

# The environment in collective bargaining

Challenges and potentialities



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# The environment in collective bargaining: challenges and potentialities

## INTRODUCTION

Collective bargaining is a key regulatory tool in labor-capital relations. In Brazil, this process is marked by the setting up of business-and-workers only and sectorwide agreements seeking to establish working conditions, wages, benefits, and social rights. Over the last decades, new dimensions have made their way into the bargaining process, mirroring sweeping social, political, and economic changes. Among these dimensions, the environmental issue stands out as it grows in importance in the light of the climate crisis, the need for energy transition, and the pressure for more sustainable development models.

The inclusion of the environment on the collective bargaining agenda takes place

The environment arises as the new frontier of collective bargaining, connecting employment, health, and sustainability.

against a backdrop of incipient thinking about the intersection between the world of work and the environment, construed as nature. This relation started to require more attention as the impact of environmental degradation became more visible.

The purpose of this report is, therefore, to systematize the general, conceptual, and theoretical features of collective bargaining as regards the environment. The focus is

directed toward the interplay between the environmental issue and the collective bargaining process, the constraints and potentialities of this process, and its broader implications for the world of work.

With respect to the inclusion of the environment in collective bargaining instruments, examples of clauses already agreed upon are presented. Environment-related clauses are part of a very small number of agreements; still, the issue is dealt with, and expectations are that this kind of clause will grow in number in face of the climate emergency and labor's rising engagement with the issue, and in face of the consequences of environmental degradation for the working class.

### **COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND THE INCORPORATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

Collective bargaining, as per an internationally acclaimed definition, comprises processes whereby employers and workers, through their representative bodies, set norms that regulate working conditions and employment terms. Traditionally, the bargaining process is geared to income distribution, wage and benefit setting, and the workweek. Yet collective bargaining was never restricted to these points, since it is characteristically open to new issues as social, economic, or political pressure grows.

The environment constitutes, therefore, a relatively recent agenda, whose space is still rather limited yet is bound to increase at negotiating tables. Its presence is linked both to the perception of the effects of environmental degradation on health,

safety, and working conditions, and to the need that companies and the productive sectors adapt to technological change and energy transition processes.

The study of collective bargaining and the environment falls into what has been called "environmental labor studies". This field has emerged from the effort to integrate two traditionally separate fields: studies about labor and studies about the environment. The starting point is the acknowledgment that the relation between workers and nature is multiple and ridden with contradictions. Labor, just as it transforms nature, is conditioned by it. Thus, understanding labor relations in times of environmental crisis calls for considering how production processes impact ecosystems and how the workers are affected by such changes.

This theoretical frame reinforces the idea that collective bargaining cannot be limited only to immediate economic aspects. Rather, it must include such agendas as sustainability, environmental impact mitigation, and strategies to adapt to new production realities. The inclusion of these dimensions broadens the scope of the negotiation and positions the unions as key actors in debates that transcend the workplace, reaching the sphere of public policies and international commitments.

### **JUST TRANSITION AND THE WORKERS' ROLE**

The need to reduce greenhouse gases (GHGs) entails radical adaptation and downsizing or even the extinction of economic sectors and modes of production. These changes directly affect the working

## The climate crisis exerts pressure on the world of work and poses new challenges to trade union action.

class in these sectors and the communities in which these undertakings are set.

We can summarize the idea of fair transition under the banner “no one left behind”. From this perspective, the workers that come to lose their jobs or the communities that come to suffer from the loss of income must be considered by means of job reallocation and economic activity diversification plans that may secure employment and income levels.

Environmental improvement coupled with social worsening does not work for the working class, just as it does not work to keep jobs that may lead to poorer environmental quality, from which the workers are the first to be affected. Work must neither kill those who perform it nor worsen the quality of life of communities.

The energy production industry is, globally, the greatest emitter of GHGs. Every contribution to reduce or eliminate emissions matters for the global outcome. For workers in the energy industry, changes represent both risks and opportunities. Risks because there is the possibility of job changes and losses, and closure of production units. Opportunities because these changes prompt the creation of new activities linked to clean forms of energy, green reindustrialization, and technological innovation.

In this context, collective bargaining arises as a privileged space into which to introduce

the theme of energy transition on the trade union agenda. Advocacy of a fair transition presupposes that the costs will not be shifted to the workers alone, but distributed equitably among businesses, governments, and societies. This includes discussing job retraining, ensuring quality jobs, providing social protection, and engaging the communities affected. The trade union experience shows that, however incipient, there already are initiatives to introduce fair transition clauses in collective bargaining agreements, which points to a way toward strengthening this agenda.

## OCCURRENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

A systematic analysis of collective bargaining agreement records in Brazil reveals a scarce presence of environmental issues. Of the tens of thousands of agreements struck in one year, only 2.5% of them had environmental clauses. This finding is significant for two reasons. First, because it shows that the bargaining arena is still heavily concentrated on traditional issues like wages and benefits, relegating environmental issues to a secondary level. Second, because it is evidence of the gap between public rhetoric of sustainability and its effective inclusion in the normative tools that regulate labor.

The low number of environmental clauses in collective bargaining agreements may be accounted for by several factors. Standing out among them is the priority assigned to immediate economic demands in adverse situations including inflation, unemployment, or loss of rights. In these situations, trade unions tend to concentrate their efforts on wage- and benefