order (WRO), issued by the largest sugarcane producer in the DR, Central Romana Corporation Limited (Central Romana), on the DR sugarcane industry.

A total of 25 interviews with sugarcane workers and 18 interviews with key informants were conducted as part of the research. In addition, the researchers reviewed trade statistics and secondary literature on the sugarcane industry in the DR. The study was conducted by ICF and its research partner in the DR, *Centro para la Observación Migratoria y el Desarrollo Social en el Caribe*.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Existing Evidence of Forced Labor

Across the DR, clustered around the country's many sugarcane plantations, more than 400 settlements or communities have developed around the sugar industry, locally known as *bateyes*. The oldest of these communities—generally consisting of little more than a cluster of run-down buildings, often lacking electricity or running water—were built in the 1960s as temporary housing for Haitian workers migrating to the DR to work in the sugarcane fields (Bernier, 2003; Goodman, 2023; Nunes, 2016). Today, however, they have become permanent communities, housing around 200,000 men, women, and children, many of whom were born in the DR as second or even third-generation Dominicans of Haitian descent (Ashly, 2021a, 2021b; Aubert, 2020). Some sugarcane workers live in company-owned compounds rather than *bateyes*, which similarly failed to meet adequate living standards.

For decades, human rights activists have reported exploitative labor conditions in the DR's *bateyes*. In a 2021 report, sugar and sugarcane from the DR were listed as risky food items by World Vision, indicating that they may have been produced by child labor (World Vision, 2021). Recent media reports published in the Washington Post, Mother Jones, the Intercept, and Jacobin have highlighted the abusive and precarious working and living conditions of sugarcane workers in the DR (Ashly, 2021a, 2021b; Reiley, 2022; Tolan & Cordero, 2021, 2022). In 2022, during a two-week mission to the DR, the U.S. Government identified several potential indicators of forced labor experienced by sugarcane workers, including

restriction of movement, isolation, abusive working and living conditions, debt, and wage theft (U.S. Department of Labor, 2022).

According to the extant literature, sugarcane workers face the following exploitative conditions, some of which indicate forced labor.

Abuse of Vulnerability. Most workers who are engaged in the sugarcane harvest in the DR are Haitian migrants or Dominicans of Haitian descent, who do not have a legal status in the country. The workers' lack of legal documentation ties them to their employers and makes them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation because they fear retaliation or deportation for raising concerns or complaints (Ashly, 2022; Corporate Accountability Lab, 2023; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022).

Intimidation and Threats. Media reports show that workers live under frequent threats of eviction and intimidation by trained and armed guards who patrol the camps (Swanson, 2022; Tolan & Cordero, 2022). The threat of eviction is made all the more salient by the statelessness experienced by Dominican-born individuals of Haitian heritage who had their Dominican citizenship stripped by a court order in 2013 (Ashly, 2021a, 2021b, 2022).

Isolation. The sugarcane work camps have been described as cities unto themselves, often isolated from the rest of the country. The precarious legal status of the workers who live and work in these camps leads to their isolation (Coto, 2022; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Workers are also scared to leave the premises due to their fear of being detained and deported by immigration officials (Ashly, 2021a).

Abusive Living and Working Conditions. The sugarcane workers live in company-provided housing, which is often degrading and in need of repair—workers live in cramped, overcrowded, and dimly lit rooms that lack proper ventilation (Tolan & Cordero, 2021; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). The Dominican government constructed *barracones*, or barrack-style housing, across the country during the 1960s and 1970s to house labor recruited through bilateral contracts with Haiti. Primarily intended as temporary accommodations, these shelters provided overnight housing for workers who worked from morning until night (Castel, 2021). These buildings are isolated and many do not have access to running water and electricity (Leos, 2023; Swanson, 2022; Ashly, 2021).

Workers lack access to protective equipment, work long hours without a break, do not receive proper treatment for workplace injuries or illnesses, and work under extreme weather conditions without adequate rest (Tolan & Cordero, 2021; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022).

Withholding of Wages and Debt: In the absence of a tracking system for working hours, and because workers are often not present when the sugarcane they have cut is weighed, they face risks of wage theft (Corporate Accountability Lab, 2023; Tweh, 2022; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). In addition, most workers and their families lack access to any social security programs (such as medical coverage for workplace injuries and pensions), even though taxes are deducted from their wages to pay into these programs (Ashly, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Coto, 2022; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Some workers and their families also reported going into debt to be illegally transported across the border by smugglers, which perpetuates a cycle of poverty and debt (Corporate Accountability Lab, 2023; U.S. Department of Labor, 2022).

In November 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) issued a WRO on Central Romana, preventing the entry of raw sugar and sugar products produced by Central Romana in the DR into the United States (Corporate Accountability Lab, 2023; Swanson, 2022; U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2022). This was based on a CBP investigation that found evidence of abusive working and living

conditions, including withheld wages and excessive overtime, in Central Romana's operations (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2022).

Prior to the WRO, Central Romana accounted for around 60% of the total sugar production in the DR and was the biggest employer and largest private landowner in the country.[1] However, reports on the abusive working and living conditions faced by sugarcane workers, as described previously, have been reported not only within the *bateyes* operated by Central Romana, but across all areas operated by *colonos,* the three private companies that make up the Dominican Sugar Industry, as well in the fields operated by *Consejo Estatal del Azúcar* (CEA, or State Sugar Council) (Ashly, 2021b, 2022; Aubert, 2020).

2.2 Economic Overview of the Dominican Republic's Sugarcane Industry

The DR is a middle-income country with a gross domestic product (GDP) of $94.24 billion USD and a GDP per capita of $9,000 in 2021 (World Bank, 2023). Historically, sugarcane was a pillar of the Dominican economy, but over the past several decades, the national economy has diversified and is currently primarily based on services (56% of GDP), followed by manufactured goods (15% of GDP), construction (14% of GDP), and agriculture (6% of GDP). However, sugarcane retains its importance as one of the major agricultural crops in the DR, accounting for an estimated 20% of total agricultural land use.

Sugarcane-related exports[2] account for approximately 2% of total DR exports, which are otherwise led by manufactured goods, particularly textiles, clothing, and metal products (WTO, 2021; UN Comtrade, 2023). The United States is the primary destination market for DR exports, importing 55% of all exports from the DR in 2021 (UN Comtrade, 2023).

2.3 Sugarcane Description

Sugarcane production is a multi-stage process that includes cultivating the land, planting the sugarcane, harvesting, and then milling the cut sugarcane into raw sugar. A perennial crop, sugarcane can be harvested 12 months after initial planting and then annually for up to 5 years (The Sugar Association, 2019). The harvesting season in the DR runs from December to June (CAEI, 2023).[3] The harvesting process can be done manually or mechanically. When done manually, it is common practice to burn the fields prior to the harvesting process, in the winter and spring months. This reduces the time it takes to harvest the stalks by removing pests and portions of the sugarcane plant not used during processing, such as sugarcane leaves. However, the ensuing smoke poses health risks to workers and nearby communities (Sierra Club, 2022). Sugarcane fields that are mechanically harvested are not burned before harvest. It is important to note that there is limited desk research specifically addressing whether sugarcane harvesting in the DR involves burning fields.

For sugarcane that is manually harvested, the sugarcane cutter cuts the plant at the base to preserve the roots. It is subsequently cut into smaller pieces to be weighed and transported to sugar mills for processing (Tolan & Cordero, 2021). Sugarcane is perishable, so cut sugarcane must be transported to a sugar mill for processing within days of harvest, ideally within 24 hours, to maximize sucrose yield. Sugar

[1] In marketing year 2021–2022, Central Romana processed 3,041,355 metric tons (MT) of sugarcane; of this, 29.6%, or 900,899 MT, was purchased from *colonos*. Of all refined and processed sugar produced in the DR, Central Romano produced 57% (357,583 MT out of 625,391 MT) (INAZUCAR, 2022).

[2] Sugarcane-related products include downstream sugar-based products: raw sugar, refined sugar, molasses, rum, and furfural.

[3] The marketing year runs from the end of October to the beginning of September.

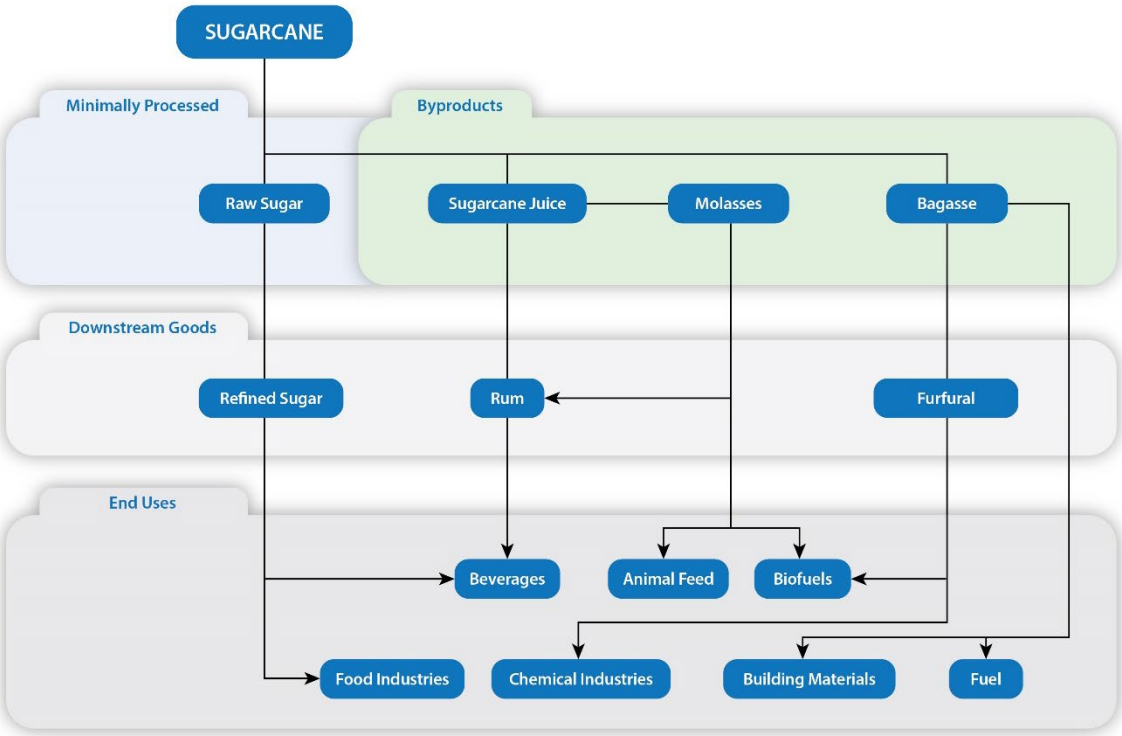
mills process sugarcane into raw sugar and the byproducts of this process include sugarcane juice, bagasse (the fibrous sugarcane husks), and molasses.

The processing of sugarcane into its downstream products takes place at sugar mills, where sugarcane juice is first extracted by soaking and crushing the sugarcane. Crushing machines squeeze the prepared sugarcane stalks between rollers, separating the sugarcane juice from the fibrous sugarcane husks (McHugh, 2020; Singh et al., 2015; Sugar Knowledge International LTD, 2023). The extracted sugarcane juice is then filtered, clarified, and prepared and sent for evaporation. During evaporation, the clarified sugarcane juice, which has a sugar content of around 15%, is heated to near boiling over a span of hours, reducing the water content of the juice and resulting in a thick, golden "cane syrup" with a sugar concentration of 70–80% (Alexander, 1998; Ensinas et al., 2007; Midwest Research Institute (MRI), 1997). The resulting sugarcane syrup is shelf-stable and can be sold as is. In most sugar mills, however, it is further processed to generate granulated sugar.

To produce granulated sugar, the sugarcane syrup is once again heated, this time to above the boiling point of water, producing a super-saturated sugar solution. This solution is then either allowed to boil until crystallization occurs spontaneously, or a small amount of seed crystals are added to catalyze the crystallization process. The mixture is then sent to a centrifuge that separates the crystals from the remaining syrup. The resulting crystallized sugar is referred to as "raw sugar," and the remaining syrup is referred to as molasses. This process of boiling and centrifugal separation is generally repeated up to three times, progressively removing more and more of the sugar content of the solution.

These three rounds of boiling and centrifugal separation result in three different grades of molasses. Molasses generated from the first boiling—commonly referred to as "first syrup," "light molasses," or "A" molasses—is light in color and quite sweet because it retains much of its original dissolved sugar content. The molasses generated after the second round of boiling and separation—commonly referred to as "second syrup," "medium" or "dark molasses," or "B" molasses—is thicker, darker, and less sweet. The molasses generated after the third round of boiling and separation—commonly referred to as "final concentrate," "C" molasses, or "blackstrap molasses"—is thick, dark, and quite bitter due to the loss of sugar and carbonization caused by repeated boiling (Alexander, 1998; Sugar Knowledge International Ltd., 2000).

Figure 1. Overview of sugarcane processing steps and resulting byproducts, downstream goods, and end uses



Source: ICF

2.4 Minimally Processed Good, Byproducts, Downstream Products, and End Uses

This section first defines the minimally processed raw sugar; followed by an overview of the byproducts: bagasse, sugarcane juice, and molasses; and concluding with downstream goods: rum, furfural, and refined sugar and end uses.

Minimally Processed Good

Raw sugar: Raw sugar, also referred to as tubinado, crystal sugar, or single-crystallized sugar, is light golden brown in color. It is produced at sugar mills by cutting and then crushing raw sugarcane with large rollers to separate sugarcane juice from the fibrous stalks (McHugh, 2020). The extracted juice is filtered, concentrated, and spun in a centrifuge to extract raw sugar that is approximately 97% sucrose (Alfaro, 2023). Raw sugar is fit for human consumption and consumed at the retail level under “azucar crema” or “sugar in the raw,” but it is more often further processed at a sugar refinery into refined sugar.

Byproducts

Bagasse: Bagasse is the fibrous husk residue remaining after juice is extracted from sugarcane. It is composed mainly of cellulose, hemicellulose, and lignin. Historically, bagasse was considered to be a waste product, but it has increasingly been used as a direct energy source in sugar mills. Additional uses for bagasse are as base fodder in animal feed; as an alternative for wood in the manufacture of paper, pulp, and particle board; and as a source of organic chemicals used in the production of furfural (Centre for Agriculture and the Bioeconomy, 2023; Gebre et al., 2015; Oliveira et al., 2016).

Sugarcane Juice: Sugarcane juice is the liquid extracted from sugarcane that is shredded and squeezed through industrial rollers. Sugarcane juice can be consumed as a beverage but is most commonly boiled to produce molasses (Jafari & Akhavan-Mahdavi, 2023).

Molasses: Molasses is a thick, dark syrup obtained from boiling sugarcane juice. Molasses is used in various culinary and industrial downstream products, including rum and *tafia,* sweeteners, commercial brown sugar, livestock feed, and biofuel (Clarke, 2003).

Downstream Goods

Rum: Rum is fermented and distilled from molasses and then aged in barrels for a minimum of one year to produce a concentrated and shelf-stable alcoholic beverage. Another form of rum, *tafia,* is produced for domestic consumption because it is easier, faster, and less expensive to produce.

Furaldehyde (furfural): Furaldehyde, also known as furfural, is a colorless organic chemical derived from agricultural waste materials, notably through the dehydration of sugarcane bagasse. It is used to synthesize industrial chemicals, solvents, resins, and plastics in the making of a variety of commercial products.

Refined Sugar: Refined sugar, also referred to as granulated or table sugar, is refined raw sugar. At a sugar refinery, raw sugar is further filtered, decolorized, and recrystallized before being ground into finer crystals. The resulting refined sugar is characterized by its white color, small grain size, and ability to easily dissolve into liquids.

End Uses

Animal Feed: Molasses and bagasse are used in livestock feed. Molasses is commonly added to dry feed mixes to supplement nutritional content, improve palatability, and reduce dust and waste by binding dry ingredients (Abreu et al., 2022; Mordenti et al., 2021). Bagasse is used as a source of roughage and dietary fiber in feed for cattle and other ruminants (Centre for Agriculture and the Bioeconomy, 2023; de Almeida et al., 2018).

Food Industries: Molasses and refined sugar are used as an additive in candies and a wide variety of processed food products. Furfural can be used as a flavoring additive for its nutty taste.

Beverages: Sugarcane juice can be consumed as a beverage or processed into sugar syrups for beverage additives or processed into molasses for downstream production of rum.

Biofuels: Bagasse can be burned and used as a primary fuel source in sugar mills or in the production of furfural, which can be converted into a biofuel with additional chemical processing. Globally, sugarcane juice and molasses are also used in the production of biofuels.

Chemical Industries: Furfural is used as a solvent in the production of various chemicals and biodegradable plastics.

Industrial Uses: Less frequently, bagasse can also be used in pulp building materials (e.g., building boards, acoustic tiles); textile fibers (e.g., viscose, modal, and lyocell); and food packaging and tableware (e.g., degradable cutlery).

3 Methodology and Study Implementation

3.1 Study Objectives and Research Questions

The study was guided by the following objectives and research questions.

Objective 1: Identification and characteristics of forced labor in the DR sugarcane industry

- What is the presence and nature of forced labor reported by workers in the Dominican sugarcane supply chain?
- What are the demographic and job characteristics of those experiencing forced labor?
- What are the most common indicators of forced labor experienced by the workers interviewed?
- At what point in the supply chain are sugarcane from various plantations, raw sugar, and sugar byproducts comingled?
- What actions (or inaction) by the Dominican government exacerbate or contribute to forced labor indicators and to what degree? What processes are set up to compel workers to work under such conditions?
- During which work activities or requirements do employers use coercion? Which work activities or requirements are performed involuntarily by workers (including workers who are compelled to work overtime to meet their daily needs)?
- Can it be reasonably assumed that all sugarcane produced in the DR is at risk of being produced by workers experiencing indicators of forced labor? If so, why?

Objective 2: Mapping the supply chain of sugarcane products in the DR, tracing goods produced with forced labor along the supply chain to domestic processors and foreign importers.

- After sugarcane is harvested and processed into raw sugar, what other domestic processing occurs in country and what downstream products are produced? Is there any evidence of forced labor in domestic processing?
- Who are the main stakeholders in the DR involved in the sale and processing of sugarcane?
- What are the major exporting markets for DR sugar products and what are some of the downstream uses of this product?
- How have sugar export dynamics in the DR sugar sector changed following the WRO against Central Romana in terms of the companies or brands under which it is exported and where is sugar from Central Romana going post-WRO?

3.2 Research Methodology

This study used qualitative methods to respond to the research questions. The study focused on adult forced labor and did not target children for data collection. Due to the sensitivity of the topic and the risks that workers face, the research prioritized the safety of all respondents. The research design and methodology were shaped by ICF's experience with similar studies and by a virtual scoping exercise that

ICF conducted in early 2023. ICF's global research instruments informed the development of the data collection tools, and the scoping exercise was used to collect contacts of key non-governmental organization stakeholders in the DR sugarcane industry. Researchers then adapted the global research instruments to the DR sugarcane context.

As described in the following sections, data collection involved a secondary literature review, qualitative worker interviews, and key informant interviews (KIIs).

3.2.1 Defining Forced Labor

This study uses the definition of forced labor contained in International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 29: "The term forced, or compulsory labour shall mean all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily" (ILO, 1930). More information on the ILO definition of forced labor can be found in Appendix 6. The study operationalizes this definition of forced labor according to the guidelines provided in the 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) *Guidelines Concerning the Measurement of Forced Labour* (2018). According to the ICLS guidelines, "a person is classified as being in forced labour if engaged during a specified reference period in any work that is both under the threat of menace of a penalty and involuntary" (p. 2). In alignment with the ICLS guidelines, for the purposes of this study, a person is classified as being in forced labor if they engaged in any work that is both under the threat of menace of a penalty and involuntary. See Appendix 7 for a description of how forced labor terminology is observed in the DR sugarcane context.

3.2.2 Secondary Literature Review

The study undertook a thorough review of more than 100 relevant secondary sources, which included government, civil society, and media reports on forced labor and working conditions in the DR sugarcane supply chain (see Appendix 1). To focus on the current state of forced labor in the industry, the study prioritized documents published within the past five years. For government data, researchers relied on the most recent data available, which were not always within this time period. This review of extant literature informed research instrument development and was used to corroborate the primary data findings.

The literature review included international trade and shipping data on the export of downstream sugarcane products from the DR, which were gathered from numerous sources, including UN Comtrade, Panjiva, *Instituto Azucarero Dominicano* (INAZUCAR, or Dominican Sugar Institute) statistics, and DATAWEB. Using these data, the study sought to provide an accurate depiction of what happens to downstream sugarcane products once exported from the DR.

3.2.3 Worker Interviews

The research included qualitative interviews with 25 sugarcane workers aimed to assess their working conditions and identify indicators of forced labor in the workplaces of the those interviewed. A purposive sampling method was used to identify workers from different demographic backgrounds, working in different regions in the country and performing various roles in the sugarcane plantations. This method helped to ensure diversity of responses and allowed researchers to assess any similarity or differences in conditions by region and size of company. The sample includes 24 men and 1 woman, reflecting the extant literature, which has shown that the DR sugarcane sector primarily employs men.

The qualitative interviews included questions about recruitment practices, wages, working hours, incentives and work benefits, and housing and labor conditions. The interviews also included specific questions around workplace injuries and hazards experienced by sugarcane workers, and their freedom of movement within and outside the *bateyes* or housing compounds.

Workers from the Eastern and Southwestern regions of the DR were interviewed to better understand the presence of forced labor indicators across the country. Specific provinces covered in this study are listed in Section 3.4.

3.2.4 Key Informant Interviews

KIIs were conducted with representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs), local and international sector experts, academics, sugarcane company representatives, and importers of downstream sugarcane goods. One government key informant provided written answers to research questions rather than participating in an interview. Interviews were conducted to better understand the supply chain of Dominican sugarcane downstream products inside and outside the DR, as well as to provide context to the working conditions of those employed in the Dominican sugar sector. The research team reached out to government stakeholders several times via official channels of communication but was unable to secure interviews.

Table 1. Sample size

Data collection type	Total respondents
Worker interviews	25
KIIs	17

3.3 Training and Preparation

A week-long training of data collectors was conducted in June 2023 in Santo Domingo, DR. The training involved reviewing the data collection instruments, cross-checking the accuracy of translations from English to Spanish and Haitian Creole, and role-playing exercises. In addition, the training covered the study design, definitions of forced labor and supply chain tracing, data collection roles and ethics, and additional data collection policies.

A pilot of the research tools was conducted at the end of the training at a formerly company-owned *batey* near Santo Domingo. After the pilot, the team spent time debriefing, reviewing their experiences from the piloting exercise, and making necessary adjustments to the instruments and the overall data collection approach.

3.4 Data Collection

All research designs and instruments underwent a review by ICF's Institutional Review Board. Researchers were trained on and required to adhere to strict ethical guidelines, including informed consent, confidentiality, and data security. The research was performed in compliance with 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 46 on the Protection of Human Subjects. All research instruments were translated into Spanish and Haitian Creole before use. At the beginning of each interview, the enumerator read the consent statement to the participant in Spanish or Creole, depending on the interviewee's preferred language. All personal identifying information of respondents was redacted from the data before analysis.

Data collection began in July 2023, and was extended until January 2024 to include additional KII respondents. A total of 17 KIIs were conducted, including respondents in the DR and outside the DR. A total of 25 sugarcane workers were interviewed. Data from sugarcane workers were collected from the provinces of La Romana, La Altagracia, El Seibo, Monte Plata, Hato Mayor, and San Pedro de Macorís in the eastern region, and from Independencia, Bahoruco, and Barahona from the Southwestern region.

The research team took very serious measures to protect the well-being of workers during data collection. ICF co-developed privacy and security research protocols to ensure that all possible measures were taken to ensure that workers were not identified as study participants by their employer. These protocols included security and data protection, interviewer selection and training, participant recruitment, privacy and procedures for interviews, informed consent protocols, and a mechanism for responding to retaliation or intimidation attempts by employers. As a result of these efforts, worker interviews took place without any instances of known employer retaliation.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

This section summarizes the main limitations of the study.

3.5.1 Difficulty Securing Key Informant Interviews

The research team initially aimed to conduct 25 KIIs with experts. However, given the sensitivities surrounding Dominican sugar supply chains and forced labor, many potential informants refused to participate or did not respond to requests for interviews. Some of the interviews with government stakeholders could not be scheduled due to unresponsive communication or logistical challenges. However, the team did receive one written response to a select number of research questions from one DR government entity. This response was coded and integrated into the report.

3.5.2 Respondent Identification and Selection

The study used qualitative research methods and interviewed a purposive sample of workers and experts. This was necessitated due to the risky conditions under which the workers live and work, and the difficulties faced in accessing respondents (mentioned in the previous section). Thus, the results from this study are not statistically representative of the sugarcane industry of the DR or the workers in the sugarcane supply chain of the DR. Nevertheless, worker respondents from several regions of the DR employed by a range of companies or small producers were selected to participate in the study to shed light on various worker experiences. These included workers in various geographical areas of the country working in different positions and of various ages. Interview locations were selected based on whether they were significant sugarcane-producing regions.

3.5.3 Potential Response Bias

The topic of labor in Dominican sugarcane production is highly sensitive, and respondents may have been reluctant to honestly answer all the questions related to supply chain and exploitative/forced labor practices. This is especially true for key informants, who may have feared being identified, despite efforts to assure them that their personal identifying information would be kept confidential. It is possible that this fear may have resulted in their downplaying the severity or pervasiveness of forced labor in the sector. Researchers attempted to foster an environment of trust and understanding to reduce potential discomfort among study participants. In addition, the lack of participation from diverse stakeholders, notably the government, may result in skewed perspectives or potential biases in the findings.

3.5.4 Challenges in Quantifying Indicators of Forced Labor

Although the research design of the study would have ideally included quantitative surveys, the sensitivity of the topic in the DR precluded conducting surveys with workers, because it would have posed too high a risk for them. Instead, researchers opted for a methodologically sound qualitative approach, including semi-structured interviews with a sample of 25 workers. Surveys are ideal for making binary decisions about the presence or absence of individual forced labor indicators and forced labor itself, but qualitative interviews also provide valuable insights into the manifestation of labor exploitation, although they are less precise in identifying the presence or absence of forced labor according to the ICLS guidelines. As is typical in qualitative interviews, interviewers varied how they asked questions and followed the flow of the conversation, not all questions about all indicators were asked of every respondent, and the questions were asked in different ways. Respondents also varied in how clearly and how comprehensively they described their working and living conditions.

A goal of this study is to understand forced labor in the supply chain, so the authors have quantified the qualitative worker interview data to determine how many workers experienced each indicator. Because not every respondent was asked about every indicator, it should be noted that the study may be underreporting the presence of forced labor in the sample.

4 Findings

The following sections present the study findings. The first section (4.1) outlines findings related to labor conditions, starting with the demographics and job characteristics of all workers interviewed and finally describing the different forced labor indicators reported by the respondents. The next section (4.2) describes additional qualitative findings from the worker interviews and literature review regarding the labor conditions of the sugarcane workers and the policy and recruitment factors that influence these conditions. The third section (4.3) provides the sugarcane supply chain findings, tracing the domestic processing and consumption of sugarcane in the DR as well as the international export and downstream uses of sugarcane products from the DR.

4.1 Forced Labor

4.1.1 Characteristics of Respondents and Their Work

Workers interviewed for this study worked in nine provinces: La Romana (n=4), La Altagracia (n=2), El Seibo (n=3), Monte Plata (n=2), Hato Mayor (n=3), and San Pedro de Macorís (n=4) in the Eastern region; and Independencia (n=3), Bahoruco (n=3), and Barahona (n=1) in the Southwestern region. Workers' ages ranged from 19 to 77, with most aged 40 and over (n=18). The majority of workers were Haitian (n=22), and 3 were Dominicans of Haitian descent. In the sample, Haitians were defined as individuals born in Haiti. Dominicans of Haitian descent were individuals who were born in the DR to Haitian parents or who had Haitian blood relatives.

Most of those interviewed worked as sugarcane cutters (n=11), sugarcane cutters and cultivators (n=3), or planters (n=3). Other positions held by workers interviewed were fumigator, chainman, wagon driver, ticketer, foreman, or former worker (ex-cane cutter and ex-supervisor). Two workers were employed at a *colono*. The remaining 23 workers (92%) worked at large sugarcane plantations.

4.1.2 Indicators of Forced Labor

As described in Section 3.2.1, according to the guidelines used in this study, a worker is considered to have experienced forced labor if they report at least one indicator of menace of penalty and one indicator of involuntariness.

The following indicators of menace of penalty were experienced by workers in the sample: abuse of workers' vulnerability through the denial of rights or privileges or threats of dismissal or deportation (n=11), withholding of wages or other promised benefits (n=10), restrictions on workers' movement (n=4), and withholding of valuable documents (n=2). Although there were no instances of debt bondage or manipulation of debt by an employer, many workers incurred debt to their local convenience stores or to private lenders.[4]

The following indicators of involuntariness were reported by workers in the sample: hazardous working conditions to which the worker has not consented, with or without compensation or protective equipment (n=24); work with very low or no wages (n=9); degrading living conditions (n=8); abusive requirements for overtime or on-call work that were not previously agreed with the employer (n=5); and limited freedom to terminate work contract (n=1).

Overall, 24 out of 25 workers reported experiencing indicators of involuntariness in their workplace, and 16 of them also reported indicators of menace of penalty in their workplace, indicating that 16 of the 25 workers who participated in interviews experienced forced labor. These findings closely align with previous forced labor research and reporting on the DR sugarcane industry (as outlined in Section 2).

As one worker described:

> *"It's like, however you [the employee] want, you have to do it...It's like you're in prison."*
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

The following subsections describe the most common indicators of forced labor within the worker sample.

4.1.2.1 Working in Hazardous Conditions to which the Worker Has Not Consented, with or without Compensation or Protective Equipment

In all the locations covered in the study, the workers—particularly the sugarcane cutters—worked under extremely harsh and physically demanding conditions, to potentially make just enough to feed themselves and their families. Workers reported extremely hazardous conditions in their workplace, with workers exposed to injuries, diseases, and other physical and health risks. These were working conditions that many were not aware of when signing work contracts with their employers. Some workers indicated that although they could technically refuse to do this hazardous work, they felt compelled to do so. These workers indicated that refusing to do this hazardous work risked not earning any money, being fired, being detained and deported by government authorities if they left the workplace without legal documentation or being thrown out of their housing with nowhere else to go. One worker said that he continues to work and face hazardous conditions out of fear of being fired.

[4] Although several workers described being in debt and unable to quit their jobs due to debt, most workers interviewed were not indebted to their employer. Debt was a consequence of low wages and was largely incurred with the local convenience store or money lenders outside of the company. One respondent was in debt to his employer, but no details are available regarding the terms of the loan.

"The shin guards can make our legs feel hot, and when the day's work is over, our feet can get swollen from wearing them. The gloves can also make our hands swell because of the intense heat. When we say we can't take it anymore, they can fire us. Right now, a man was told he shouldn't be in the sun or rain due to health issues, but I don't know what will happen to him."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

For the sugarcane cutters, the machetes they use to cut the canes pose the most risk of physical harm. Worker interviews suggest that there are frequent occurrences of cuts to the hands, feet, and legs due to the machetes. Almost all sugarcane cutters interviewed had either experienced such injuries themselves or witnessed others who had. One worker said that the frequency of these incidents increases due to the pressure to cut sugarcane faster, presumably to meet the company quota.

"They put the machinery behind us, that puts pressure on us so that we have to cut faster and there are people who have cut themselves because of the speed they are working at."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

The fast pace of work, working under extreme weather conditions, and working during seasons or times of the day with low visibility exposed all workers to risks of falls and injuries.

"Especially night work. It's not the same as the light from a tractor or a pickup truck as daylight. I had people almost die from falling into holes in the sugarcane fields."

—Dominican of Haitian descent, former supervisor, Eastern region

Other risks included workers' exposure to smoke and high temperatures from the pre-harvest sugarcane burning. According to one KII, data from Florida sugarcane fields show clear causal linkages between the burning of sugarcane and respiratory illnesses among sugarcane workers. Although these data are based on research conducted in the United States, they indicate the long-term health impacts of exposure to sugarcane burning. Workers interviewed for this study reported sugarcane burning in their fields, and some also mentioned health implications due to exposure to the high temperatures and the ash.

"You know it's strenuous work, and the dust, burnt cane, ash, it all goes up and affects us a lot."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

All sugarcane cutters are provided with boots and gloves to protect them from the machetes, and some of the sugarcane cutters interviewed also reported receiving shin guards, but the rest of their bodies are exposed to the extremely sharp edge of the machete. The risk of injury also increases during the night and during the rainy season when vision is poor.

"We can get all sorts of injuries. You can even get hit by a machete on your hand or knee. The shin guard only covers one side of the leg, so there are parts of the leg where a machete can hit you… (and) many people fainted from the heat."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

According to a KII respondent familiar with the working conditions on the sugarcane plantations, the protective gear provided to the workers is often ripped or faulty, and some workers, such as those handling pesticides, are not provided with the necessary gear to protect them from these chemicals. This was corroborated by workers who said that they sprayed pesticides and did not report the provision or use of masks or any protective equipment for their lungs.

In addition to the risk of injuries, workers also face the risk of illness from their exposure to extreme weather conditions and impure water. Those interviewed mentioned instances of workers fainting in the field or getting sick from working in the heat or in the rain. Feeling dizzy was also common due to the heat or lack of nutrition.

> *"Sometimes there are people who get sick and do not find the humane treatment that they should be given and also the work is a bit forced in the hot sun, the food they give is not enough for you, nor is it enough, water—there are things that are missing for it to be something normal."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region*

The majority of workers expressed a lack of control over their working conditions, ranging from their work hours, the amount and type of labor they provide, their ability to rest, and their ability to complain about work conditions, and how effective it is to do so.

As part of this study, researchers interviewed two workers working in *colonos.* The sample size is too small to assess the working conditions of the workers in the *colonos,* but where possible, this report highlights quotes and experiences of the two *colono* workers interviewed.

The industry experts as well as CSO respondents attributed the poor conditions in the *colonos* to a lack of regulation and informality of the working relationship on their premises. Their experiences are similar to workers outside of *colonos.* However, based on our small sample and KII informants, the working conditions in the *colonos* may be subject to less regulation, and consequently, be worse than the conditions in the large plantations.

> *"Colonos [small landowners] try to have five or six workers under difficult conditions, sometimes not registering them, not providing health benefits, and not participating in the social security system. These workers are treated in a form of labor servitude...the person working there, and the homeowner see the person as part of the family but don't guarantee them any rights. On the other hand, large companies, despite paying less than what the law mandates, at least provide some participation in the social security system."*
>
> *—Local CSO representative*

It is important to note, however, that workers without legal status likely do not qualify for these benefits provided at large plantations. Consequently, many workers are left to rely solely on medical treatment and severance from their respective companies.

Employer provision of food and water throughout the workday varied among the workers interviewed. Most reported receiving water during the workday, which was distributed by a mobile tank. This water was often reported to be tap water, however, and was not potable.

> *"It [water provided in the fields] makes me sick to my stomach. I went to the doctor, they did some tests, and I had amoeba."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region*

> *"Sometimes we see [the water tank] being filled with even dirty water. They authorize the driver to fill up the tank."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region*

As a result, some workers preferred to buy their own water or bring water from their homes, adding to their daily cost of living. One of the workers interviewed also reported getting ice with their water from the company's tank. In most cases, however, workers had to buy ice if they wanted cold water, because the tank sat out in the sun.

The analysis of the interviews suggests that the companies have an established system to manage workplace injuries with doctors or hospitals, which implies how common such injuries are. This system involves the receipts being given to workers by the doctor at a hospital, which allows them to take paid leave from the company. In the absence of that receipt, workers do not get paid during their leave. With that receipt, they are paid the average amount they were making before their injury for 7 to 10 days, depending on the employer. It is reported that bosses are responsible for taking injured workers to the doctor and obtaining the necessary license for compensation. Workers mentioned that companies have different ambulances stationed in the sugarcane cutting area in case of injury. However, concerns arise regarding access to medical licenses, especially for workers who face language barriers. One worker shared that, in some cases, workers must rely on their boss or a family member who speaks Spanish to help them obtain this note, as many workers only speak Haitian Creole.

> *"It is not my experience but there are some people who have families or friends who speak Spanish, and they do the licensing procedures [for compensation for paid leave] for you, but if there is no license, there is no payment."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region*

Furthermore, some workers reported not receiving as much pay during their leave as expected or being paid for only part of their leave. Because workers were barely able to sustain themselves on their regular paychecks, some reported hiding their injuries so they could continue to work and make money. In addition, some workers express dissatisfaction with the treatment they receive, particularly when visitors are not present, suggesting that the quality of care may vary depending on external oversight.

> *"They have an ambulance at the sugarcane field, and they also have a mobile restroom for the workers, but they remove it when there are no visitors. (…) If you come unannounced, you'll see everything that happens here. But if you tell them beforehand, they act like they're the best."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region*

4.1.2.2 Indicator of Involuntariness: Very Low or No Wages

In 2022, the Dominican government increased the minimum wage of sugarcane field workers to 400 Dominican pesos (DOP) per day (Presidencia de la República Dominicana, 2022). In the study sample, 9 of the 25 workers interviewed reported that sugarcane workers in their workplace received less than this minimum wage, during at least some parts of the year, such as the non-harvest period.

A local CSO representative interviewed for this study, with family who continue to live and work in the *bateyes*, pointed out that the low pay keeps workers in conditions of poverty:

> *"I see my dad who has to get up at 4 in the morning with another man just like him, even until Sunday, to be able to stack a pile of cane, and [t]hat's like 500 pesos between the two of [them], I mean...what is 500 pesos...that is, less than 4 dollars between 2 people..."*
>
> *—Local CSO representative*

Due to their low wages, many of the workers are in perpetual debt to their *colmado*, or local convenience store, where workers can obtain store items through a loan system.[5] These loans are often given to workers at high interest rates. One worker said that if people borrow 10,000 pesos, the debt grows to more than double the amount, "and they have to pay it because they don't have the money to pay back the principal" (Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region). One KII respondent shared an example of how a sugarcane cutter's debt to local stores (colmados) prevented him from leaving his job.

> *"I have a Haitian friend who had a lot of debt and moved with his family...I went to the police station the day I saw him being accused of coming with a huge debt from the local store. So, I intervened and tried to intervene as best I could in this matter, but they don't have much possibility of movement now because of the situation. Although some tell me, with this problem of the weight of the cane, I think I'll leave the company...But I know about the local stores because I ask about them, but I don't think they can leave because they have to work for debt, for sure."*
>
> *—Local CSO representative*

Almost all workers reported having to buy food on credit due to their low pay, even if the company covered some of their meals during the day. One worker reported having to buy food during the workday as well. The cost of food (around 200 DOP for a plate of rice and beans) for a single meal is around half his daily wage (400 DOP per day).

The wage amount and type for sugarcane workers varied across locations and types of worker. Eleven of the 25 workers interviewed (all sugarcane cutters) were paid production-based wages, based on the weight of sugarcane they cut in a day or week. Nine were paid based on an hourly or daily wage rate. Only the former supervisor interviewed reported receiving a fixed salary. It is unclear how the wages of the remaining workers were calculated. Even among those who were paid production-based wages, their rates varied across locations. For instance, sugarcane cutters reported a rate range of 75.86 DOP to 215 DOP per ton of sugarcane cut. For those who were paid hourly, some were paid extra for overtime hours, but many were not.

For workers who received production-based wages, their ability to make the minimum wage amount varied by season and their own physical capacities. Some reported cutting 7–10 tons of sugarcane, but 1 sugarcane cutter reported barely being able to cut 1 or 2 tons per day:

> *"Sugarcane is cut for 135 pesos per ton. In the past, we used to cut up to 10 tons of sugarcane per day, but as the years go by, things have become more difficult. There are times when we only cut one or two tons."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region (colono)*

Elderly sugarcane cutters find it especially challenging to cut enough sugarcane to make minimum wage.

[5] Some *colmados* are owned by the sugarcane companies, and others are independent. If the local *colmado* is owned by a worker's employer, this could indicate a situation of debt bondage, an indicator of forced labor. However, the present study did not ask workers about the ownership of the *colmados* at their worksites, so this type of debt bondage cannot be confirmed within the sample.

"We cut 8, 7 tons of cane. That pays around 700 or 800 pesos for the day. But there are older folks who can only cut 3 or 4 tons of cane…the rate is 147 pesos per ton."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

Moreover, even those workers who did make minimum wage expressed its inadequacy to meet their and their families' basic needs. One worker shared that there are times when workers go a whole day without eating because they do not have enough money for food. Another worker shared that the 2,400 to 3,000 DOP that he makes on a weekly basis is not enough for his family, saying, "but you're obligated to do what you have to do" (Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region).

Workers also said that their pay failed to keep up with the increasing costs of commodities, so they are forced to work more every year to sustain themselves.

"…because they pay very little to us, and every day, things get more demanding, and instead of improving, we need to catch up. Before, we used to buy rice for 3 or 4 pesos, and now it's over 30... the price we get means we have to wake up early at 4 in the morning and work until 2 or 3 in the afternoon."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region

The weight of sugarcane also varies with different seasons, so that in some seasons, workers may have to work more to make the same amount of money. For example, the weight of the sugarcane is impacted by periods of drought.

"There's a period during the dry season when the sugarcane is much heavier because it's more concentrated. Conversely, during the rainy season or when it's freezing in December or January, the sugarcane is lighter. The cold makes it weigh less."

—Dominican of Haitian descent, former supervisor, Eastern region

Some respondents indicated that there are daily, weekly, or seasonal quotas set by the companies or supervisors. Workers reported that quotas are informally set and not mentioned in their contracts. However, each worker, or a group of workers, is expected to cut a minimum number of stacks of sugarcane during a particular day or week or to cut a minimum area of sugarcane during a particular season. Workers are compelled to begin their day early, driven by the necessity to meet the quota. The failure to meet quotas instills fears among workers, who worry about facing termination or deportation if quotas are not met.

"You must get up early because there is a minimum amount of cane to cut. And if you cannot cut that minimum amount, you will be cut. They are going to take you to the border."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

"We always have to be out there, whether it's in the sun or the rain. We have a daily quota to meet, so we're always in a rush to finish."

—Dominican, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region

One of the workers (Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region), for instance, mentioned that their quota for the current year is 160,000 tons for all workers together. Several workers reported that they would be paid less if they did not meet their daily quota—this was regardless of whether they were elderly, worked overtime to meet the quota, or were ill.

"If he says he'll give you 50 pesos, but he gives you 30. And you have to settle for it because you can't go anywhere else, that's where you are."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region

"If you don't finish the piecework and come back tomorrow you would be working for the same amount of money because it is piecework."

—Haitian, cultivator, Western region

Sugarcane workers across locations expressed that the abuse they experience is reflected in their low pay, which forces them into a cycle of continuous labor and debt with no relief or upward mobility in sight.

"The abuse lies in not paying the rightful price for the work, and if you complain, you know they'll fire you, and you don't want to lose your job because your family depends on it."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

4.1.2.2.1 Wage Theft

Sugarcane cutters who are paid based on the weight of sugarcane they cut reported experiencing wage theft at the weighing of the cane. The sugarcane bundles are generally weighed at night after the end of the workday, and workers are typically not present during weighing. According to a CSO representative, Central Romana weighs sugarcane immediately, although typically, this process occurs at night in other companies. The representative also mentioned that some companies use a lifting device to generate a ticket indicating the weight of each sugarcane load. This was corroborated by a representative from the sugar industry, who stated that the sugarcane weighing process happens twice a day. Before the day begins, the scales are calibrated, and technicians often verify them for accuracy. The supervisor then collects the tickets with the recorded weights. The representative also mentioned that workers generally have confidence in the weighing system, although worker interviews suggest otherwise.

This lack of transparency allows for wage theft; workers report that there are often discrepancies between the actual weight of the sugarcane and the weight for which they are paid. One worker shared that these discrepancies are intentional and benefit the weigher of the sugarcane.

"If we are supposed to earn 10 pesos, they pay us 9. It's okay to make a mistake, but they never send 11; the error is always in their favor."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

This wage theft at the weighing of the sugarcane is further corroborated by an informant who says this is done so that others make a profit from the sugarcane cutter's work.

"Look, the weight is usually not shown to them [the workers] directly...The adjuster, the weigher, because everyone must make a profit in the face of this ignominy and this sugarcane that doesn't weigh [much]...So where is the profit? Who takes it? Is it just the big entrepreneur? (...) Now, maybe the weigher gets some perks, maybe the adjuster or the middlemen have some kind of advantages, they must have them because I can't explain rationally that the sugarcane doesn't weigh [much] just because of a technical problem with a scale that can be fixed."

—Local CSO representative

One planter shared his experience with wage theft. He felt that he and other sugarcane workers had nowhere to register their complaints if their wages were reduced without proper notice or reason.

"In the company where I work, sometimes you don't get paid the amount you work and you have no one to complain to because they give you a receipt to get paid, only God can make the claims. You can work and pray to God to get paid your money in full."

—Haitian, planter, Southwestern region

Some workers expressed fear of repercussions from their supervisor or loss of their job if they filed a complaint for wage discrepancies.

"If someone is going to make a claim, it should be everyone because if just one person goes, they will be fired from work...There is a human resources office in the company to handle complaints and claims, but if what you are doing to claim is not in favor of the company, they are not going to act in your favor because they understand that you are negatively influencing others for them. They fire you, give you your money, and take you out of work."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

A former supervisor interviewed for the study noted that although the salary of the supervisor was fixed and never fell short, the salary of "regular workers" frequently did:

"Payments to the regular workers often failed, but what failed was how they paid you. They paid you what they wanted, and there was no oversight from anywhere."

—Dominican of Haitian descent, former supervisor, Eastern region

One worker at a *colono* painted a vivid image of the difficulties of this wage loss:

"I am still determining how we will make it; people experiencing poverty always a struggle… they are deceiving us. When we go to get paid, we get very little."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region (colono)

Respondents also mentioned incidents of corruption and favoritism, in which some supervisors allocate a certain weight of sugarcane for a worker due to an established relationship or in exchange for a percentage of the workers' pay.

"They [foremen/ bosses] have an agreement with the sugarcane cutter and when they collect that money, they share it between them. It is a commitment, for example, if I am committed to you one day and I don't work, you throw me a sugarcane with my code...if I do 10, you write down 15 for me [or] 25 for me, when the payment arrives you have about 1,000 or 1,500 pesos. There are foremen who go into San [community savings scheme] and the sugarcane cutters are the ones who pay for that."

—Haitian, former sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

4.1.2.2.2 Lack of Clarity Regarding Wages

Across all types of workers, respondents expressed a lack of clarity on how much they make every week, or how each week's pay is calculated. Their actual pay versus their expected pay often varies every week.

"I think I'm going to earn 7,000 pesos [per week], but when I go to get paid, I only receive 2,500 [per week] pesos during the downtime."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region

"There is no exact price. I can't tell you how much they pay."

—Dominican of Haitian descent, chainman, Eastern region

Another worker described not knowing how much he will be paid until payday and mentioned how low wages for himself, and his coworkers are in comparison to workers in other positions:

"Sometimes we work a lot, and we don't receive much for the work we do because we don't know the prices but until Friday arrives, [when] we find out how much we are going to charge [i.e., be paid]. There are people who charge [are paid] up to 1,000, 2,000, 2,800, 3,000 pesos…the money is not enough because we work a lot…those who operate the machines are paid more while we are the ones who work by hand, the ones who work hardest, the money is not enough."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

4.1.2.3 Indicator of Involuntariness: Degrading Living Conditions

The indicator of degrading living conditions imposed by the employer was commonly reported by the workers in the sample.

Almost all workers interviewed either lived in housing provided by their employer or in homes that the workers have built on company land. As such, their housing rights are tied to their labor for the company, and they have limited control over their living conditions. Workers also expressed reluctance to voice complaints about their living conditions, because doing so could result in losing company-provided housing.

Workers did not say whether they were told what their living conditions would be if they worked for the company, and several signed work contracts without understanding them. Company-provided housing often lacks basic provisions, such as access to drinking or running water, privacy, security, electricity, and private bathrooms. Many workers reported living in cramped conditions, with some reporting 7 to 12 people living in a single room with bunkbeds. Some workers reported a lack of potable drinking water.

"We buy bottled water. There's a tap outside, but that water isn't safe to drink."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region

One worker reported that if their mattress was stolen, they would not receive another one because the company would not provide another mattress even if they had some available. When asked about the living conditions of Haitian sugarcane workers arriving in DR, one worker responded:

"For me it is a misery. There are people who leave Haiti to come to work here and they have no family. For example, sleeping outside or if they get someone to give them a mattress to sleep inside."

—Haitian, former sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

A few workers said that they did not have electricity. In some cases, workers reported that "The company often charges for the home, water, sanitation, and electricity and still doesn't provide electricity to the places" (Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region).

Workers living in company-owned housing said that they would lose their home if they were fired or quit their job. Although living conditions in company-owned housing are not adequate, workers depend

on them because they have nowhere else to go. As a result, workers must endure degrading living conditions to maintain their living space.

> *"There's a saying that when you don't have, you have to hold your nose to drink the water. You have to endure a lot of things, a lot of humiliations."*
>
> *—Dominican of Haitian descent, chainman, Eastern region*

Workers expressed being unable to complain about the living conditions due to fears of being terminated and consequently, losing housing.

> *"Sometimes, we live off the company because we don't know where to go. There are elderly people who are 96 years old, 80 in their country. If you leave the company, they take your house and don't give you the money you've earned. So, you have to endure."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

> *"If they fire me tomorrow, I have to leave, and I can't live there anymore. I'm there as long as I'm working. It's not secure."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

Another worker, who migrated from Haiti at a young age, expressed the ongoing struggle for adequate shelter and basic amenities despite years of dedicated service.

> *"I want a better life. Considering the amount of time I've been providing benefits, I don't have a proper place to sleep, I don't have drinking water, and they should treat workers better, so we can be content. That's what we want—a place to sleep, a place to bathe, and access to clean drinking water. We're providing them benefits, and they should treat us well."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cultivator, Eastern region*

Some workers, however, reported living in company-provided private, single-family units. This was more common among those who also live with their family. However, not all companies allow families to stay with the workers in the *bateyes* or offer single-family units.

The workers indicated that sugarcane cutters and foremen have different living experiences. The foreman who participated in the study said that he had a bigger house, running water, and a private bathroom, and he felt that his housing was safe. This was not the case among the other currently employed workers in the sample. According to a former supervisor interviewed, the lack of access to bathrooms is deliberately imposed and used to create hierarchies between the conditions of the workers and their supervisors.

> *"The supervisor's houses had bathrooms, but the workers had to go into the woods, and they weren't allowed to build their toilets... It was a dictatorship, and they didn't allow you to build a bathroom, not even an annex for the kitchen."*
>
> *—Dominican of Haitian descent, former supervisor, Eastern region*

There is a component of isolation within the theme of housing. One worker in the *colonos* said that people who live in the company's *bateyes* cannot have visitors. It is possible that the companies do not want visitors to see how the workers are living in company-provided housing. It is also possible that companies aim to increase workers' vulnerability through isolation, as a means to force them to work.

4.1.2.4 Indicator of Involuntariness: Abusive Requirements for Overtime or On-call Work that Were Not Previously Agreed with the Employer

Although Article 147 of the Labor Code of the DR sets the legal limit for working hours at 8 hours daily (Código de Trabajo, n.d.), Article 281 sets a higher daily limit of 10 hours for agricultural workers (Código de Trabajo, n.d.; ILO, n.d.). Long working hours were reported by many of the workers, and only some of the workers mentioned getting paid for them.

Five of the workers interviewed reported working for more than 10 hours, under conditions of involuntariness. Sometimes, this can mean working at night with low visibility and a high risk of injury.

During peak harvest season, workers across different positions frequently work 12-hour shifts. One worker reported that sometimes they work more than 12 hours in a day. Another worker said that workers do not have an exact end time to the workday because it depends on the goal or quota set by the employer, which can sometimes mean continuing to fill several wagons with sugarcane well beyond 12 hours. In some cases, especially for workers who are paid on an hourly basis, workers are paid extra for these additional hours. However, the amount that these workers are paid is often arbitrary or unpredictable. When asked how much they are paid for overtime, one worker said:

> *"I can't tell you; they just say they will pay us overtime, but they don't confirm whether it's 50, 60, they just pay us overtime."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

For those who make production-based wages, workers reported welcoming overtime as an opportunity to make more money that day or week. The low rates paid to these workers compel them to work as long as possible. Workers were sometimes compelled to work overtime due to the need to meet the quota. When one worker was asked whether they can refuse to work extra hours, he responded:

> *"It's like, whatever you want, you have to do it. You don't have another job, you're already there… You have to wait for the Big Boss to say something to you."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

One worker said that he could refuse to work overtime, but his boss would notice and eventually he would be fired. However, other workers reported that working extra hours was not mandatory and they could freely refuse to do them, at the expense of extra pay.

4.1.2.5 Indicator of Involuntariness: Limited Freedom to Terminate Work Contract

One worker commented that if they decided to quit their job, they would not receive all the benefits that they were owed. He cites that he would lose his severance pay if he quit.

> *"If you want to leave and you go to ask for your liquidation, they are not going to give you anything. If you have 100,000 pesos there, they will give you half of it, 50,000 pesos. I would like to leave, but I don't want to lose my severance pay."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region*

4.1.2.6 Indicator of Menace of Penalty: Abuse of Workers' Vulnerability Through the Denial of Rights or Privileges or Threats of Dismissal or Deportation

Of the 25 workers interviewed, 11 described abuses of vulnerability, including threats of dismissal or deportation in their workplace.

Most of the workers interviewed were of Haitian origin (21 out of 25 workers) who lacked regular migration status and, as a result, lacked access to secure jobs and housing in the DR outside the sugarcane industry. In addition, they may face obstacles in obtaining higher education, vocational training, bank accounts, and sometimes cellular contracts. These opportunities typically require documentation for access. As one Haitian sugarcane worker explained:

> *"We, as Haitians, are in the batey. You have nowhere else to go to look for another job, so you work with them... as Haitians, we can't inquire about anything. We have to settle for what they give us."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region*

> *"You have to take what you can because you have no other options. If we Haitians find a job, we can't quit because we don't know where we're going."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

These workers lived and worked under constant fear of deportation. For most Haitian workers, a work card or contract from the sugarcane company is the only paperwork they have with them, which allows them to live in their *batey* and work in the sugarcane sector. Once outside the *batey*, most workers have no document that provides them with legal status in the country, with some reporting expired documents, such as passports, that they have not been able to renew. This makes them dependent on their employers for a place to live and forces them to endure the degrading and hazardous conditions of their work and housing, and to accept the low pay and long hours discussed above.

A representative from a local CSO pointed out that young Dominicans of Haitian descent who have grown up in the *bateyes* are also left with no alternative but to continue to live and work there; without legal documentation of their DR residency or immigration status, these young people cannot access any other jobs in the country, not even informal jobs.

> *"This vicious circle continues...where young people [living in the bateyes] are Dominican [of Haitian descent], they do not have documentation, nor can they work in the hotel industry, which is what happens most in the eastern area, where young people most take refuge in the issue of construction, in the issue of informal jobs, that's right, where they can, but they still need to have documentation."*
>
> *—Local CSO representative*

Another representative from a local organization noted that Haitian workers' lack of documentation makes them vulnerable to being forced to work for their employers. They noted that these workers lack rights and are unable to find better working or living conditions.

> *"Well, there is their documentation, this documentation practically makes them, for me, have a batey as a prison, and they are forced by their illegal status, they have an ID and with the ID they are admitted or subcontracted. In this sense I met some sugarcane workers who lived like animals and who had been subcontracted by a contractor to a colono."*
>
> *—Local CSO representative*

Worker interviews show that in some cases, the employers or supervisors abuse workers' vulnerability by threatening and intimidating the workers. As a sugarcane planter noted during the interview, Haitians, like "people with a criminal record," are "willing to do anything" (Haitian, Eastern region)—thus expressing how Haitian migrant workers, due to their vulnerable position in the country, are willing to take up any degrading work offered to them.

"It is everyone who is mistreated here, especially the Haitians who are mostly illegal and they [the employers] know that they are not many job options and they know that our children from descendant to descendant are here in the batey working the sugarcane."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

Employers use threats of dismissal or deportation to coerce workers to work at a certain pace or to dissuade them from complaining about their conditions.

"Bosses of the company throw out the people who can't cut at least 25 piles of sugarcane and not only that they take you out, but they take you to the border…"

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

"Many people have been fired for complaining... If you complain, they kick you out."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

Due to fear of retaliation, deportation, and loss of employment, the workers are reluctant to ask for better wages or complain about their living and working conditions. The workers also expressed fear of losing their housing if they made any complaints or tried to leave their employment. This fear is aggravated by an absence of accessible legal mechanisms to make claims for their rights and an absence of accessible alternative employment opportunities.

"If you complain, they fire you. They don't mistreat you; they don't beat you, but you can't complain."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region (colono)

One of the workers interviewed referred to the *bateyes* as "lawless" and workers like himself as "lawless goats," adding that no one wanted to "speak up for us." This lack of representation and absence of proper regulation or grievance redressal mechanism makes the workers feel like they are at the mercy of the company and forced to accept the conditions imposed on them.

"When we say [to our bosses that] we can't take it anymore, they can fire us."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

Workers' fear of losing their job is also tied to their fear of losing their housing in the *bateyes*.

"We live off the company because we don't know where to go...If you leave the company, they take your house and don't give you the money you've earned. So you have to endure… it's like being left for dead right there."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region

"You cannot stay inside the company house without going to work unless you are sick. You must get up early because there is a minimum amount of sugarcane to cut. And if you cannot cut that minimum amount, you will be cut. They are going to take you to the border."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter Southwestern region

4.1.2.7 Indicator of Menace of Penalty: Withholding of Wages or Other Promised Benefits

Some workers (n=10) reported that they face the withholding of their wages or other promised benefits if they quit their job or fail to meet their daily quota. Workers reported losing their pension, insurance, vacation, and wages.

A worker in the Eastern region reported that quitting his job would mean "los[ing] it all," including his pension and the insurance provided while employed (Haitian, ticketer, Eastern region). Another worker said that if they quit, they are not paid the full amount of money they earned:

> *"They [the employer] take about half…I have 250,000 pesos but if I ask for it [for my money and don't work anymore] they'll give me around 200."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region*

When asked what happens if a worker does not meet their daily quota, one worker said:

> *"That gets you in trouble, and they start giving you penalties. When they see that you don't want to work, they mark it as work abandonment, and then you lose your vacations and other benefits"*
>
> *—Dominican of Haitian descent, chainman, Eastern region*

He speaks to not only his reality but also that of many workers at the harvest stage of sugarcane production; they risk their benefits and wages if they do not meet the production quota. One worker in the Eastern region reported that his employer deducts pay from his fixed salary if he does not work on some days. The company deducts time not worked from his paycheck, and this seemed to apply even if the worker was sick and had to miss days of work.

Although some workers indicated that they could refuse to work, this decision could have serious consequences on their pay and the benefits provided by their employer. Therefore, they are forced to continue working due to the threat of these necessities being withheld.

Elderly workers are forced to continue to live and work on the *bateyes* as they wait for their pension. A 68-year-old sugarcane cutter interviewed for this study continued to work 12-hour shifts in the sugarcane fields after 45 years of service as he waited for his pension. "If I already had my pension, I would have quit by now," he explained. In the absence of his pension, and with his expired identity card, he is unable to leave the *batey*. He said he has "nowhere to live" and is forced to continue to live and work on the plantations. Another sugarcane cutter reported that despite having requested his pension in 2002, he still has not received it. When asked why he thinks he has not received it, he said:

> *"Because I don't have an ID card. They say I'm not eligible for a pension because of that paper…I arrived here with a Haitian ID. The company gave me a certificate, but if I had the ID, I would already have my pension."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region*

A local CSO representative interviewed for this study confirmed that only individuals with Dominican identification cards can access health and pension benefits. Yet, employers of Haitian sugarcane workers without legal documentation in the DR continue to deduct the social security contribution from the wages of these workers, even though they are aware that these workers do not qualify for social security benefits.

4.1.2.8 Indicator of Menace of Penalty: Restrictions on Workers' Movement

Many workers reported restrictions of workers' movement in their workplace (four of them attributed these restrictions explicitly to their employers). This is due to a combination of company policies and the policies of the Dominican government (discussed further in Section 4.2). Most of the Haitian sugarcane workers stated that they keep their movements limited due to fear that Dominican government authorities will deport them once they exit the premises of the company land. As one of the Haitian

sugarcane cutters at a *colono* (Eastern region) explained, “You can’t move around freely.” The experiences of restriction of movement in the sample are related to employers abusing the vulnerability of workers. This is because many sugarcane workers—particularly those of Haitian origin—have no legal status in the country to protect them from deportation. As a result, workers are prevented from escaping working conditions they do not want to be under, because as long as they stay within company land, they are somewhat protected from adverse migration actions due to informal agreements between the companies and the government.

One worker from the Eastern region differentiated their freedom of movement between the harvest and non-harvest season:

> *“During the harvest season, like zafra [harvest], you're required to be there, but when it's not, you can leave.”*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

In addition, some companies have curfews and lock the gates of the housing compounds. Workers who leave the premises for any reason and are unable to come back before the curfew have to stay out for the night and enter the premises in the morning in time to be picked up by the bus to their worksite.

> *“They had a curfew to go out, but they locked the gate. For example, they would say until 9, and nobody could be outside at 9 p.m. It's a kind of dictatorship or slavery. And if they stayed out, they had to wait until the next day.”*
>
> *—Dominican of Haitian descent, former supervisor, Eastern region*

One key informant alluded to a potential agreement between sugarcane companies and the Dominican government to not raid company lands.

> *“What we understood is that that [company] land is not very often patrolled by Dominican authorities… It's kind of a state within a state, so as long as you're within that state, your quote unquote, OK, in terms of legal implications.”*
>
> *—Sugarcane sector observer*

Moreover, some sugarcane workers mentioned that, at the end of the harvest season, the sugarcane company arranged for a vehicle to take the Haitian workers to the border. Some workers interviewed confided that they were living in the *bateyes* during the non-harvest period, without the company’s knowledge. Other workers interviewed reported leaving the *batey* when these vehicles arrived, with their supervisor’s knowledge, to avoid being taken out of the country. They were then able to continue to stay in the country, and even in the *batey* in some cases, and were ready to work for the next harvest season.

> *“Some of us have paid some of the bosses to leave earlier and so the superiors do not realize it and when the harvest opens, we return, they think that we come from Haiti, but we have been here. When I finished collecting the bonus and end-of-year incentive, I ran away from the center that's why they didn't take me to the border.”*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region*

> *“We are dedicated cane cutters; they went to look for us in Haiti to cut cane. After six months the harvest closes, they take us to the border and when the harvest reopens, we return, and they look for us around the months of October and November. When I came here, as I live near the*

border, I went through the mountains and when I arrived further ahead, they sent a truck to look for me."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region

Two of the workers interviewed also mentioned surveillance visits from the company. One of them called it the arrival of a "white van" and the other mentioned surprise visits by "stewards." During these visits, the workers have to make sure they appear productive for fear of losing that day's pay if they do not.

"…but when we see a white van arrive, we should move our hands and that's like that with everyone."

—Haitian, wagon driver, Southwestern region

"Stewards come by surprise and if they arrive and you are not working then you would lose the day's work even if you work a lot."

—Haitian, planter, Southwestern region

4.1.2.9 Indicator of Menace of Penalty: Withholding of Valuable Documents, Such as Identity Documents

Two of the Haitian workers reported that the company took their work card during the non-harvest period. As mentioned previously, these cards are often the only source of identification available to many Haitian workers in the DR. Without it, their movement is further restricted, and they are unable to find other employment in the country. In addition, given that it is the only identification they have in the country, workers mentioned that without it, they would be denied medical services.

"If they left the codes [work cards] one could work in another area, but they keep the code [work card]; so there is no way to work, they take the codes [work cards] until the harvest opens and the harvest opens in December."

—Haitian, wagon driver, Southwestern region

"If you have the code [work card] in his name, the bosses take him to the hospital but if he doesn't have [it] they can't do anything for him."

—Haitian, planter, Southwestern region

4.2 Additional Qualitative Findings

4.2.1 Recruitment and Contracts

Most workers were directly hired by the company or by their respective supervisors. Among the workers interviewed, some older workers mentioned being recruited from Haiti, but most voluntarily arrived at the plantation in search of paid work. They learned about the plantation from their acquaintances, and it was often the only option available to them to make a living. However, CSO representatives interviewed for this study also reported the continued involvement of "scouts" or "intermediaries" in recruiting Haitian sugarcane workers. One of the CSO representatives clarified that workers are no longer recruited from Haiti, as was common previously in the sugarcane industry; instead, Haitian migrants who are already living or working in the DR are targeted for recruitment as laborers in the sugarcane fields.

"There are still scouts in the communities who actively search for people, not only for sugarcane but also for construction work."

—Local CSO representative

"The previous model of recruiting workers from Haiti is no longer in place because the sugar industry is not as attractive, and they now rely on migrants who have been in the country for 15 to 20 years. Since these migrants have no education and cannot read or write, the only option left for them is to continue working with settlers."

—Local CSO representative

Nine of the workers interviewed reported getting a contract for their work. These contracts are generally valid for a single harvest season. Some workers reported getting a new contract every year, and others received a single contract years ago that has never been renewed. Two of the workers also reported receiving separate contracts for the non-harvest season. One worker said that they are paid differently during the *zafra*, or harvest period, compared to during the off season.

"When the contract ends, we have to sign another contract for the downtime, which means cultivating and planting sugarcane until the next zafra starts because we don't have any guarantees for food during the downtime."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region

Others have never received a contract and were only given verbal confirmation for their jobs, along with the protective equipment, a mattress, and a place to stay.

"If you live in the batey, you already work for them."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region

Even those who did sign a contract with their employer expressed lacking adequate knowledge about the terms of the contract. Many sugarcane workers are either illiterate or are only proficient in Haitian Creole. Two of the workers reported having to sign work contracts written in Spanish without the contents explained to them. The workers thus signed the contract without understanding the wage rates, working hours, and benefits that they were entitled to, such as healthcare in case of a workplace accident.

"Some people don't have their documents and they don't know how to speak. They don't know where to find a lawyer or a union. If you don't have someone to advocate for you, you're going to die."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region

"At the end of the harvest we realized that the contract was that we earned $400 DOP a day no matter how much we worked."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

These findings point toward the sugarcane workers' lack of awareness of their rights and entitlements in their workplace. This increases their risk of deception and wage theft. It also heightens their vulnerability to experience hazardous and degrading working and living conditions, because they are unable to advocate for themselves or demand their rights.

"[Haitian workers] are completely unaware of their rights and the procedures related to, for example, immigration regularization and child registration. There is a lack of awareness about the procedures and what they need to have on hand to do them."

—Local CSO representative

4.2.2 Workers' Relationship with Their Supervisors

Most of the workers interviewed indicated that their daily working conditions depend on their relationship with their immediate supervisor. These supervisors can make working conditions and pay comparatively better or worse, without the knowledge of higher-level company officials. Overall, workers indicated that companies lacked effective mechanisms to address supervisor behavior, but one former supervisor mentioned that there were immediate termination measures for supervisor abuse.

"Central Romana doesn't abuse its workers, and if a supervisor tries to or does abuse a worker, they will be terminated immediately."

—Dominican of Haitian descent, former supervisor, Eastern region

Workers described situations in which grievances regarding underpayment went unaddressed due to the absence of avenues for complaint. They also highlighted instances in which strikes or discussions with higher-level management temporarily alleviated issues, but afterward problems persisted.

"That day none of us went to work, we stayed at the compound. When that happened, the bosses from Barahona came to the compound to talk to us. (…) When they come to talk to us everything is fine. One payment, two payments, [everything is] fine. And then it's the same [issue] as before."

—Haitian, former sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

In the absence of oversight from the company, the workers' everyday reality in the fields and the *bateyes* is dependent on the leniency and protection of their supervisors. As mentioned previously in this report, this could mean favoritism, in which workers with better relations with a supervisor are singled out and given better pay than the other workers.

"If you have a godmother or a godfather [referring to an having an existing relationship with a specific supervisor within the company], you will get better pay...if you don't have any of those things, you won't get paid at all. There are people, when they have a godfather and godmother, earn up to 5,000 or 6,000 pesos a week, when you [other workers] only earn 2,000 or 1,800 pesos no matter how hard you work."

—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region

Two of the workers also reported that their overtime pay being determined as per the whims of their supervisor.

"Sometimes they give you for 1 hour 50 pesos, 70 pesos and you end up exhausted. Sometimes it is 8, 9, or 10 o'clock at night… there are bosses who have no condolences from anyone. They just want the work to get done."

—Dominican of Haitian descent, chainman, Eastern region

Lastly, the former supervisor interviewed for this study (Dominican of Haitian descent, Eastern region) noted that the companies are now bringing in Colombians for the "middle-high positions" because "they

say we Dominicans are colluding with the workers." This, however, was not mentioned by any other respondent in the study.

4.2.3 Immigration Policies, Enforcement, Discrimination, and Impacts on Forced Labor Experiences Among Workers in the Sample

The Dominican government's immigration policies (discussed in more detail in Section 5) also serve to exacerbate the risks and vulnerabilities faced by Haitian workers in the DR sugarcane industry. Specifically, widespread deportations in the DR makes these workers dependent on the companies for safety and the ability to stay and work in the country. This compels Haitian workers to remain in company-owned housing and endure poor working conditions on the plantations.

> *"I'm afraid because immigration is picking up people in [a nearby town]. I know they're picking people up there, so I don't go there, and I have to stay at home [in the batey]."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and fumigator, Eastern region*

Without the necessary legal documents that would allow them to seek alternative employment beyond the sugar sector, workers reported feeling trapped and forced to endure substandard living and working conditions. When asked whether his legal status has limited him in some ways, one worker said:

> *"Yes, because sometimes we don't have papers, we can't even walk on the street. When Dominicans talk to us, we can't even lift our heads, and that's abuse. You can't even go to the police, or they might shoot you and dump you in the woods…Two months can pass without me being able to see [my daughter] …I can't go to [a nearby town if I need to] buy [something] because of the current situation. The police and migration (authorities) are making things difficult."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region*

Haitian workers reported being afraid of being seen by the Dominican police or by immigration officials, fearing detention or deportation.

> *"If you don't have documents, you have nothing. Right now, those who are working can't go anywhere. You can't go see your family."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Eastern region*

One of the workers also expressed racial abuse and discrimination by Dominicans and by the Dominican police. This further adds to their fear and their feelings that they cannot move freely outside the *bateyes*.

> *"Right now, you know that immigration is not letting anyone in or out. We are here like prisoners; we can't leave. We're stuck here, and we have no rights. We have to endure it all."*
>
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter and cultivator, Eastern region*

Some of the KII respondents also alluded to close ties between the Dominican government and the sugarcane companies.

> *"Well, Central Romana is...the biggest landowner, the biggest employer in the country and...[they are] politically extremely influential...There's been, in the past at least, if not continuing today, a kind of revolving door between the government and the company...I mean, the former vice president of Central Romana was the foreign minister for the Dominican*

Republic...So the influence…and this is true in many countries, [it] is hardly exclusive to the DR, but the influence of big business...makes a huge impact on the policies."

—Sugar sector observer

Although it is in the interests of the Dominican government to eliminate forced labor within the country's sugarcane supply chain, the industry's influence on the government and the importance of the industry for the Dominican economy complicate the government's ability to do so. As one key informant put it, "The (Dominican) government is interested in working with the U.S., but they also don't want to, you know, cross this powerful corporation" (Sugarcane sector observer).

4.3 Forced Labor Risks in the Sugarcane Supply Chain

4.3.1 Forced Labor in the Domestic Supply Chain

As reported in Section 4.1, indicators of forced labor were reported at the harvest stage of sugarcane production in the DR—that is, the first stage of the domestic supply chain. The study sample did not report any forced labor during the transportation and processing stages of the sugarcane supply chain in the DR.

The study covered a small purposive sample of 25 workers from 9 provinces across the Eastern and Southwestern regions. Of the 25 workers interviewed, most reported experiencing involuntariness indicators (n=24). In addition, 16 reported both involuntariness and menace of penalty indicators in their workplace, indicating the presence of forced labor conditions.

The sample included those working in different positions—sugarcane cutters, cultivators, fumigators, wagon drivers, chainmen, ticketers, foremen, and supervisors. Experiences of coercion were particularly high among sugarcane cutters in the sample.

Because the study sample was small and purposive, the findings of this report do not statistically represent all workers in the Dominican sugarcane industry. However, within the context of this sample, the findings corroborate the vast body of literature on forced labor conditions in the DR sugarcane industry and suggest that experiences of forced labor are not specific to the supply chain of one company or region. Interviews with KII respondents indicated that the labor conditions in the *colonos* are less regulated and often worse than those in the larger plantations. Worker interviews show that although working conditions and wages vary between different plantations, sugarcane workers across regions experience involuntariness and menace of penalty indicators. Although a few KII respondents pointed toward positive efforts taken by the industry to improve sugarcane workers' conditions, this study did not find any clear evidence to suggest that any of the sugarcane companies in the DR do not have forced labor conditions in their fields.

Thus, it can be reasonably assumed that all sugarcane produced in the DR is at risk of being produced by workers experiencing indicators of forced labor.

Harvested sugarcane is processed at one of four mills in the DR. At this point in the supply chain, sugarcane grown by the sugar mill owner and sugarcane from *colonos* is co-mingled. Sugarcane is processed into raw sugar, refined sugar, bagasse, molasses, and furfural. The study's findings (see Section 4.1) show the presence of indicators of forced labor conditions across plantations and geographies, so therefore all of these downstream sugarcane downstream products are at risk of being produced with forced labor.

4.3.2 Sugarcane Production, Processing, and Consumption in the Dominican Republic

Sugarcane producers are composed of two main groups: large sugarcane producers that operate plantations and mills, and smaller independent producers known as *colonos* that grow sugarcane to sell to a sugar mill for processing. Worker interviews as well as the KII responses indicate the presence of forced labor conditions across the sugarcane plantations owned by both types of producers. As of 2024, four large producers grow approximately 70% of the sugarcane produced in the DR and that operate sugar mills: Central Romana, *Consorcio Azucarero de Empresas Industriales* (CAEI, or Sugar Consortium of Industrial Companies), *Consorcio Azucarero Central* (CAC, or Central Sugar Consortium), and CEA. Of these, Central Romana and CAEI privately own their sugar mills (Central Romana and Cristobal Colon, respectively), CAC leases from the government through CEA (Barahona), and CEA is state-owned and operated by the government (Porvenir). The remaining 30% of sugarcane in the country is produced by *colonos,* which must sell their sugarcane for processing to a sugar mill.[6]

Colonos sell their sugarcane to either Central Romana, CAEI, or CEA for processing into raw sugar. Thus, although each sugar mill grows its own sugarcane for processing, the sugarcane from multiple *colonos* is comingled with sugarcane from larger plantations at the sugar mill, except for CAC, which does not purchase sugarcane from *colonos*. Central Romana and CAEI mills are the only ones that also process the raw sugar they produce into refined sugar.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in the 2021–2022 season, the DR harvested 117,000 hectares of sugarcane.[7] Data suggest that a significant amount of sugarcane in the DR is cut with manual labor, although mechanization has been introduced in some areas. The hand cutting of sugarcane on plantations in the DR is primarily performed by Haitian migrants who are paid based on weight of sugarcane cut per day per week or, in some cases, a fixed hourly/daily wage (see Section 4.1 for more details about sugarcane workers' wage rate and type). The workers cutting sugarcane are those most at risk of experiencing indicators of forced labor.

There has been a push for mechanization in the DR from top political leaders (KII 17). Large plantations and *colonos* continue to use manual cutters due to the high cost of machinery, the low price of labor, and a desire to maximize the brix[8] of cut cane. Furthermore, the hilly terrain of some sugarcane plantations precludes mechanization with sugarcane-cutting equipment. As the findings in Section 4.1 indicate, the manual sugarcane cutters work under risks of physical hazards and injury and for very low wages (with some even receiving less than minimum wage rates).

Larger producers are more likely than *colonos* to have the resources necessary to mechanize sugarcane production (KII 3). CAEI's website indicates that 30% of its harvested sugarcane is cut with manual labor

[6] In marketing year 2021–2022, *colonos* produced 31.9%, or 1,794,531 metric tons (MT) of the 5,618,097 MT sugarcane grown in the DR (INAZUCAR, 2022).

[7] According to company websites, self-reported cultivated sugarcane land by company is 67,178 hectares for Central Romana, 35,000 hectares for CAEI, and 8,400 hectares for CAC. In addition, according to *Alcoholes Finos Domincanos'* corporate website, the distillery cultivates 630 hectares of sugarcane fields, or 0.005% of the 117,0000 hectares cultivated in the DR. Porvenir's hectares for 2021 could not be verified, but is assumed to be approximately 6,000 hectares. Furthermore, given that company plantation size equals total national harvested area, without separate accounting of land by *colonos,* it is possible that company land estimates include land they do not own, but rather refer to *colonos*-owned land from which they have procured sugarcane (CAC, 2023; CAEI, 2023; Corporate Accountability Lab, 2023; INAZUCAR, 2022).

[8] Degrees Brix (symbol °Bx) is a measure of the dissolved solids in a liquid.

(1,200 cutters).[9] Central Romana's website indicates that 50% of the "company's process has been automated."[10] Central Romana's website does not indicate what percentage of the sugarcane is being cut by hand; therefore, it is unclear whether the automated percentage is meant to include mechanized activities such as tilling, planting, hauling, or mechanization of cutting sugarcane.[11] Regardless, the website does clearly state that "25% [of the sugarcane fields] cannot be automated due to the ruggedness of the terrain," and 1,800 ox-drawn carts are used to haul hand-cut sugarcane to railway stations [for transportation to sugar mills] (*Central Romana Agriculture*, n.d.). CAC's corporate website indicates that it has 3,800 direct employees, but it does not indicate the number of sugarcane cutters or specify efforts at mechanization (CAC, 2023). Likewise, state-owned Ingenio Porvenir reported "... that right now only about 30% remains non-mechanized, and we aim to be 100% mechanized by the next year" (KII 5). It also indicated, "…we are at a point where almost everything is mechanized, and they [laborers] only perform the cutting. Other tasks are handled by the company" (KII 5). To clarify, 70% mechanization refers to all sugarcane planting and harvesting activities rather than indicating that 70% of sugarcane cutting is mechanized. Given the variety of points at which mechanization is possible, it is beyond the scope of this report to analyze company-reported mechanization statistics. However, it is clear that there is a trend toward mechanization among the largest sugarcane growers in DR.

As explained by a sugarcane specialist interviewed for this study, two common types of equipment are used in sugarcane plantations: loaders and sugarcane cutters. A loader can collect sugarcane cut by manual laborers. A sugarcane cutter, on the other hand, is a heavy piece of equipment used to cut sugarcane in lieu of cutting sugarcane by hand. Given its weight and center of gravity, this type of equipment cannot operate on a slope of more than approximately 8% (KII 7).

> *"And there's different stages of mechanizations...the first step to mechanization would be like just loading it mechanically...you get now these combines, […] the loader […]grabbing the big bile of cane...It's always the first step of mechanization. Then the combine [sugarcane cutter] is kind of like cuts. It blows the leaves out and would put into a transport wagon […]you're cutting pieces that are about 8 inches long."*
>
> *—Sugarcane specialist (academic)*

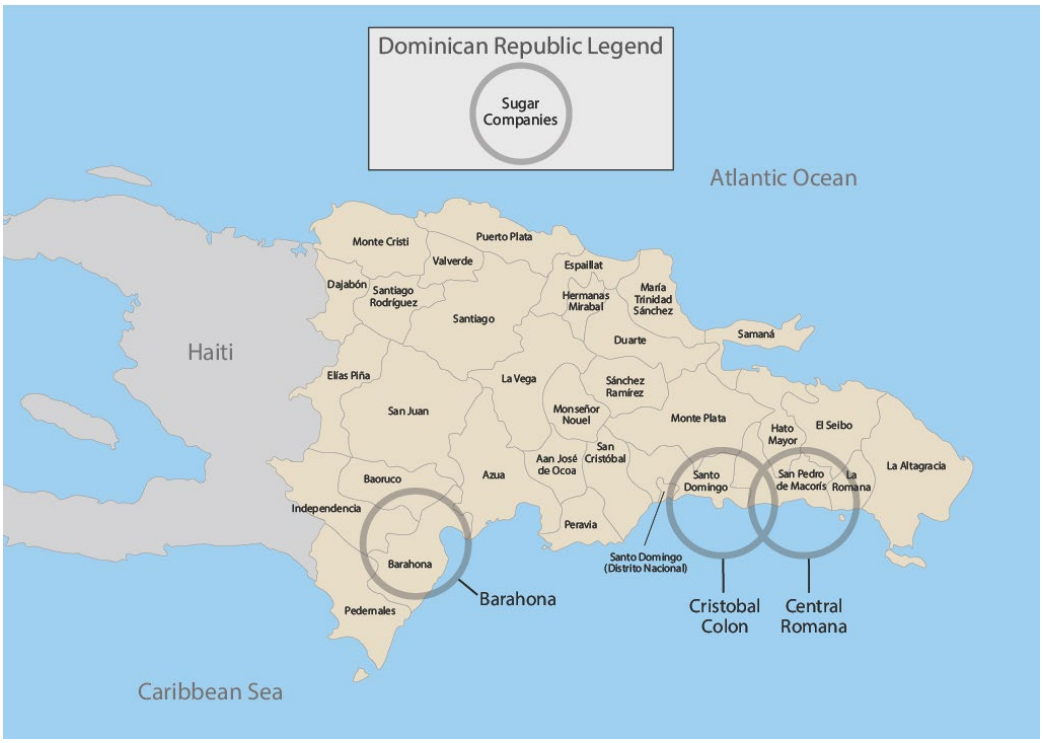
Thus, even while ignoring the cost of mechanization, given the topography of existing sugarcane cultivation in the DR, only a maximum of 85% of plantations could be cut by mechanized cutters (Group, 2006-2020, n.d.).

[9] CAEI is a group of companies, comprising approximately 4,000 employees (fluctuation between 3,000 and 4,100 employees depending on *zafra* or off season). CAEI employs approximately 1,300 Haitian nationals, as well as employees from Colombia, Venezuela, Cuba, and Brazil. During research interviews, a CAEI representative stated," […] in our operation of around 1,300, we have about 650 employees dedicated to sugarcane cutting during the harvest, and in the last harvest, we achieved 74% mechanized harvesting. The remaining 26% was manual cutting with approximately 600-650 cane cutters. This is a number that our organization has been working on for about 10 years to increase the level of mechanized harvesting. Why? Because we see that it's becoming increasingly challenging to find labor for manual cutting." (CAEI KII)

[10] See more: https://centralromana.com.do/estructura-corporativa/agricultura/?lang=en

[11] The research team attempted to conduct an interview with Central Romana. An initial meeting took place to answer questions regarding the study, and then Central Romana stopped responding to follow-up requests for an interview.

Figure 2. Map of domestic sugarcane production



Source: ICF; (FAS, 2022)

This study's research suggests risks of forced labor in sugarcane cutting across the DR. Cut sugarcane from multiple sources is co-mingled at the point of sugar mill processing.

4.3.3 Domestic Processing

During marketing year (MY) 2021–2022, the national sugarcane harvest totaled 5,618,097 metric tons (MT). The *colonos* accounted for 32% of the total sugarcane processed in the country during the 2021–2022 *zafra*, with a total of 1,794,531 MT. The vast majority of the sugarcane grown at the *colonos* was sold to Central Romana (900,899 MT) and CAEI (772,112 MT); the remaining 6% (112,211 MT) was sold to CEA/Porvenir (INAZUCAR, 2022).

Cut sugarcane is perishable, so transporting it to the sugar mill is time sensitive. Sugarcane stalks cut by hand have to be transported within 24 hours of harvest to maximize sucrose level and reduce the risk of spoilage. The cut sugarcane is transported through a variety of modes, including ox-drawn carts, trucks, and trains.

Colonos typically transport their cut sugarcane by truck. An industry representative explained the process by which they purchase sugarcane from *colonos*:

> *"We set an annual price for the purchase of sugarcane, which, let's say, this past year was 2,050 pesos based on a 10% yield, meaning for every 10 tons, they should provide 1 ton of sugar. That was last year; in reality, the average yield was a bit higher, so they ended up paying or we ended up paying around 2,200 pesos per ton of sugarcane to different suppliers."*
>
> *—Industry representative*

The largest plantations transport cut sugarcane from the fields by rail or truck to the sugar mills.[12] Several railway networks are dedicated to the sugarcane industry in the DR, including those run by the state-owned CEA group and the three large private sugar companies—Central Romana, CAEI, and CAC (Railway Gazette International, n.d.). Sugarcane is loaded onto these trains using a mix of machine and hand labor.

> *"They have a train and that train takes the sugarcane to the sugar mill to make sugar."*
> *—Haitian, sugarcane cutter, Southwestern region*

At the sugar mills, all the cut sugarcane are processed into raw sugar.[13] When sugarcane is processed into raw sugar, the sugar mills can produce byproducts (molasses and bagasse) and further refine it into downstream goods (refined sugar and furfural). Central Romana and CAEI have vertically integrated facilities in which raw sugar can be immediately processed into refined sugar. National production statistics for sugarcane, raw sugar, and refined sugar for the last two marketing years are summarized in Table 2. Due to the industry's manufacturing structure, the production totals for raw sugar, as published by INAZUCAR, do not account for the raw sugar used in the production of refined sugar.

Table 2. Total domestic sugarcane, raw sugar, refined sugar production, MY 2021–2022

Domestic production of sugarcane 2021–2022			
Market year	Sugarcane (MT)	Raw sugar (MT)	Refined sugar (MT)
2020/2021	5,595,540	444,897	166,639
2021/2022	5,618,097	463,012	162,397

Source: INAZUCAR, 2022; Mayol, 2023; Boletín Cierre Zafra Azucarera 2021-2022 (INAZUCAR)

According to research correspondence with INAZUCAR, in addition to sugarcane production at the four sugar mills (Central Romana, Ingenio Cristóbal Colon, Ingenio Barahona, and Ingenio Porvenir), one distillery, *Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos*, grows its own sugarcane (INAZUCAR KII).

Of the four sugar mills, all produce raw sugar and molasses. Only Central Romana and CAEI produce refined sugar, and Central Romana alone produces furfural (FAS, 2020; INAZUCAR, 2022). Table 3 outlines product production levels for each sugar mill (*ingenio).*

Table 3. Domestic production of raw sugar, molasses, furfural, and refined sugar by *ingenio,* MY 2021–2022

Ingenio (owner)	Raw sugar (MT)	Molasses (gallons)	Furfural (pounds)	Refined sugar (MT)
Central Romana (Central Romana Corp.)	213,525	19,035,700	64,153,278	144,058
Ingenio Cristobal Colon (CAEI)	15,827	10,909,324	0	18,321
Ingenio Barahona (CAC)	89,615	6,098,544	0	0

[12] "As of today, 93% of the sugarcane that CAEI receives is transported to us by trucks. We call it "Goma," and you may have seen the yellow queues on the right when you entered. That's the transportation we use to bring the sugarcane from the fields here. The remaining 7% is transported by train." (KII 1)

[13] In addition, one rum distiller, *Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos,* grows its own sugarcane for alcohol production. In 2010, with $1 billion USD in co-financing from the European Union, it established a distillery reported to process 55,000 liters of alcohol a day from sugarcane juice. Reportedly, in 2010, the facility requested access to the former CEA sugar fields to grow and harvest sugarcane. *Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos* is a company formed by Hazim Frappier, Santoni Vivoin families, unspecified sugar growers, and the owner of Ron Barcelo and Ron Siboney (Barcelo Export Import C x A) (Diario Libre, 2010).

Ingenio (owner)	Raw sugar (MT)	Molasses (gallons)	Furfural (pounds)	Refined sugar (MT)
Ingenio Porvenir (CEA)	9,045	1,365,336	0	0

Source: INAZUCAR, 2022

Production numbers should be understood to reflect local farming and weather conditions.[14] Although the amount of land designated for sugarcane cultivation has remained relatively steady in recent years, sugarcane production levels are also heavily impacted by sugarcane variety and dry weather patterns (KII 7; Mayol, 2023). The USDA notes that below average rainfall in MY 2019/2020 resulted in a decrease of 12.9% among major Dominican producers. Furthermore, low rainfall in winter 2023 (relative to 2022) resulted in an estimated 4% drop in production levels year on year, and anticipated dry weather conditions in 2023/24 are further reducing production volume forecasts (Mayol, 2023).

4.3.4 Domestic Consumption

The uptick in domestic consumption of sugarcane products in the last few years is attributed to the return of normal operating levels in the country following the COVID-19 pandemic for small and medium-size processing enterprises and the tourist hospitality industry[15] (FAS, 2022a; FAS 2022b; FAS, 2023).

Table 4. Domestic production and consumption of raw sugar, refined sugar, and molasses MY 2021–2022

	Raw sugar (MT)	Refined sugar (MT)	Molasses (gallons)	Furfural (pounds)
Imports	10,000[16]	0	0	0
Exports	168,982	1,050	21,018,445	50,268,069
Local sales	144,815	108,477	11,156,021	
Production	463,012	162,397	37,408,904	64,153,278

Source: FAS, 2022; INAZUCAR, 2022

Raw and Refined Sugar

In MY 2021–2022, local sales consumed 31.2% (144,815 MT) of raw sugar production in the DR and 66.8% (108,777 MT) of refined sugar production[17] (INAZUCAR, 2022). Retail consumption of refined and raw sugar is sold under local brands, including Caña Linda Brand sugar (CAC) and Cristal De Caña (CAEI). CAEI has a company, *Endulzza del Caribe* (Sweeten the Caribbean), which markets CAEI's products in the DR (KII 1).

Industrial enterprises that are presumed to use local sugar as an input include confectioneries, bakeries, and beverage producers. Domestic consumption of sugar-sweetened downstream goods is augmented by a robust hospitality industry; in 2022, the DR, with a population of 10.8 million, welcomed 7.2 million

[14] In addition to introducing new sugarcane crop varieties, sugar production from sugarcane can be increased by new farming techniques, even if hectares of cultivation remain relatively constant. For example, the USDA largely attributed the annual increase in production in MY 2021/22 to the expansion of drip irrigation systems on CAC's sugarcane fields (Mayol, 2022).
[15] According to the Dominican Central Bank, after receiving nearly 2 million tourists from January to June 2021, the DR has received over 3.5 million tourists during the same period in 2022 (FAS, 2023).
[16] Imports of raw sugar represented 0.07% of local raw sugar sales in MY 2021/22. In 2021, the DR imported raw sugar from Colombia (60.4%), Guatemala (35.1%), El Salvador (2.2%), Costa Rica (2.1%), and Brazil (0.2%) (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023; HS 1701.13 and 1701.14). Percentages by value.
[17] Calculated from values in Table 4.

tourists (Mayol, 2023; "Country Summary," n.d.). These downstream food and beverages sweetened with raw and refined sugar are at risk of being produced with sugarcane harvested with forced labor.

Molasses

In MY 2021–2022, approximately one-third of domestically produced molasses was consumed domestically in the DR.[18] Molasses is most commonly used in livestock feed and rum production, with specialized transport routes depending on the end use (KII 3).[19]

There are many rum distilleries in the DR, including Brugal Rum, *Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos* (Ron Barcelo, Ron Atlantico, and Ron Matusalem), Bermudez, Matusalem, Summum, Perla del Caribe, and Oliver and Oliver. In addition, there are manufacturers of rum infused drinks, such as J & J Spirits, which manufacture *Mama Juna,* a spiced alcoholic beverage containing rum, wine, honey, and herbs. Of these distilleries, all use domestically produced molasses to produce rum, except *Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos,* which produces alcohol directly from the fermentation of sugarcane juice (Lopez, 2023).[20] Molasses is also used in animal feed, primarily for livestock. Animal feed companies in the DR that use molasses in animal feed include Central Romana and Dex Iberica, S.A., among others. These downstream uses of molasses in livestock feed and rum are at risk of being produced with sugarcane harvested with forced labor.

Furfural

Furfural is exclusively produced and exported by Central Romana and is not consumed domestically (INAZUCAR KII; INAZUCAR, 2022). Thus, all furfural exported from the DR is at risk of being produced with forced labor.

Bagasse

Bagasse is consumed domestically as an energy source at sugar mills and is not exported (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023). The domestic sugar mills are near self-sufficient in energy production from sugarcane bagasse as a fuel source. CAEI and CAC are reportedly interested in supplying energy to the national matrix (co-generation) to generate revenue. CAEI appears to be the market leader in supplying energy from bagasse:

> *"… we have San Pedro Energy, a 30-megawatt cogeneration plant. This co-generation plant is the only one of its kind in the country, running on bagasse from sugarcane and woods that we also cultivate. It is the only manageable renewable plant in the country, meaning we can provide renewable energy 24 hours a day."*
>
> *—Industry representative*

4.3.4.1 Sugarcane exports

The vast majority of downstream sugarcane products exported from the DR are in the form of raw sugar or rum. Of the major downstream sugarcane products, the largest exports by value were rum (48.5%),

[18] Calculated from values in Table 4.

[19] Molasses is occasionally used in food and medicines. Porvenir, the smallest domestic producer of molasses (approximately 3.5% in MY 2021/22), indicated that, "typically, we sell the molasses in the local market, where it is used in the production of various products, including edible items, medicines, and medicinal alcohol for consumption." (KII 5)

[20] *Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos* is an alcohol distiller, established in 2010, that grows sugarcane to produce sugarcane juice for alcohol production (*Billion Peso Distillery Opens in San Pedro de Macoris - Diario Libre*, n.d.).

raw sugar (41.7%), molasses (6.4%), furfural (3.4%), and refined sugar (>0.1%)[21] (UN Comtrade, Appendix 3). The following section outlines the trade of these goods internationally, to offer a better understanding of how the downstream products of sugarcane at risk of being produced with forced labor are consumed.

As an island, the majority of the DR's exports pass through one of the country's 15 seaports. The most heavily used ports for sugarcane products include the Port of Santo Domingo, Port of Barahona, Port of Puerto Plata, and Haina Port. Research did not find evidence of sugarcane products being exported by plane, although there are airports with cargo capacity with direct flights to the United States, including the Santo Domingo Las Americas International Airport (Amerijet International and UPS Airlines) and the Cibao International Airport (Amerijet International).

4.3.4.2 Trade Regulations Impact on Sugar Exports

On November 23, 2022, CBP issued a WRO against raw sugar and sugar-based products produced in the DR by Central Romana Corporation Limited (Central Romana). According to the press release, the WRO was issued based on information that reasonably indicates the use of forced labor in its operations. CBP identified 5 of the ILO's 11 indicators of forced labor during its investigation: abuse of vulnerability, isolation, withholding of wages, abusive working and living conditions, and excessive overtime. Effective November 23, 2022, CBP will detain raw sugar and sugar-based products produced in the DR by Central Romana at all U.S. ports of entry (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, 2022). Given Central Romana's role as the dominant exporter of a majority of downstream sugarcane products to the United States prior to 2022, this policy ruling has impacted the domestic supply chain and exporting patterns.

Although the WRO indicates that there is reasonable evidence of forced labor specifically in Central Romana's operations, this report suggests that all sugarcane byproducts and downstream goods produced in the DR are at risk of being produced with forced labor, not just those from Central Romana. In the months following the implementation of the WRO, in the main destination markets of the DR, there were some limited changes in export patterns of downstream sugarcane products. The most significant change, especially in the case of raw sugar, was that other domestic sugar companies replaced Central Romana's role in exporting to the United States.

INAZUCAR reassigned the production and export quotas to sugar mills to redirect supply to local and foreign markets, awarding export quotas to CAEI rather than Central Romana, leaving Central Romana to sell raw sugar to the domestic market (FAS, 2023). Limited shipping data confirm this trend (Panjiva, 2023). The U.S. tariff rate quota (TRQ) program is unique to raw sugar, so there was no need for INAZUCAR to formally reallocate export quotas for other downstream sugarcane products (rum, molasses, furfural).

The following sections will examine Dominican exports and international trade data of raw sugar, rum, molasses, furfural, juice, and animal feed from 2021, before the WRO was implemented.

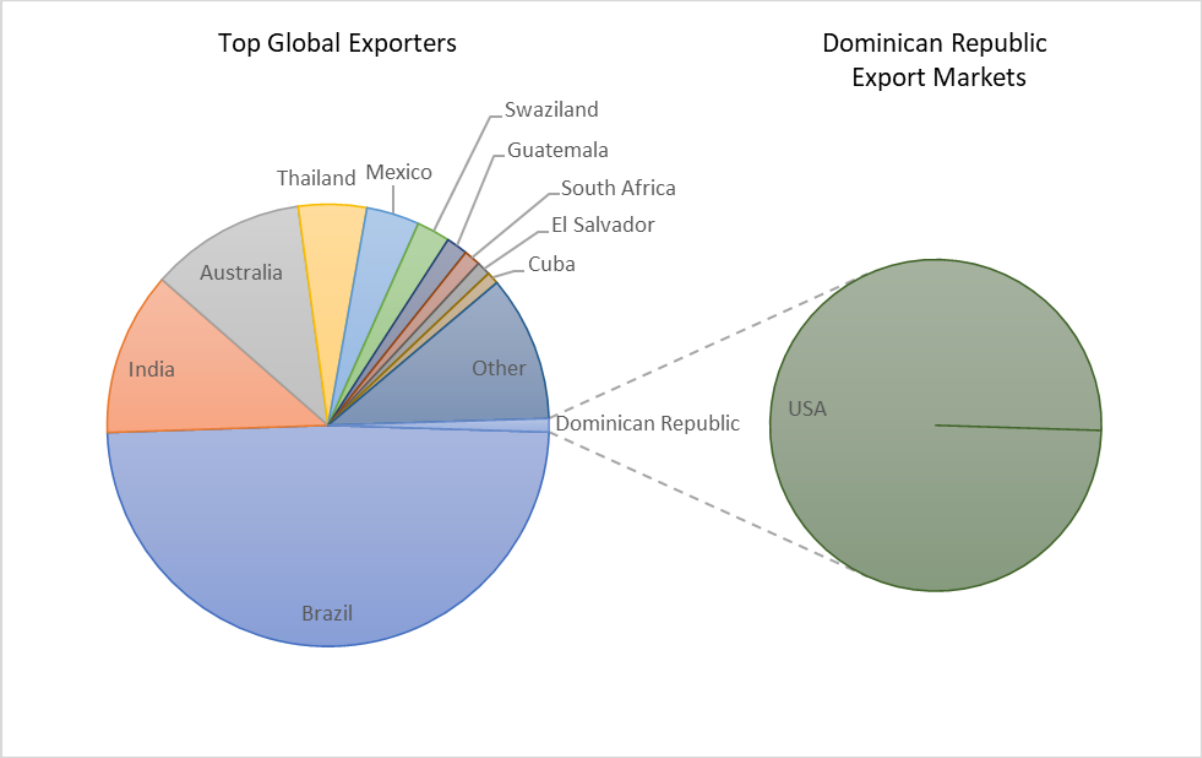
4.3.4.2.1 Raw Sugar

The DR is not a major global supplier of raw sugar, exporting less than 1% of global exports in 2021. The top five global exporters of raw sugar are Brazil (50.3%), India (12.3%), Australia (11.7%), Thailand

[21] Unlike raw sugar, refined sugar is only exported from the DR in trace amounts, approximately $8,000 in 2021 (UNCOMTRDE through Panjiva, 2023).

(5.1%), and Mexico (4.0%) (see Appendix 3). More than 99% of raw sugar from the DR is exported to the United States, as illustrated in Figure 3.[22]

Figure 3. Top export markets by percentage for raw sugar in 2021



Source: ICF. UN Comtrade, 2023. Harmonized System (HS) Codes: 1701.13, 1701.14

Exportation of raw sugar from the DR is a regulated process that is carried out in accordance with export quotas set by INAZUCAR. The United States is the main market for the exportation of raw sugar from the DR, and it annually publishes its allocation of favorable TRQs, which are in turn allocated to DR sugar mills by INAZUCAR. In addition to TRQs for sugar, the United States administers three sugar refinery import incentive programs: the Refined Sugar Re-Export, the Sugar-Containing Products Re-Export Program, and the Sugar for the Production of Polyhycric Alcohol Program. The Refined Sugar Re-export incentivizes businesses to import raw sugar and export refined sugar (USDA). An industry observer noted that the U.S. government should not be "subsidizing forced labor" through the sugar program, noting that major sugarcane producers in the DR, such as Central Romana, lobby to the U.S. government to influence U.S. sugar policies, which are worth hundreds of millions of dollars to Central Romana every year (KII 2). During an interview with researchers, CAEI noted the importance of tariff policies to Dominican sugar mills:

> *"The Dominican Republic enjoys the highest percentage of access (AA) to the U.S. market, known as the Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) or American quota. Essentially, this means that a group of countries has tariff-free access to the U.S. market. Like any other market, the U.S. protects its*

[22] In 2021, Dominican export statistics recorded that 0.2% of raw sugar exports by free on board (FOB) value were shipped to Saint Lucia, and 99.8% were shipped to the United States. Saint Lucia's import statistics did not yet report raw sugar imports from the DR in 2021. Figure 3 represents trade values, as reported by importer cost, insurance, and freight value (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023).

domestic industry with high tariffs. Anyone can import sugar, but without being under the quota system, they would have to pay high tariffs, making it less competitive. As mentioned, the Dominican Republic has a 17% share of this quota, equivalent to 190,000 tons of sugar. This quota is then allocated to the country and distributed among different producers based on a three-year production average, according to INAZUCAR regulations. The main producer in the country is Central Romana, which, due to certain conditions, cannot export to the U.S. or would face high tariffs. Therefore, this year, INAZUCAR has distributed the quota among other sugar mills, assigning 70% to one and 30% to Ingenio Barahona."

—Industry representative

The owners of Central Romana play a dominant role in sugar production and refining, in the DR and the United States. Central Romana is owned by the Fanjul family, which founded Florida Crystals Corporation in 1960 (two sugar mills, one refinery, one rice mill, pack and distribution, largest biomass plant). The Fanjul Corporation plays a dominant role in sugar production and refining in the United States. In 1998, Florida Crystals Corporation and the Sugar Cane Growers Co-op of Florida partnered to form American Sugar Refining (ASR) (later the ASR Group) (ASR Group, 2023). Through a series of acquisitions over the last two decades, including Domino Foods in 2001, California and Hawaiian Sugar Company in 2005, Jack Frost in 2007, and Redpath Sugar in 2010, the ASR Group has become the largest refinery and marketer of sugar in the world, with an annual capacity to produce 6 million tons of sugar a year, while selling a reported 1,500 products in 100 countries (ARS, 2023; NYT, 2001).

At present, ASR owns and operates six sugar refineries in North America (Yonkers, NY; Baltimore, MD; Chalmette, LA; Crockett, CA; Toronto, Canada; and Veracruz, Mexico) with vertically integrated packaging, warehousing, and distribution systems. In addition, ASR also owns sugar refineries in England, Portugal, and Belize (ARS, 2023). Its sugarcane products are sold to retail grocers and industrial and specialty food enterprises under brand names, including, but not limited to, Domino, California and Hawaiian Sugar Company, Redpath, Tate&Lyle, Sidual, SRB, Belize Sugar, and San Nicolas.

Given the personal and business ties between Central Romana and ASR, there was a strong commercial relationship between the two entities. Prior to the WRO issuance against Central Romana, it was the dominant exporter of raw sugar for the DR. In 2021, INAZUCAR allocated Central Romana a quota of 138,647 MT for export, and it eventually exported a total 295 million pounds (133,810 MT) to the United States in 2021 (USDA, 2022). CAEI and CAC also exported raw sugar to the United States before the WRO, albeit in lower quantities.[23]

As reported by the USDA, following the WRO order and seeking to retain TRQs with the United States, the sugar industry in the DR reached a temporary consensus to reassign mills to supply the domestic market or exports to the United States. The agreement stipulated that Central Romana would decrease output of raw sugar by 19% to 170,000 MT and increase output of refined sugar (for domestic consumption) by 10% to 160,000 MT; in coordination, CAEI would decrease its planned production of refined sugar to match Central Romana's increased production goals (FAS, 2023). INAZUCAR reallocated Central Romana's TRQs to CAEI (increased from 51,426 MT to 132,729 MT) and CAC (increased from 18,934 to 56,614). Shipping data of raw sugar exports from the DR to the United States are extremely

[23] As noted on their website, CAEI sells "brown and refined sugar" in 1 to 125 pound bags, as well as 1.5 ton industrial "super sacks." CAEI indicates that it supplies to large national and multinational industrial customers, such as supermarkets, minimarkets, small and medium trading companies, small trading companies, supply stores, and sugar wholesales.

limited; however, available data do not contradict any of the export allocation data reported by INAZUCAR or USDA (Panjiva, 2023).

Although official statistics are readily available, it is worth noting that some KII respondents expressed skepticism about how raw sugar exports were being handled in the wake of the WRO, as Central Romana's export quota was reallocated to other producers (KII 12).

Although there is skepticism about reallocation of raw sugar exports, it is important to note that efficient reallocation is possible for several reasons. First, the sugar industry is heavily regulated, and INAZUCAR has the authority to allocate export quotas and set prices. Second, the *colonos* sale of sugarcane could be redirected away from Central Romana to CAEI and CAC, allowing them to increase the volume of raw sugar produced at each facility. Third, a variety of other farming and climate conditions may impact sugarcane yields, and thus the production levels of raw and refined sugar. Fourth, it is possible that production targets will not be met and not all TRQs fulfilled.

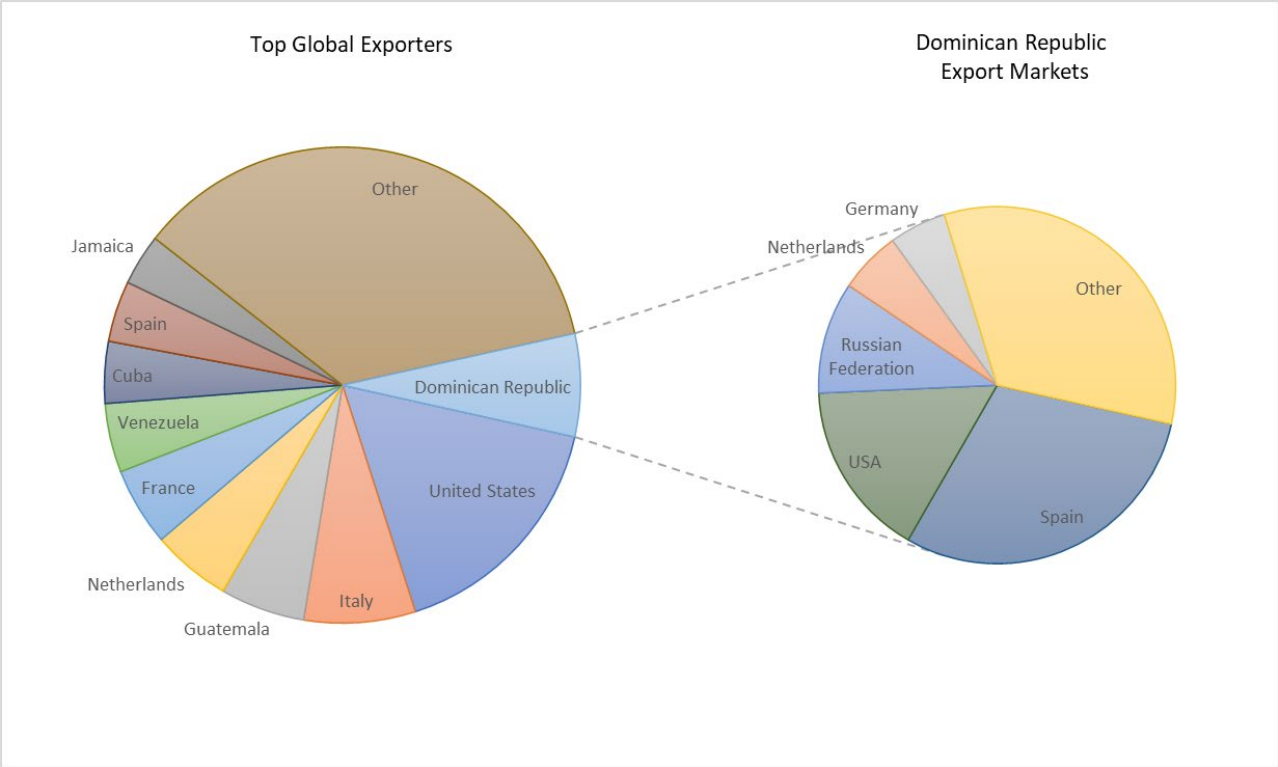
This reallocation of raw sugar produced by Central Romana into the domestic market has implications for implementation of the WRO, as raw sugar consumed domestically could be used as an input in food and beverages that could be exported to the United States. However, for the purposes of this report, it is not necessary to isolate the products produced with sugarcane from Central Romana, as all sugarcane produced in the DR is at risk of being produced with forced labor.

4.3.4.2.2 Rum

The DR has a material global presence in the export of rum. In 2021, it exported 7.5% of the rum traded globally; only the United States (18%) and Italy (8%) exported more (Appendix 3). As illustrated in Figure 4, Spain (30.4%) was the largest destination market for Dominican rum in 2021, followed by the United States (16.3%) and Russia (10.3%) (Appendix 3).[24]

[24] Between 2021 and 2022, the DR reported a 23.2% increase in the value of rum exports, from $112 million rum exports (free on board) to $138 million (free on board). Due to reporting delays, complete international trade data for 2023 are not available at the time of writing.

Figure 4. Top export markets by percentage for rum in 2021



Source: ICF. UN Comtrade, 2023. HS Code: 2208.40

Rum is sold in retail bottles under Dominican brand names and wholesale, which can be refined and barrel aged by importing distillers. Available shipping was extremely limited for top European and Russian destination markets—the data available primarily listed buyers as retailers or wholesalers, rather than distilleries (Panjiva, 2023).

U.S. import data indicated that approximately 75% of rum imported to the United States through the DR went through three districts: Miami, New York, and the U.S. Virgin Islands (DATAWEB, 2023). Shipping data were insufficient to identify major buyers and end uses of rum imported from the DR.

4.3.4.2.3 Molasses

DR exports of sugarcane molasses represent 2.6% of the total global sugarcane molasses trade, significantly less than leading exporters India (28.9%), Indonesia (12.6%), and Guatemala (8.4%).[25] In 2021, the DR reported exporting $19.5 million worth of sugarcane molasses; 67.5% to the United States, 28.3% to Barbados, and 3% to Trinidad and Tobago (UN Comtrade through Panjiva).

The United States is the largest destination market for Dominican molasses, and Puerto Rico is the dominant importing district. In 2021, 96% of molasses exports from the DR into the United States were sent to Puerto Rico, and the remaining 4% were imported into Houston-Galveston, TX (DATAWEB, 2023). In 2022, Puerto Rico remained the largest importing U.S. district, with 78% of Dominican molasses exports. However, in 2022, other U.S. districts imported molasses from the DR, including Houston-Galveston, TX (7.9%); New York, NY (7.9%); Boston, MA (5.7%); and Miami, FL (less than .01%)

[25] Values reported by importer cost including freight

(DATAWEB, 2023). It is unclear if the shift in the profile of molasses buyers in the United States is related to the implementation of the WRO in November 2022 or to other market forces.

An industry expert indicated that there are three major importers of molasses in Puerto Rico: Bacardi, Serralles, and Gabso (KII 10).[26] This is consistent with available shipping data, which also included records of imports by Ed & F Man Liquor. Bacardi and Serralles, two of the largest rum producers in Puerto Rico, import molasses for rum production. Both corporations sell alcoholic beverages under a variety of labels. Bacardi is best known for its white Bacardi rum, and Serralles is best known for Puerto Rico's best-selling rum, Ron Don Q. Gabso imports molasses for use in livestock feed, which it sells to provide nutritional supplement for livestock that are raised to produce both meat and dairy for domestic consumption in Puerto Rico (KII 10).

Before the WRO in 2022, Central Romana, CAC, and CAEI all exported molasses to Puerto Rico; although shipping data are limited, there are no shipping records of Central Romana exports post-WRO (Panjiva, 2023).[27] An industry representative interviewed for this study spoke of the difficulty in securing sufficient quantities of molasses and the rising prices resulting from not only the WRO, but also from lower sugarcane production, inflation, and rising freight and transportation costs; they reported prices fluctuating from $290 to $400 in 2023 per MT, compared to $180 in 2022 (KII 10).

Following the WRO, Puerto Rican buyers reported seeking new sources of molasses other than Central Romana; buyers increased purchases from CAC and CAEI out of the DR and sought out new suppliers in Panama and Guatemala (KII 10; Panjiva, 2023). As the Puerto Rican buyers struggled to secure molasses from the DR and other sources, one industry expert explained that during times of extreme shortage, companies occasionally would sell molasses to each other in an effort to support the local livestock and rum industries dependent on molasses imports (KII 6).

It is beyond the scope of the study to explore all the reasons for supply shortages and pricing of molasses in the U.S. market, following the WRO against Central Romana. While the sourcing of molasses remains in flux, DR molasses producers remain dominant suppliers to the Puerto Rican market.[28] This indicates that downstream producers of rum and animal feed in Puerto Rico are buying molasses at risk of being produced with forced labor.

In 2021, Barbados was the second largest destination market for molasses from the DR. Notably, 2021 marked a 240% increase in exports to Barbados, from a reported $1.6 million in 2020 to $5.5 million in

[26] In 2021, the United States imported $156 million of sugarcane molasses; by value, the top five sources were Guatemala (23.9%), El Salvador (16.0%), Nicaragua (11.4%), the DR (10.7%)., and Honduras (8.2%) (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023).
[27] In MY 2022–2023, INAZUCAR reported that Central Romana continues to lead in molasses production among all companies, accounting for 46% of the total. Of the 21,270,561 tons of molasses exported by the country, 62.1% (13,223,632 tons) originated from Central Romana; CAEI exported 18.2% (3,867,553 tons), and CAC exported 19.6% (4,179,376 tons) (INAZUCAR, 2023).
[28] According to available trade data for 2023, the value of U.S. imports of sugarcane molasses from the DR dropped 47.3%, from $18.8 million in 2022 to $9.9 million in 2023 (UN Comtrade, 2024). Of the sugarcane molasses imported to the United States in 2023, 77% was shipped to Puerto Rico and 17% to Houston-Galveston, TX, and the remaining 5% to Baltimore, MD (ITC DataWeb, 2024).

2021 [29] [30] (UN Comtrade through Panjiva). Trading patterns remained relatively consistent in 2022, when the DR reported $22.8 million in sugarcane molasses exports, 64.2% to the United States and 25.2% to Barbados (UN Comtrade, 2023). International trade data for 2023 are incomplete at the time of writing, but available data suggest a possible change in destination for Dominican molasses, although this can not be confirmed until all 2023 trade data is publicly available .[31]

Although shipping data are not available to identify specific importing companies, given molasses primary downstream use in animal feed and rum production, it is reasonable to assume that molasses is used in rum production by the four main distilleries in Barbados: Foursquare, Mount Gay, West Indies Rum Distillery, and St. Nicholas Abbey. In 2021, it is estimated that Barbados sourced approximately half of its imported molasses from the DR.[32] Given that Barbados imported five times as much molasses as it produced to meet domestic demand in 2021, and absent greater transparency in rum distillery sourcing, it is reasonable to assume that rum produced in Barbados is at risk of using molasses produced with forced labor in the DR.[33]

4.3.4.2.4 Furfural

Central Romana is the only producer of furfural in the DR. International Furan Chemicals (IFC), incorporated in the Netherlands, indicates on its website that it has "exclusive use and distribution rights of the furfural produced at the world's largest furfural facility, Central Romana Corporation (CRC), which is located in the Dominican Republic" (International Furan Chemicals, 2023).

The DR is a minor supplier of furfural to the global market. In 2021, the largest share of global exports originated from the United States (16.1%), Japan (14.2%), Germany (11.4%), South Korea (8.4%), and Brazil 6.4%. In 2021, the DR reported that exports of furfural were sent to Belgium (52.8%), the United States (31.9%), and the Netherlands (15.2%) (Panjiva, 2023). Around 2018, the value of exports to the Netherlands began to decrease, and the value of exports to Belgium began to increase. There were no shipping records to identify consignees of shipments, but given that the IFC corporate website lists that

[29] Values as reported by DR exports free on board. All other trade values in this report are reported by importer cost, insurance, and freight. Dominican export statistics are deemed more accurate than Barbados import statistics. Barbados import statistics report import of sugar beet molasses (HS 1703.90) from the Dominical Republic; whereas the Dominican Republic reports exports of sugarcane molasses (HS 1703.10). As the DR is known to export sugarcane molasses rather than sugar beet molasses, Dominical export statistics are deemed more accurate for the purposes of this report. (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023).

[30] The increase in exports from the DR to Barbados was primarily supported by an increase in total molasses exports from the DR, from $16.8 million in 2020 to $19.5 in 2021, as well as adjustment to trade patterns among smaller trade partners.

[31] Available 2023 trade data report that Guyana imported $8.7 million sugar beet molasses (HS 1703.90) from the DR, and the United States reported $9.9 million in sugarcane molasses (HS 1703.10) imports from the DR (UN Comtrade, 2024). In contrast to 2021 and 2022, in 2023 Barbados didnot report molasse imports from the DR, but rather reported $6 million imports of sugarcane molasses from the British Virgin Islands, Mexico, and the United States, and $7.3 million imports from the British Virgin Islands and Mexico. Due to limitations of available data, it is not possible to confirm the destination markets for Dominican molasses in 2023 or definitively explain annual volume, values, and suppliers of molasses in Barbados. Furthermore, at the time of report writing 2023 trade data was incomplete.

[32] Barbados import statistics misclassified sugarcane molasses as sugar beet molasses. For the purposes of understanding the makeup of Barbados suppliers of molasses when reporting Barbados imports, import data were collected for both sugarcane molasses (1703.10) and sugar beet molasses (1703.90). Under these two HS Codes, Barbados reported importing 61,148 MT of sugarcane and sugar beet molasses. The largest suppliers in 2021 were the DR (51.9%), Mexico (34.9%), and the United States (13.1%). In previous years, important sources of molasses also included Guyana, the United Kingdom, and Fiji (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023).

[33] In 2021, Barbados produced 91,129 MT of sugarcane, with an estimated molasses production of 6,287 MT. In that same year, Barbados reported that the country imported approximately 31,735 MT of sugarcane and sugar beet molasses and exported a total of 21 MT (HS 1703.10 and 1703.90) (FAOSTAT; UN Comtrade through Panjiva; Brathwaite, 2023).

it has locations in Belgium, England, Canada, and the Netherlands, it can be reasonably assumed that exports to both Belgium and the Netherlands are imported by IFC.

Imports to the United States may be re-exported. Existing shipping records prior to implementation of the WRO in November 2022 indicate that furfural exports from Central Romana were shipped to Odfjell Terminal Baytank and Stolt Tank Containers in Texas, companies which specialize in bulk chemical storage.

Furfural exported from the DR is at risk of being produced from sugarcane harvested with forced labor.

4.3.4.2.5 End Use Goods

It is beyond the scope of this study to trace all end uses of downstream sugarcane products, but two general categories of goods (juice and animal feed) merit mention for the likelihood of using raw or refined sugar and molasses as input goods.

Juice

Juice, as defined under Harmonized System (HS) 2009, may or may not contain added sweeteners. Therefore, values of juice sold under this category certainly overstate the total value of juices that are sweetened with sugar. Furthermore, sugarcane-based sugar is not the only type of sweetener used in juice production; other sweeteners include corn syrup and natural juices. Nonetheless, the size of the market and the likelihood that sugarcane sugar is used as a sweetener merit attention to the beverage sector. In 2021, $71.7 million worth of juice was exported from the DR, 79.6% of which was imported by the United States. Shipping records indicate that large companies, such as Goya Santo Domingo S.A., export juices, some sweetened with sugar. In Goya's corporate catalog, one product in its line of juices is sugarcane juice "*caña de azucar,*" which lists cane sugar as a main ingredient (Panjiva 2023; "Catalogo - Goya Santo Domingo," n.d.). Therefore, future research should investigate the possibility that sugarcane at risk of being produced with forced labor in the DR is being used to sweeten non-alcoholic juices.

Animal Feed

Molasses in the DR is used in animal feed production. The DR is not a major exporter of large global animal feed (HS 2309.90), exporting less than .01% of the animal feed global market, which a robust industry, valued at $16.5 billion in 2021. Primary exporters are led by the Netherlands (12.9%), the United States (10.2%), and Germany (8.5%) (UN Comtrade through Panjiva, 2023). This suggests that a majority of the molasses used in animal feed in the DR is consumed domestically. The end use of molasses-based animal feed points to the end use of sugarcane in the meat, poultry, and dairy sectors in the DR.

5 Examining the Impact of Policy and Other Factors Affecting Sugarcane Production in the Dominican Republic

Sugarcane plantations are, by their nature, towns isolated from the rest of the country. There is little to no government oversight into these plantations, and the workers have limited interactions with any civil society actors outside the plantation. The sugarcane companies monitor and regulate all aspects of the workers' lives—access to healthcare, food, water, housing, and even regulating and, in some cases, restricting visitors that workers can have in the *bateyes.*

Although there are labor and immigration policies (discussed below) in the DR with implications on the lives of sugarcane workers, as long as they live and work within the premises of the companies, the workers are in-practice typically outside the purview of these policies. The companies have their own guards who patrol and manage the premises, and they also have doctors, clinics, and grocery stores linked or affiliated with the *bateyes* that workers can access using receipts from the company.

In addition, as mentioned in Section 4.2, some of the KII respondents alluded to the sugarcane companies exercising a significant influence on the Dominican government, which might make the latter reluctant to intervene in the policies and conditions imposed by the companies in the *bateyes.*

5.1 National Policies Affecting Labor and Trade Standards in the Dominican Republic Sugarcane Industry

Labor in DR is governed by the Labor Code under Law No. 16 - 92. This law prohibits and criminalizes forced labor. As per the law, persons convicted of exploiting forced labor can be fined and imprisoned for 15–20 years. However, these penalties are rarely applied to violators. Further, even though the labor code is supposed to equally apply to workers of all nationalities, workers of Haitian origin or descent who lack documentation do not exercise their labor rights because of fear of deportation and expulsion from the *bateyes* (US Embassy, 2022).

Minimum Wage Policies. Minimum wage is fixed by a tripartite body, the National Wages Commission (NORMLEX, n.d.). In 2022, the minimum wage for sugarcane field workers was increased to 400 DOP per a full 8-hour day of work (Presidencia de la República Dominicana, 2022). However, many sugarcane workers are still paid based on weight of sugarcane cut, or area of land planted or watered, rather than by hours worked, with many of them not getting paid the difference between their production-based wage and the required minimum wage. Thus, as previously noted in this report, many sugarcane workers in the DR are in fact still paid less than the 400 DOP minimum wage set by national law. Moreover, even those who do make that much have to borrow money to meet their basic needs.

Sugarcane Policy. INAZUCAR is responsible for regulating the sugarcane industry, including setting prices, issuing export permits for Dominican sugarcane companies, and allocating preferential quotas for the sugar exported to the United States (INAZUCAR).[34] According to the DR Sugarcane Colonate Law 491 Art. 11, "The *colonos* shall be obliged to deliver all their sugarcane, placed in wagons or substitute equipment, to a company that has been customarily receiving them, in the places near their colonies, to be determined by the company, and the company shall be obliged to mill them, unless it proves that such sugarcane does not meet the conditions of cleanliness, maturity and all other conditions that would make it satisfactory for milling, such as its sucrose yield, except in cases of force majeure or unforeseen events or occurrences." (El Congreso Nacional, 1969).

5.2 Policies Affecting Haitian Migrant Workers in the Dominican Republic

Many individuals of Haitian descent born in the DR, including minors, remain undocumented due to a 2013 Constitutional Court ruling that retroactively withdrew birthright citizenship from those born after 1929 to non-citizen parents (U.S. Department of State, 2022). Law 169-14, enacted in 2014, aimed to address this issue by offering citizenship papers or a naturalization process to those rendered stateless

[34] "Law 491 controls the relationship between private sugarcane producers and millers and sets prices for raw sugarcane based on sugar content. Similarly, Law 619 assigns regulatory functions to INAZUCAR and governs marketing (domestic and export), TRQ assignment, price schedules, and statistics." (FAS, 2020)

by the 2013 ruling. The specific process varied based on the individual's status; those registered at birth (Group A) could apply for citizenship immediately, and those unregistered (Group B) were required to register as "foreigners" and pursue naturalization after a two-year residency period. However, the implementation of the 2014 documentation process was only partially successful because many stateless individuals were unable to obtain citizenship documents, and others failed to register, leaving them with no legal path to citizenship (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

The DR is known for the regular and arbitrary arrests, detention, and deportation of those suspected of being undocumented Haitian migrants (US Embassy, n.d.). As the worker interviews conducted in this study show, Haitian workers living and working on the sugarcane plantations live with the constant fear of deportation.

5.3 U.S. Policies Affecting the Dominican Republic Sugarcane Industry

As noted in Section 4.3, raw sugar from the DR is almost exclusively exported to the United States. Thus, U.S. trade policies have a significant influence on the sugarcane industry of the DR. For instance, the DR consistently receives the largest single-country allocation of the sugar import quota from the United States; in 2023, this was 17% of the total quota, amounting to 189,343 MT (USDA, 2023).

In addition, the U.S. sugar program, authorized by the Farm Bill, benefits DR sugarcane companies supplying to the United States. The program allows for minimum price levels for sugar, which is generally well above the market price in other countries, and also provides loans to sugar producers to store sugar for future consumption by U.S. consumers. These protections, as per a public policy expert interviewed for this study, are "worth hundreds of millions of dollars" for DR sugarcane companies like Central Romana. According to this expert, Central Romana promotes the continuation of these protections through significant lobbying in the United States to ensure the continuation of the sugar program.

> *"Through the Farm Bill, we continue to support Fanjul companies and this is where the domestic and international connect [at] the end of the day...I mean, they [Central Romana] are extraordinarily shrewd about making political contributions in order, and at the end of the day, there's one reason for that. That's to sustain…the sugar program and the Farm Bill, which is worth hundreds of millions of dollars to them per year."*
>
> *—Public policy expert*

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The occurrence of forced labor in the sugarcane plantations of the DR has been well reported on in the past. This study aimed to examine the current state of these realities in the DR sugarcane industry and trace the sugarcane supply chain in the DR and sugar-importing countries.

As discussed previously, the findings of this study show that 16 of the 25 workers who participated in interviews experienced forced labor, reporting both involuntariness and menace of penalty indicators. These findings are consistent with the extant literature indicating that sugarcane workers in the DR experience indicators of forced labor. Indicators found among the qualitative study sample include hazardous work conditions to which the worker has not consented, very low or no wages, abuse of workers' vulnerability, withholding of wages or benefits, degrading living conditions, restriction on workers' movement, abusive overtime requirements not previously agreed, limited freedom to

terminate work contract, debt bondage or manipulation of debt, and withholding of valuable documents.

Underlying vulnerabilities driving these abusive working conditions include the risk of deportation for Haitian workers, who are largely undocumented in the sector, and the lack of access to alternative income-generating opportunities. Workers are often forced to accept low or inadequate pay due to their lack of alternative employment options.

These findings offer the following conclusions:

- Sugarcane workers, particularly the Haitian workers and workers of Haitian descent, in the DR experience indicators of both involuntariness and menace of penalty.
- The workers experiencing indicators of forced labor are mainly engaged during the sugarcane harvest's production stage.
- The workers' experience of these indicators is not determined by their location or type of company. Thus, it can be reasonably assumed that all sugarcane produced in the DR is at risk of being produced by workers experiencing indicators of forced labor.
- Sugarcane from multiple farms and plantations is co-mingled at sugar mills in the DR where sugarcane is processed into raw sugar. Raw sugar can be consumed as a sweetener or further refined into refined sugar. As part of this process, mills also produce bagasse and molasses as byproducts. Bagasse is primarily used as an energy source to power the mills. The most common downstream use of molasses is in rum and animal feed production. Some mills also produce refined sugar and furfural. Refined sugar can be consumed directly or used to sweeten food (especially candies and baked goods) and beverages. Thus, although evidence of forced labor is most present in the harvesting of sugarcane, downstream goods of raw sugar, refined sugar, bagasse, molasses, furfural, rum, animal feed, candies, baked goods, and sweetened beverages are all at risk of using inputs of forced labor.
- The working conditions in the *colonos* may be subject to less regulation, and consequently, be worse off than the conditions in the large plantations. However, more research is needed to draw conclusions about conditions in *colonos*.

6.1 Study Recommendations

Government of the Dominican Republic:

- Provide a path to regularization for Haitian sugarcane workers in the DR. This would involve the provision of a legal document allowing Haitian sugarcane workers to work and live in the country without fear of deportation from their employer or the state. This action should be accompanied by government body coordination to ensure that workers can avail themselves of their rights and avoid exploitation due to irregular status. A legal document should allow sugarcane workers to seek employment in other areas of work in the DR, not solely within the sugarcane sector. In the interim, the government should require companies and *colonos* to register workers and provide them with an employment identification number that is valid during and after the harvest period. This ID should be kept by the worker and serve as a legal document for them to remain in the DR and work in other sectors during the off-season. This measure would be particularly useful for Haitian workers who are at risk of deportation due to lack of documentation.
- Strengthen the labor inspectorate of the Ministry of Labor by dedicating the necessary resources and training. Inspectors should be granted the authority to independently assess labor law

violations on sugarcane plantations. Labor inspectors should be hired to work in agricultural areas and be fluent in Haitian Creole so they can interact with Haitian workers who are most vulnerable to labor abuses. Inspectors must prioritize the assessment of working and living conditions in all sugarcane-producing companies and *colonos* in the country. Requiring regular in-person assessments by inspectors of sugarcane workers' working and living conditions—when housing is provided by the employer—would create a sense of urgency for sugarcane producers to improve these conditions. Labor inspectorate findings should be used to set effective goals for all sugarcane producers in the interim period before the next assessment.

- The Office of the Attorney General and Public Ministry should adequately sanction sugarcane producers that do not comply with the labor laws protecting vulnerable workers.
- Increase the minimum wage for sugarcane workers because the current $400 DOP per day minimum is insufficient for the work completed and does not cover daily expenses incurred by the workers. An increase in wages would minimize workers' need to borrow money from local convenience stores, freeing them from this type of debt.

Industry:

- Ensure that workers fully understand their work contract before signing a written contract, or understand their work duties and benefits before agreeing to work for their employer, if working under a verbal agreement. This should include tasks they will complete, protective equipment provided, work hours, pay, company-owned housing information, and benefits. Many workers are Haitian and only speak Haitian Creole, or may be illiterate and unable to read their contracts. An interpreter should be present when signing the contracts to ensure that workers understand what they agree to and can ask questions as needed.
- Ensure that workers are earning at least the legal minimum wage for the sugarcane sector of $400 DOP per day, or $2400 DOP per 6-day working week. Furthermore, employers should provide the legally required overtime pay to workers laboring more than 10 hours a day. Pay should be commensurate with the amount of work completed by the worker, not to fall below the legal minimum wage.
- Enforce strict penalties for wage theft at the weighing of the cane. To facilitate this requires the creation of a safe reporting mechanism for workers to report instances of wage theft and investigate these claims, enforcing appropriate measures based on findings.
- Improve employer-provided housing and living conditions for sugarcane workers. Improve access to potable water, electricity, sanitation facilities, and living quarters in company-owned *bateyes*. Reduce the number of workers assigned to each living area to eliminate overcrowding. Reduce or eliminate the cost of electricity, water, and other utilities to workers when living in this company-owned housing.
- Remove automatic worker pay deductions for union membership costs. Allow workers to choose whether to opt into union membership during the contract signing process and provide a mechanism to change this selection at any time during employment. Furthermore, unions should work with trusted CSOs to improve their communication and work with sugarcane workers.
- Provide workers full liquidation of their owed wages if they decide to quit working for the employer, ensuring that workers are also paid their pensions and any other owed benefits.
- Establish traceability programs to document the sale of sugarcane from *colonos* to sugarcane mills, to allow for transparent third-party audits.

U.S. Government:

- Exports of raw sugar, refined sugar, rum, molasses, and furfural from the DR are at risk of being produced with forced labor, and the U.S. Department of Labor should consider adding them to the List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor.
- Conduct further research on the industrial consumption of raw and refined sugar in the DR, and trace the international downstream consumption of these goods, especially in baked goods, confectionery, and juices.

Appendix 1: References

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Appendix 2: HS Codes

HS Code Glossary

Product	HS Code	HS definition
Raw product		
Sugarcane	1212.93	Locust beans, seaweeds and other algae, sugar beet and sugarcane, fresh, chilled, frozen or dried, whether or not ground; fruit stones and kernels and other vegetable products (including unroasted chicory roots of the variety Cichorium intybus sativum) of a kind used primarily for human consumption, not elsewhere specified or included.
Minimally processed goods		
Raw sugar	1701.13	Raw sugar not containing added flavouring or colouring matter cane sugar specified in subheading note 2 to this chapter: "Subheading 1701.13 covers only cane sugar obtained without centrifugation, whose content of sucrose by weight, in the dry state, corresponds to a polarimeter reading of 69° or more but less than 93°. The product contains only natural anhedral microcrystals, of irregular shape, not visible to the naked eye, which are surrounded by residues of molasses and other constituents of sugar cane."
	1701.14	Other cane sugar
Byproducts		
Bagasse	2303.20	Residues of starch manufacture and similar residues, beet-pulp, bagasse and other waste of sugar manufacture, brewing or distilling dregs and waste, whether or not in the form of pellets. Beet-pulp, bagasse and other waste of sugar manufacture[7]
Molasses	1703.10	Molasses resulting from the extraction or refining of sugar: Cane Molasses:
Downstream goods		
Rum	2208.40	Rum and other spirits obtained by distilling fermented sugar-cane products:
Furfural	2932.12 2932.13	2-Furaldehyde (furfuraldehyde) Furfuryl alcohol and tetrahydrofurfuryl alcohol[9]
Refined sugar	1701.91	Cane or beet sugar and chemically pure sucrose, in solid form. Other. Containing added flavouring or colouring matter
	1701.99	Cane or beet sugar and chemically pure sucrose, in solid form. Other. Other

Product	HS Code	HS definition
End use goods		
Juice	2009	Fruit juices (including grape must) and vegetable juices, unfermented and not containing added spirit, whether or not containing added sugar or other sweetening matter
Animal feed	2309.90	Preparations of a kind used in animal feeding; Other

Appendix 3: Export Values

Table A1. Export value (USD) by HS Code, 2021

Good	HS Code	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Top destination market for Year 5 (percentage)
Sugarcane	1212.93	$16,302	$21,350	$9,374	$12,428	$7,403	2021: France (66.5%)
Raw sugar	1701.13	N/A	N/A	$243	$5,607	$967	2021: UAE (100%)
Raw sugar	1701.14	$103,669,827	$104,157,614	$98,406,910	$118,143,706	$120,943,846	2021: USA (100%)
Bagasse	2303.20	$301	N/A	$2	N/A	N/A	2021: N/A
Molasses	1703.10	$15,070,033	$18,348,868	$14,218,781	$18,416,918	$18,560,004	2021: USA (89.7%)
Juice	2009.89	$1,091,099	$1,425,301	$1,888,028	$4,343,027	$8,709,255	2021: USA (94.3%)
Rum	2208.40	$111,461,327	$113,333,382	$117,853,378	$114,175,892	$138,177,114	2021: Spain (30.4%)
Furfural	2932.12	$2,198,513	$2,457,601	$11,016,017	$3,509,657	$9,890,720	2021: USA (99.7%)
Furfural	2932.13	N/A	N/A	N/A	$9,922	N/A	2021: N/A
Refined sugar	1701.91	$9,368	$21,633	$7,308	$11,874	$7,433	2021: USA (100%)
Refined sugar	1701.99	$131,686	$282,134	$325,068	$119,555	$2,738	2021: Jamaica (76.4%)

Source: UN Comtrade, 2023.

Table A2. Top five importers of raw sugar from the Dominican Republic, 2021

Destination country	Value (USD)	Percent of total raw sugar export value from Dominican Republic
USA	$120,943,845	100.0%

Source: UN Comtrade, 2023. HS Codes: 1701.13, 1701.14

Table A3. Top five importers of rum from the Dominican Republic, 2021

Destination country	Value (USD)	Percent of total rum export value from Dominican Republic
1. Spain	$41,969,982	30.4%
2. USA	$22,506,534	16.3%
3. Russia	$14,269,259	10.3%
4. Netherlands	$7,906,185	5.7%
5. Germany	$7,292,949	5.3%

Source: UN Comtrade, 2023. HS Codes: 2208.40

Table A4. Top global exporters of raw sugar, 2021

Country	Value (USD)	Percent of total global raw sugar exports
1. Brazil	$7,067,758,138	50.3%
2. India	$1,728,066,296	12.3%
3. Australia	$1,639,531,771	11.7%
4. Thailand	$720,063,743	5.1%
5. Mexico	$559,355,461	4.0%
6. Swaziland	$351,496,692	2.5%
7. Guatemala	$227,805,638	1.6%
8. South Africa	$175,037,783	1.2%
9. El Salvador	$147,333,049	1.1%
10. Cuba	$128,664,968	0.9%

Source: UN Comtrade sourced through Panjiva, 2023. HS Codes: 1701.13, 1701.14

Table A5. Top global exporters of rum, 2021

Country	Value (USD)	Percent of total global rum exports
1. USA	$334,069,572	17.7%
2. Italy	$152,622,162	8.1%
3. Dominican Republic	$140,766,128	7.5%
4. Guatemala	$116,088,350	6.2%
5. Netherlands	$108,952,122	5.8%
6. France	$107,198,051	5.7%
7. Venezuela	$94,609,747	5.0%
8. Cuba	$84,754,671	4.5%
9. Spain	$83,544,739	4.4%
10. Jamaica	$70,094,984	3.7%

Source: UN Comtrade sourced through Panjiva, 2021. HS Codes: 2208.4

Appendix 4: Destination Markets

Dominican Destination Markets' Top Five Sources of Imported Raw Sugar, 2021

Destination market for Dominican raw sugar	Destination markets' sources of raw sugar	Trade value (USD)	Percent of total raw sugar import value by destination market
USA	Mexico	$464,952,532	35.8%
	Brazil	$159,901,160	12.3%
	Dominican Republic	$120,943,845	9.3%
	Guatemala	$79,541,291	6.1%
	Philippines	$73,660,589	5.7%

Source: UN Comtrade, 2023. HS Codes: 1701.13, 1701.14

Dominican Destination Markets' Top Five Sources of Rum, 2021

Destination market for Dominican Rum	Destination markets' sources of rum imports	Trade value (USD)	Percent of total rum import value by destination market
Spain	Dominican Republic	$41,969,982	27.4%
	Cuba	$35,745,787	23.3%
	Netherlands	$21,363,312	13.9%
	Italy	$16,359,510	10.7%
	France	$13,746,169	9.0%
USA	Dominican Republic	$22,506,534	11.7%
	Guatemala	$21,626,344	11.3%
	Nicaragua	$18,219,778	9.5%
	Jamaica	$17,818,726	9.3%
	France	$17,690,515	9.2%
Russia	USA	$21,303,587	44.2%
	Dominican Republic	$14,269,259	29.6%
	Guatemala	$2,622,084	5.4%
	United Kingdom	$2,091,633	4.3%
	France	$997,879	2.1%
Netherlands	Belgium	$34,627,073	27.6%
	Germany	$18,073,949	14.4%
	Dominican Republic	$7,906,185	6.3%
	Guyana	$6,402,768	5.1%
	Eswatini	$5,969,560	4.8%
Germany	Spain	$28,763,651	15.8%
	Italy	$27,582,029	15.1%
	Venezuela	$23,767,318	13.0%
	Guatemala	$13,183,463	7.2%
	France	$12,112,601	6.6%

Source: UN Comtrade, 2023. HS Codes: 2208.40

Appendix 5: Worker Demographics Tables

Table A6. Worker respondent demographics and job characteristics

	Number of workers	
	%	N
Age (years)		
18–24	12%	3
25–39	16%	4
40–54	32%	8
55+	40%	10
Region		
Eastern	72%	18
Southwestern	28%	7
Sex		
Men	96%	24
Women	4%	1
Origin		
Haitian	88%	22
Dominican of Haitian descent	12%	3
Workplace		
Large sugarcane plantation	92%	23
Colono	8%	2
Position type		
Sugarcane cutter	44%	11
Sugarcane cutter and cultivator	12%	3
Planter	12%	3
Sugarcane cutter and fumigator	8%	2
Former worker (sugarcane cutter and supervisor)	8%	2
Chainman (*cadenero*)	4%	1
Wagon driver (*carretero*)	4%	1
Ticketer (*tiquero*)	4%	1
Foreman (*mayordomo*)	4%	1

Table A7. Forced labor indicators reported by the worker sample[35]

Indicator	n
Menace of penalty	
Abuse of workers' vulnerability	11
Withholding of wages or other promised benefits	10
Restrictions on workers' movement	4
Withholding of valuable documents	2
Experienced at least one indicator of menace of penalty	**16**

[35] This is a qualitative study with a very small sample size, so it should be noted that these number do not imply prevalence of forced labor within the sugarcane sector of the Dominican Republic.

Indicator	n
Involuntariness	
Could not refuse to do hazardous work	24
Very low or no wages	9
Degrading living conditions	8
Abusive overtime requirements not previously agreed	5
Limited freedom to terminate work contract	1
Experienced at least one indicator of involuntariness	**24**
Forced labor	
Experienced forced labor	**16**

Appendix 6: Forced Labor Definitions

Forced labor: The International Labour Organization Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines, in its Article 2, forced or compulsory labor for the purposes of the Convention as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." For statistical purposes, a person is classified as being in forced labor if engaged in any work that is both under the threat of menace of a penalty and involuntary.

- **Menace of Penalty**: Threat and menace of any penalty are the means of coercion used to impose work on a worker against a person's will.
    - Workers can be:
        - actually subjected to coercion, or
        - verbally threatened by these elements of coercion, or
        - be witness to coercion imposed on other co-workers in relation to involuntary work.
    - Elements of coercion may include, inter alia:
        - threats or violence against workers or workers' families and relatives, or close associates;
        - restrictions on workers' movement;
        - debt bondage or manipulation of debt;
        - withholding of wages or other promised benefits;
        - withholding of valuable documents (such as identity documents or residence permits); and
        - abuse of workers' vulnerability through the denial of rights or privileges, threats of dismissal or deportation.
- **Involuntariness:** Involuntary work refers to any work taking place without the free and informed consent of the worker.
    - Circumstances that may give rise to involuntary work, when undertaken under deception or uninformed, include, inter alia:
        - unfree recruitment at birth or through transaction such as slavery or bonded labor;
        - situations in which the worker must perform a job of different nature from that specified during recruitment without a person's consent;
        - abusive requirements for overtime or on-call work that were not previously agreed with the employer;
        - work in hazardous conditions to which the worker has not consented, with or without compensation or protective equipment;
        - work with very low or no wages;
        - in degrading living conditions imposed by the employer, recruiter, or other third-party;
        - work for other employers than agreed;
        - work for longer period of time than agreed;
        - work with no or limited freedom to terminate work contract.

Appendix 7: Forced Labor Terminology in the DR Context

Forced labor: The International Labour Organization (ILO) Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines, in its Article 2, forced or compulsory labor for the purposes of the Convention as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." For statistical purposes, a person is classified as being in forced labor if engaged in any work that is both under the threat of menace of a penalty and involuntary.

Contextual examples of ILO forced labor indicators within the Dominican Republic sugarcane sector are as follows.

Menace of penalty: Threat and menace of any penalty are the means of coercion used to impose work on a worker against a person's will. • Elements of coercion may include, inter alia:	
ILO indicator	**Example in the Dominican Republic sugarcane context**
Threats or violence against workers or workers' families and relatives, or close associates	Some employers use verbal and physical violence towards sugarcane workers.
Restrictions on workers' movement	Some employers provide worker housing in a closed or remote area where workers are not allowed to leave freely. Some employers have security personnel who work for the company and monitor the movement of workers, which sometimes prevents them from leaving their communities. These security personnel also watch the workers if they leave the community. Companies and migration authorities may make agreements about the hours when workers are in transit and thus allowed to be on the streets. Workers on the streets at other hours may be more vulnerable to detention or deportation by migration authorities. Employers may make agreements with local authorities to return workers who are picked up during a raid to the employer.
Debt bondage or manipulation of debt	In some instances, workers must pay their employer for job equipment, such as boots, uniforms, and tools. These costs are deducted from their regular pay, and workers are unable to quit their jobs until they pay off that debt. Debt may be related to extortionate loans granted to workers by supervisors or pay staff (*ajusteros*, *mayordomos*, etc.) and deducted from salary at payday. Workers may also be in debt to the company-hired recruiter, or *buscon*, and are unable to quit their job until they pay off that debt. Sometimes *buscones* hired by the companies retain identity documents from the workers, to guarantee that they will be paid for recruiting them or paid back the debts owed from the workers. These debts can include cash advances made to the workers.
Withholding of wages or other promised benefits	Some employers make people do work by threatening to take away their bonus payments or denial of holidays or mandated days of rest off and associated premium pay rates.

Withholding of valuable documents (such as identity documents or residence permits)	Companies hire recruiters, who may keep workers' identity documents, to ensure that they are paid back for their recruiting services or for any debts owed by the workers. These debts can include cash advances to the workers.
Abuse of workers' vulnerability through the denial of rights or privileges, threats of dismissal or deportation	Many workers are Haitian migrants and may not have legal status or documentation to be in the country. Employers may abuse this vulnerability to impose work against workers' will under threat of dismissal, denunciation to authorities, or deportation. Some employers threaten workers with taking away their homes, which are company owned. In this scenario, workers are threatened with permanent expulsion from the community as a means of coercion. Many workers are illiterate and have low levels of education, amplifying their vulnerability. Employers may deny future work to workers who complain ("there's no work for you today") or threaten to fire without paying legal severance.
Involuntariness: Involuntary work refers to any work taking place without the free and informed consent of the worker. • Circumstances that may give rise to involuntary work, when undertaken under deception or uninformed, include, inter alia:	
Abusive requirements for overtime or on-call work that were not previously agreed with the employer	When the company must meet its production goal, sugarcane workers are often expected to be available to work for the company at any time. Normally, this results in workers working late into the evening and starting work again early in the morning (as early as 4 am).
Work in hazardous conditions to which the worker has not consented, with or without compensation or protective equipment	There have been cases of sugarcane workers who spray pesticides and experience health issues or even death due to exposure to hazardous chemicals without protective equipment. Many of these workers are illiterate and are unable to read the chemical application instructions, which may be in English or Spanish, languages many do not speak or read. Workers may be exposed to other hazards such as extreme heat without breaks or potable water (some report drinking the same water as animals that makes them sick). Protective equipment is not always provided or maintained by the employers. Off-season workers (planting) may be forced to wait long times in the hot sun for seedlings to arrive without compensation.
Work with very low or no wages	Sugarcane workers are paid by the weight of sugarcane that they cut. Lack of consistency or oversight and mixing of workers' sugarcane also creates opportunities for reducing individual cutters' pay. In practice, workers are often paid under the minimum wage. Although the Dominican government increased the minimum wage to RD$400 a day for sugarcane workers in 2022, some workers do not receive this wage, particularly the elderly who do not want to work but must work to eat. Other reasons workers may make very low wages include: • Deductions for unions that workers registered for without representation or desire

	• Deductions for social security or healthcare benefits they are not entitled to or that supposed to be company provided
In degrading living conditions imposed by the employer, recruiter, or other third-party	Workers are often required to live in company-owned housing which may be unsanitary, overcrowded, and lack access to potable water.
Work with no or limited freedom to terminate work contract	Some workers are dissuaded from leaving their jobs because many are undocumented and cannot easily find alternative employment. Those who do have documentation are often held back because their home is owned by the company. Leaving their jobs would mean departing from their communities and losing their homes.
Work for other employers than agreed	N/A Note: Potentially seen for sugarcane workers rotating among smallholder farms like *colonos.*
Work for longer period of time than agreed	N/A
Situations in which the worker must perform a job of different nature from that specified during recruitment without a person's consent	N/A Note: Workers are often recruited by the *buscones* with a general description of the work they will conduct. Because many recruited workers are undocumented migrants, they accept the work because it does not require their documentation.
Unfree recruitment at birth or through transaction such as slavery or bonded labor	N/A Note: There are a number of cases in which children of undocumented migrants or Dominicans of Haitian descent are born and raised in the *bateyes*, or worker communities, that are sometimes company-owned, and have little work opportunities outside of the sugar sector because of their lack of documentation. This phenomenon will grow as a result of the 2013 Constitutional Court ruling denying legal status and documentation to subsequent generations.

Appendix 8: Final Research Instruments

DR Sugarcane - Supply Chain Study Qualitative Research Instrument Protocols

Forced Labor

KII (Key Informant Interview) Interview Protocol Question Bank (2 opening questions, 26 supply chain questions, 4 out of country KII supply chain questions, 35 labor questions and 2 closing questions)

Interviewer:	Date (DD/MM/YY)	
Location of interview:		
Name (code, not real name):		Sex:
Profession (if applicable):		
Position (if applicable):		
Employer/Affiliated Institution/Organization (if applicable):		
Contact information (office address, phone number, email):		
Time interview started:		
Time interview ended:		

Interviewer instructions:

Foster a dynamic conducive to gathering good data. The interview should have the relaxed feel of a conversation. Set the tone by using a slow pace in your speech.

Ask one question at a time. Give the respondent ample time to reflect and fully respond before moving to the next. Try not to interrupt, and do not answer on their behalf.

If the respondent agrees to be recorded, give them your full attention. Make note of any follow-up questions you want to remember to ask, but otherwise focus on the respondent rather than your paper.

Probe for more depth, particularly when responses are brief. Use phrases such as, “Tell me more about that” and “Can you give me an example?” Aim to get specific instances, in considerable detail, whenever possible.

You do not have to ask each question verbatim, but at least broach all the topics covered that are relevant to the key informant. Adapt the flow and questions to make them relevant to the respondent.

For each item, ask the general question first, and then probe the sub-items that have not been addressed spontaneously.

Project Introduction

READ: ICF International is conducting a study to understand labor conditions and the supply chain of sugarcane produced in the Dominican Republic, as well as the labor conditions throughout this supply chain. We hope to learn from you during our discussion. Please note that your identity will be kept confidential, and we will only use the name of your organization/ [ENTITY TYPE] upon your approval.

(IF STAKEHOLDER ASKS) This study is funded by the U.S. government.

Introduction Questions (KIIs):

1. Could you please tell me your role and what you focus on?
    a. Is there any other experience you have in the Dominican Republic sugarcane industry?
2. Can you describe your organization's work directly in the sugarcane industry?
    a. *(PROBE: for what kind of activities in this area do you and your organization undertake)*
    b. (IF THE ORGANIZATION IS NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED ASK) If your work is not directly related, how are you familiar with issues regarding the sugarcane industry?

(TO INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT INDICATES THEY WORK IN THE FOLLOWING PROFESSIONS/INDUSTRIES: TEACHERS, UNION REPRESENTATIVES, NGOs / INSTITUTIONS THAT WORK TO PREVENT AND ADDRESS LABOR EXPLOITATION, MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS, AND THOSE THAT DO NOT WORK FOR AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS PART OF THE SUGARCANE SUPPLY CHAIN, ASK QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 FROM THE SUPPLY CHAIN SECTION BEFORE MOVING ON TO THE FORCED LABOR QUESTIONS SECTION. IF RESPONDENT WORKS FOR AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS OUTSIDE THE SUPPLY CHAIN BUT HAS IN DEPTH SUPPLY CHAIN KNOWLEDGE IN RELATION TO QUESTIONS 1-2 YOU MAY RETURN TO ASK MORE SUPPLY CHAIN QUESTIONS IF TIME ALLOWS)

<u>Supply Chain Questions</u>

Supply Chain Theme General:

1. How does sugarcane production work in the Dominican Republic?
    a. What laws and regulations provide the foundation for the operations of the industry?
        i. *(PROBE: for specific labor laws, regulations on sugar exports, laws governing supply chains and smallholder farms/colonos)*
2. Who are the major stakeholders and influencers in the sugarcane industry involved in the sale and processing of sugarcane (ex: local and international NGOs, trade associations,

government agencies, informal business networks, owners, buyers, traders, and foreign investors)?

a. How are these stakeholders involved in the sale and processing of sugarcane?

3. Please describe the production process of sugarcane from planting to processing at sugar mills to final downstream products.

a. How are these goods transported and traded?

b. What are major infrastructure routes and transportation methods between each stage of production?

4. After harvesting the sugarcane and processing into raw sugar at a sugar mill, what other processing occurs within the DR to produce downstream goods, such as refined white sugar, molasses, candies, and rum?

a. What other goods, byproducts, or downstream goods are produced in-country?

i. Where are the major production sites?

ii. Are these consumed domestically, exported, or both?

iii. What domestic industries or companies use sugarcane as a material input?

iv. *(PROBE: for production volume of molasses, refined white sugar, and rum)*

b. At what point are raw sugar and other byproducts sold? Who purchases sugar products (traders, retailers, industry/manufacturing facilities)? How are these trade relationships structured?

5. [If relevant] Please provide an overview of the sourcing of raw materials needed for the production of sugarcane products particularly refined white sugar, molasses, and rum?

6. Is there any list or mapping of sugarcane production sites (plantations, neighborhoods, districts, etc.) in the DR?

a. Is there a map or list of worker communities/*bateyes* maintained both privately and by the Dominican government (CEA/*Bienes Nacionales*)?

b. How would someone access these lists?

7. Is there any list or mapping of processing facilities (sugar mills, alcohol distillers, etc.) in the DR?

a. How would someone access the list?

b. *(PROBE: for availability of production data, such as that published by INAZUCAR. Is this data perceived to be accurate? Any quantitative concerns with published data?)*

8. What role do sugarcane and downstream sugarcane products exported from the Dominican Republic play in international markets?

9. Who are the major buyers and what are their countries of origin? (*Probe for specifics, with focus on the U.S./Puerto Rico, Haiti, Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Guatemala, Colombia, Turkey*)

10. What are some international markets for downstream products such as refined white sugar, rum, and molasses?

11. What country poses the greatest market competition to the Dominican Republic in sugarcane product exports?

12. How have current or former trade policies impacted the DR sugarcane sector? *(PROBE: for specifics on import and export quotas)*

13. Has the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the product's supply chain? Please describe.

14. The United States imposed a ban on imports of raw sugar and sugar-based products produced by Central Romana in November of 2022. To your knowledge, what impact has this had on sugar exports of raw sugar and sugar-based products from the Dominican Republic?
    a. Has there been a change in terms of the companies that now export sugar and its byproducts from the Dominican Republic? If so, which companies make up the largest export volumes?
15. Central Romana produces a large quantity of sugar. To your knowledge, given the US import ban, where is this sugar being consumed now? *(PROBE: for information on whether it has been sold under a different label and/or details on where it is sent within the Dominican Republic)*
16. Given Central Romana's historically dominant production and processing capabilities of sugarcane and sugar products, and dominant role in filling trade export/import quotas in the Dominical Republic and United States, how has the sugarcane industry in the Dominican Republic adjusted?
    a. Who is the primary exporter?
    b. Has this impacted company's domestic production or contractual agreements with other farmers?
    c. Have there been any socio-political events that have impacted the sugarcane supply chain?
17. What can you tell us about the labor standards in the Dominican Republic sugarcane industry?
    a. What are the primary concerns across the industry when it comes to labor standards?
    b. What are the certifications available for companies in the supply chain, if any?
        i. Is it common for companies to have these certifications *(PROBE for specifics)*
18. Are you aware of any ongoing supply chain traceability initiatives in the sector?
        i. *(PROBE: for specifics on what the initiatives are and who is promoting them (Ex. Government, international corporations, domestic companies)*
        ii. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these certification and traceability programs?

Supply Chain Labor Exploitation Questions:

1. How might one track sugarcane made at a particular plantation through the domestic supply chain? How might this vary between the three major sugarcane producers (CAC, CAEI, and Central Romana) vs. sugarcane from the *colonos* and CEA?
    a. After sugarcane is cut, which sugar mill is the sugarcane sent to for processing into raw sugar? *(PROBE: for specifics based on the supply chain of large industry players versus INDEPENDENT FARMERS.)*
    b. Is there a point in the supply chain where you anticipate tracking would no longer be possible? *(PROBE: for specifics on what stakeholder the traceability ends with, ex: intermediary buyer, exporter, comingling with other sugars (Ex. Beet sugar etc.))*
        i. *(SPECIFIC PROBE)* When does the mixing of sugarcane from different sites occur, how does mixing occur? At what stages of the supply chain are sugarcane and its downstream goods mixed?
2. What is your overall impression of working conditions in the sugarcane industry?

a. What factors make a worker in this sector more vulnerable to abusive working conditions?

i. *(PROBE: for specifics on demographics – age range, gender, migratory status)*

ii. *(Probe for specifics and differences between large and small plantations)*

3. During which stages of the sugarcane supply chain are risks for abusive working conditions most prevalent? How widespread are these risks?

a. What are the risk factors at each stage (particularly harvest and processing)

i. *(PROBE: for similarities and differences)*

4. What are the differences in working conditions for sugarcane plantation workers in smaller plantations (*colonos*) compared to those working for major sugarcane companies, those working on lands administered by the Dominican government (CEA/Bienes Nacionales), and those working on sugarcane harvesting lands owned by other independent companies such as Alcoholes Finos Dominicanos?

5. Which indicators of abusive working conditions are common among workers on Dominican sugarcane plantations? *(Probe for specifics and differences between large and small plantations)*

a. Is there potable water readily available for workers in the fields?

b. What is the policy with regard to rest time for the workers exposed to extreme heat and humid temperatures?

c. What are the safety and health risks workers are exposed to when carrying out this work?

6. What types of products does sugarcane from the Dominican Republic end up in? (Probe for both intermediary goods and finished/end goods.)

7. Who are the main stakeholders in the sugarcane industry of the Dominican Republic involved in the sale and processing of sugarcane harvested where workers experience abusive working conditions?

(For applicable studies) Additional Questions for interviews for Supply Chain KIIs Outside of the Dominican Republic

1. Are you aware of what industries in (target import country) use sugarcane from the Dominican Republic?

a. *(PROBE for specifics)* What goods are produced in (import country of focus) using sugarcane from the Dominican Republic?

2. Does (import country of focus) produce sugarcane domestically?

a. How have changes in domestic production impacted/changed imports of sugarcane?

b. At what stage do sugarcane imports (or downstream goods) become mixed with domestically produced sugarcane?

3. Does the downstream use of sugarcane from (target country) differ from the downstream use of domestically produced sugarcane? (If yes, probe for reasons for differentiation (quality, business relationships, etc.)

4. Does your company/[ENTITY] conduct due diligence measures to ensure ethical sourcing and processing?

a. Can you explain what these measures are? (PROBE: for uptake and effectiveness?)

b. Have you ever encountered compliance issues with (sugar or sugar product) suppliers in the DR? (PROBE: for details on adherence to labor policies, repeat violations, remediation, etc).

c. If yes, how does your company address these issues when they occur?

Forced Labor Questions

1. (IF NOT ALREADY ASKED IN SUPPLY CHAIN QUESTIONS) What is your overall impression of working conditions in the sugarcane industry?
    a. What are the main issues regarding working conditions for workers in the sugarcane fields?
        i. *(PROBE: for section topics below and skip to corresponding guide section.)*
    b. What factors make a worker in this sector more vulnerable to abusive working conditions?
        i. *(PROBE: for specifics on demographics – migratory status, age range, gender)*
2. What do you think of worker-employer relations in the industry?
    a. *(PROBE: for specifics and jump to corresponding section below)*
3. Where are most sugarcane workers from or what is their nationality?
    a. If they are of Haitian descent or Haitian citizens, do they face greater risks because of this fact or are they more vulnerable? *(PROBE: for specifics on vulnerability and associated risks)*
    b. Does their migratory status affect their or their family's quality of life and employment?
        i. If yes, how?

(INTERVIEWER: FOR RESPONDENTS WITH LIMITED INSIGHTS ON LABOR CONDITIONS FROM QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 RELY ON SKIP LOGIC NOTES BELOW)

Recruitment and Contracts

1. In your understanding, how do individuals become employed in the sugarcane sector?
    a. Are workers hired directly by the sugarcane producers (companies, smallholder farms, or Bienes Nacionales (previously CEA))? Or are they being hired by 3rd party contractors?
        i. Is employment sometimes arranged through *buscones*?
    b. What are the specific recruitment methods used and do they differ among types of employers?
    c. *(PROBE AS RELEVANT)*: How common is employment through *buscones,* or a third-party recruiter?
        i. If common, what is the relationship between the recruiter and the owner of the worksite?
        ii. Please explain their role and relative importance (what percentage of positions are filled by or what percentage of employers use recruiters)?
        iii. Are you aware of any fees / the typical amount associated with the use of recruiters in the sugarcane sector? (PROBE: how do workers acquire the money to pay these fees?)
    d. Are they hired in-country or before they travel to the Dominican Republic?
    e. Are any workers born into employment based on any part of their identity?

(INTERVIEWER: CHECK WHETHER RESPONDENT HAS INSIGHTS INTO WORKER RECRUITMENT. IF NOT, MOVE ONTO NEXT SECTION)

2. Are workers promised something before they begin their employment by their employer/recruiters (or smugglers, *buscones*)?
    a. If so, what kinds of promises?
    b. Who is the one making the promises?
    c. In your opinion/experience are those promises being met?
3. Do workers in the sugarcane sector typically have a contract or a work agreement with their employer?
    a. If so, is the contract or work agreement position-specific? Is this true for all positions? (PROBE: which ones have specific contracts and which have more informal or no contracts?)
    b. Are contracts or work agreements typically verbal or written?
        i. If written, do workers usually understand the contents of the contract? *(PROBE: written in a language the worker can understand; worker is literate or allowed to have someone read it; worker is given sufficient time to examine the contract)*
        ii. Are there significant language barriers? How does the employer address them?
    c. If written, do workers get a copy? How do they store/keep such documents?
    d. How long do work agreements or contracts last?
        i. What happens when they end?
4. Are you aware of any reports of anyone being sold or taken by force to work in the sugarcane sector?
    a. When?

Earnings, Wage Theft/Withholding of Wages, Hours, Benefits & Debt

1. In your experience, what are the key issues that workers face in terms of their wages and benefits in the sugarcane sector?
    a. How is the salary of workers determined?
    b. How are workers paid?
    c. Do workers get paid regularly and on time?
    d. How often are they paid?
    e. Do workers encounter situations of withheld wages or wage deductions?
    f. Do workers typically receive more or less than the minimum wage?
    g. Are you aware of coercive practices used to set a worker's wage?
        i. If yes, can you elaborate on what these are?

(INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT DOES NOT HAVE INSIGHTS INTO WAGES AND PAY BASED ON THIS INITIAL QUESTION MOVE ONTO NEXT SECTION)

2. Are workers paid according to a piece-rate / quota system?
    a. What are the typical targets that workers have?
    b. In your experience/opinion are those targets achievable/reasonable? *(PROBE: for strategies used to achieve targets)*
        i. Do workers meet this quota within the legal limit of hours worked?
        ii. What happens if workers are unable to meet this quota?
3. How is the work of the workers cutting the sugarcane measured? Kept track of to ensure appropriate payment?

4. Is the worker present for the measurement?
    a. If not, why not?
    b. At what point does a worker receive confirmation of their daily work and how?
5. How many hours does a worker typically work?
    a. How much of this is work in the field?
    b. And how many of their daily hours involve transport to and from the worksite?
    c. Are they paid for all hours worked?
    d. How often do employees work overtime or past their agreed hours?
    e. What happens to a worker if they refuse to work overtime or past their agreed hours?
        i. If something happens, who is the culprit?
    f. Are workers paid the legally required overtime rate?
6. Is it common for workers in the sugarcane sector to be in debt to employers/company personnel or recruiters/*buscones*, or grocers?
    a. If yes, can you please clarify to whom they are normally indebted?
    b. What kinds of borrowing and pay-back arrangements have you seen? *(PROBE: for knowledge regarding paying grocers for lent goods/*capataz - colmadero*)*
    c. How often are workers unable to leave their jobs because of debt?
        i. Could you give me a sense of how common it is for workers to experience this?

Working Conditions, Hazardous Work & Coercion:

1. (If not already asked in supply chain questions) What are the main risk factors for abusive working conditions in the sugarcane industry?
    a. In what segments of the industry and its supply chain are abusive working conditions most visible?
    b. Are you aware of specific companies and/or production sites throughout the supply chain that are particularly exploitative?
    c. *(IF APPROPRIATE, PROBE: for knowledge of psychological or physical abuse on behalf of the employer)*
2. What are the most common hazards workers tend to face in the sugarcane sector?
    a. *(PROBE: for safety and health risks workers are exposed to at work)*
    b. Are workers provided any personal protective equipment, or PPE? *(PROBE: for type of equipment provided, whether they have to pay for it, under what circumstances and how much they pay)*
3. In your understanding, are there sufficient health and safety standards in place in the sugarcane sector?
    a. Please explain
    b. *(PROBE: for difference between small-scale employers versus large-scale employers)*
4. Is it common place to hear of or witness coercion or threats from employers toward workers in the sugarcane sector?
    a. Do employers use any kind of coercion to make workers comply? Please explain. *(Probe: withholding of wages or benefits, withholding documents, threats of dismissal, denunciation to authorities, deportation)*
    b. How are workers threatened or coerced?
        i. What are they told and by whom?

ii. What is done to the workers?

c. *(PROBE: for specifics about situations when this is common (Ex. Not meeting a quota when worker wants to quit, etc.) + factors that make a worker more likely to experience this (migration status, gender, race, religion, etc.))*

d. How common is it for workers to experience threats or coercion?

5. Can workers in the sugarcane sector leave their jobs if they choose?
   a. If not, why are they not able to do so?
      i. Could you elaborate on that? (PROBE: if the reason is due to workers being in debt, because they are not allowed to leave/limitation of movement, isolation, or/and their migration status)
   b. Describe any consequences, if any, that a worker may face if they try to leave their job or refuse to perform certain aspects of their job.
      i. If yes, what are these?
6. Regarding the previous questions, does similar treatment occur in the downstream production of sugarcane products, such as refined white sugar, molasses, and rum?
7. Have companies attempted to address issues relating to abusive working conditions? (*Probe to learn how*)
   a. What actions have been taken by sugar companies in the DR to improve worker living conditions?
      i. What limitations do these efforts have and what actions remain?
   b. What has been done to formalize work and what impact has it had on the lives of plantation workers in small and large plantations?
   c. What rules, if any, have been put in place to safeguard workers from physical or psychological abuse in small and large plantations?

Surveillance, Isolation, Limitation of Movement & Living Conditions

1. What kind of involvement do employers have in workers' lives outside of work?
2. How do workers access goods and services to meet their basic needs?
   a. What limitations are placed on workers' ability to access those goods and services or to improve their community or housing?
   b. How are these limitations communicated to workers, how are they imposed, and what consequences do workers face?
   c. Where do workers buy food?
      i. Are workers reliant on employers for these items? How often?
      ii. Are these items ever bought on credit? Under what conditions?
3. Who provides the living arrangements for workers?
   a. By your estimation, what proportion of workers live in employer-provided housing in the sugarcane sector?
      i. Can they come and go freely outside of working hours?
4. Are workers threatened with losing housing by their employers?
   a. What are the circumstances of such threats?
   b. Are you aware of workers that have actively lost their housing in this way?
5. Can workers freely move on company land, including to other communities? To nearby towns/cities?
   a. If not, what barriers exist?
   b. *Can you elaborate on these? (IF APPROPRIATE, PROBE: for fear of deportation, limitation of movement, and isolation)*

If not, what barriers exist? *(IF APPROPRIATE, PROBE: for fear of deportation)* (INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT HAS NOT SHOWN INSIGHTS INTO LIVING CONDITIONS BY THIS STAGE, MOVE ONTO NEXT SECTION)

6. Can you describe the living conditions of those living in employer provided housing?
    a. *(PROBE: for specifics on access to water, building material of homes, typical number of people to a dwelling or number of families to a dwelling, etc.)*
    b. Is clean water available?
    c. Is electricity available?
        i. If available, do workers have to pay for it? (*PROBE: for specifics on who they have to pay and where they charge their phones*)
    d. Do workers have access to phones and/or wifi to communicate with loved ones?
7. Is housing provided free of charge or is there a fee?
    a. If there is a fee how much is it and how/when does the worker pay?
8. Do employers monitor / limit the communications or movement of their workers? If so, how?
    a. Do they limit who is allowed to visit workers, worksites or *bateyes*? If so, how? (Probe: not just the types of limitations/monitoring, but also who carries out monitoring or activities that limit worker movement, communication, and access to outsiders).
9. Are you aware of workers being locked in or under guard while they are working or while in their housing?
10. Do workers have access to transportation?
    a. Are there any limitations to workers being able to access transportation?
    b. If yes, can you elaborate on what these limitations are?
11. Do workers have their own documents?
    a. If not, who holds workers' identity documents?
    b. How can workers access or regain procession of their documents?

Grievance Procedures & Industry/Government Initiatives:

1. In your experience, what understanding do workers, in the sugarcane sector, typically have of their rights?
    a. What are the areas in which worker awareness is low?

(INTERVIEWER: IF RESPONDENT HAS NOT SHOWN INSIGHTS INTO WORKERS RIGHTS BASED ON THE INITIAL QUESTION, MOVE ONTO NEXT SECTION)

2. What mechanisms are available to sugarcane workers for voicing complaints or reporting issues in the workplace? *(PROBE: for specifics on systems in place with different employers, if the informant is aware)*
    a. What is the process for submitting grievances/complaints at the workplace?
    b. Have you heard of or observed any retaliation against workers for the submission of complaints or grievances?
        i. What about retaliation against workers that express/voice out their discomfort or complaints about working conditions to others?
        ii. (PROBE IF RELEVANT: What were the retaliations faced by workers)
    c. If there are accidents, how do the employers address them (including how do they report and maintain records and accidents, injuries, illness, etc.)?
    d. What is the policy on employees that need to take leave due to illness?

3. Are you aware of any efforts by companies, the government, or others to improve labor conditions in the sugarcane sector?
    a. If so, please explain
    b. In your opinion, are there key gaps in policy and practice from the government and/or industry in terms of workers' rights and working conditions?
4. Do social programs exist for sugarcane plantation workers?
    a. If so, do you know of any organizations working to implement these programs?
    b. What barriers do workers, and their families face in accessing such programs, including public programs?

Conclusion:

1. Could you suggest any organizations or individuals that are well informed about the sugarcane sector supply chain or labor conditions in the industry that we could interview?
    a. What about any publicly available industry reports/publications
2. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Sugarcane Worker Interview Protocol Question Bank (34 Questions)

Interviewer ID (i.e. 01):	Date (DD/MM/YYYY)	
Province of interview:		
Participant ID (i.e. 01):		
Age range:		Sex:
I am: ***Haitian*** ***Dominican*** ***Dominican of Haitian Descent*** Other:		
Interview duration:		

Interviewer instructions:

Foster a dynamic conducive to gathering good data and ensuring the participant feels comfortable. The interview should have the relaxed feel of a conversation. Set the tone by using a slow pace in your speech. Be aware of your body language and aim to be relaxed and attentive.

Ensure the respondent feels safe during the interview. Remind them their information will be anonymized and we will not collect any detailed personal identifying information. Ask if they would like to keep the door ajar. Remind them they are free to stop the interview at any time.

Provide workers with the point of contact to whom they may report any retaliation or intimidation attempts from their employer after the interview has concluded.

Ask one question at a time. Give the respondent ample time to reflect and fully respond before moving to the next. Try not to interrupt, and do not answer on their behalf.

If the respondent agrees to be recorded, give them your full attention. Make note of any follow-up questions you want to remember to ask, but otherwise focus on the respondent rather than your paper.

Probe for more depth, particularly when responses are brief. Use phrases such as, “Tell me more about that” and “Can you give me an example?” Aim to get specific instances, in considerable detail, whenever possible.

You do not have to ask each question verbatim, but at least broach all the topics covered that are relevant to the worker by the guide. If a respondent makes clear they have no knowledge of that topic, move on to the next. Adapt the flow and questions to make them relevant to the respondent.

For each item, ask the general question first, and then probe the sub-items that have not been addressed spontaneously.

Introduction:

1. Could you please tell me about your work?
    a. How long have you been doing it?
2. If you are Haitian or of Haitian descent, how has this affected your employment and quality of life?

Recruitment:

1. How did you first hear about your current job?
2. Can you please explain how you got this job?
    a. Were you hired directly by the sugarcane producer (COMPANY/SMALLHOLDER FARM/*BIENES NACIONALES*-CEA)?
    b. Were *buscones* involved?
        i. If so, what did they promise you and to what extent did they fulfill these promises?
        ii. Did you take on any debt from your recruitment? If so, please explain the nature of that debt.
        iii. How do you acquire the money to pay these debts?
    c. To your knowledge, do sugarcane workers at other plantations have similar recruitment experiences?

Contracts:

1. Do you have an individual, position-specific verbal or written contract or agreement with your employer?
    a. If you have a written contract, were you given a chance to review it? Did you understand the contents? *(PROBE: whether respondent is literate or had the contract read to them, whether respondent speaks the language of the contract)*
        i. *(If language barrier present, how does their employer address this issue?)*
    b. (IF WRITTEN) Do you have a copy of your contract? If so, how do you store it or keep it safe?
    d. If you don't have an individual, position-specific contract, do you have a work agreement?
        i. Do you understand the terms of this agreement?
        ii. *(PROBE: for Spanish language competency or if they only speak Creole. Probe for details on how this increases their vulnerability)*
2. What is the length of your work arrangement? Do the actual terms of your work match what you were originally promised? (EXAMPLE TYPE OF WORK, LOCATION, WAGES, ETC.)
    a. If not, please explain
    b. Is this unique to your experience with your employer, or do other sugarcane workers at other plantations experience the same?
3. In your experience, to what degree has your employer honoured your contract? *(PROBE: for contract violations)*
4. Do you know what the conditions for ending your contract are if you wanted to leave?
5. What will happen when your employment agreement ends?
    a. *(IF APPLICABLE, PROBE: for fear of deportation)*

Working Conditions and Wages:

1. Please describe your relationship with your employer and/or supervisor(s).
    a. Have you ever experienced any harassment or abuse by your employer and/or supervisor(s)? If so, how have you dealt with it? *(PROBE: to understand how harassment/abuse manifests; GENTLY PROBE: for physical or psychological abuse)*
    b. *(PROBE: for vulnerabilities relating to legal status)*
    c. If you have identification documents, do you retain your identification documents or does your employer have them?
    d. Do you know or have you seen other workers experience any harassment or abuse? Can you describe an example? *(GENTLY PROBE FOR DETAILS)*
2. How do you assess your workload? Do you have enough time during your normal hours to do your work? (probe: what are normal working hours?)
    a. Is there a certain amount of sugarcane or weight of sugarcane you must cut on a daily or weekly basis? Does your employer do anything to make you work harder or faster? If so, explain.
    b. What happens when workers do not meet their workload or target? *(PROBE: for penalties/threats.)*
3. Do you work overtime, or over 44 hours a week? If so, how often/ for how many hours (DAILY, A FEW TIMES A WEEK, ETC.)?
    a. How are you compensated for working extra hours, if at all?
    b. Could you turn down overtime if you wanted or do you feel compelled to work overtime? How would your employer respond if you turned down overtime?
4. Does your employer do anything to make you comply with what they ask of you? *(PROBE: for withholding your wages or benefits, withholding documents, threats of dismissal)*
5. What are the most dangerous parts of your job *(PROBE: for specific hazards)*? How frequently are you performing those tasks?
    a. Were these tasks clear to you before you started the job?
    b. Are you provided the proper equipment to conduct these tasks safely? *(PROBE: for what kind of equipment, and whether workers have to pay for it)*
    c. What effects have these tasks had on your health and safety?
    d. Is there potable water readily available in the fields?
    e. Does your work allow rest time during periods of extreme heat and humid temperatures? If so, please describe.
6. (IF APPLICABLE ASK) Do you face additional barriers at the workplace because of your legal status?
    a. *(PROBE: for fear of deportation, retention of identity documents/lack of documentation, language barriers, etc.)*
7. What types of injuries are commonly associated with work in this sector?
    a. Have you ever been injured on the job? If so, please elaborate. *(PROBE: about what they had to do to seek help or services)*
        i. How has your employer addressed worker injuries?
8. Can you tell me how and how much you are paid?
    a. *(PROBE: for average wages, for specifics on weighing of the cane, and wage theft)*
        i. Are you present for the measurement of the sugarcane you cut? If not, why?

b. How often are you paid? Is this always the same or does it change? Please explain

i. Who pays you? *(PROBE: for the whether directly employed by a company or a 3rd party contractor*)

ii. Are your payments from your employer ever late? If yes, please explain

9. Do you think you are paid fairly for the work you do? Why or why not?
    a. Have you ever faced non-payment of your wages, if so, can you recall why and how did you react to it?
10. Have you taken on any debts from your employment?
    a. If so, to whom? *(PROBE: for debts to grocers/*colmaderos, ajusteros, mayordomos/capataces*)*
    b. If so, in exchange for what? *(PROBE: for debts to grocers/*colmaderos*)*
    c. How long have you been in debt and how are you repaying it?
        i. Does your employer first pay your debts and then provide you with your remaining payment? *(PROBE: for details on how this is done)*
        ii. What are the terms of your debt (INTEREST, REPAYMENT DATE, ETC.). Do these feel fair? If not, why?
11. If you are unhappy about your pay, working conditions, hours, etc., is there a way for you to report these complaints or grievances (WORKERS ASSOCIATION, UNION, INDUSTRY CO-OPERATIVE, ETC.)?
    a. How does your company react to worker complaints (wages, quotas, etc.) and grievances?
12. Do you know or have you seen other workers experience any harassment or abuse? How did they deal with it?
    a. To your knowledge is this a common problem in this industry?
13. If you had to leave work for any reason, would you be able to do so?
    a. If not, why? *(PROBE: for limitation on their ability to access goods or services)*
    b. What happens if you need to leave work because you are sick?
14. Can you tell me about any breaks you receive during your day such as for meals or to use the bathroom?
    a. If you cannot take a break to use the bathroom or have a meal what prevents you from doing so?
15. Has your employer attempted to address issues relating to abusive working conditions? (*Probe to learn how*)
16. To your knowledge, is the work experience you have shared particular to your experience with your employer, or are they also common amongst workers at other sugarcane plantations?

Living Conditions:

1. Please tell me a little about the place where you live *(PROBE: if housing is employer provided)*
    a. Do you live in any form of employer provided housing?
2. If you live in employer provided housing – did you choose to do so or was this required by your employer? Why? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
    a. Are you required to pay for this housing? If so, how much?
3. If you live in employer provided housing, can you describe it to me? Do you have a private space or do you share it? If you share it, with how many people?
    a. Do you have access to drinkable water?

b. Do you have access to a bathroom – is it private or public?
c. Heating?
d. Do you feel safe? If not, what feels unsafe?

4. If you live in employer provided housing, do you have freedom to leave your housing during non-work hours, are there certain instances where you cannot? *(PROBE: for details as appropriate, can workers come and go as they please, are there places they cannot go or times they cannot leave their homes, etc.)*
5. Do you experience isolation from other people or communities? How so?
    a. (PROBE: for whether they face threats of isolation from their families or communities to force them to perform work)
6. Where do you buy food?
    a. Do you ever buy these items with credit? Under what terms?
7. To your knowledge, are your living conditions working for this employer unique, or do workers at other sugarcane plantations have similar experiences? *(PROBE: for specifics)*

(INTERVIEWER: THANK THE RESPONDENT FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION AND INSIGHTS SO FAR. INFORM THEM THAT YOU ARE DONE ASKING ABOUT WORKING CONDITIONS AND HAVE TWO FINAL QUESTIONS FOR THEM. INFORM THEM THAT ONE QUESTION WILL BE ABOUT SUGARCANE PRODUCED AT THEIR WORKSITE AND THAT WHILE THEY MIGHT NOT HAVE A COMPETE ANSWER ANY INSIGHTS THEY HAVE FOR US WILL BE VALUABLE.)

Child Labor:

1. Are there people under the age of 18 in the *bateyes* or who work at your worksite? If so, what are they doing?
    a. (PROBE: Ask if they are aware of children/people under the age of 18 who work in the sugarcane sector? Is it common for children to work in sugarcane sector?)

Supply Chain:

1. After the sugarcane leaves the plantation do you know where it goes? Who buys and sells the sugarcane?

Conclusion:

1. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time.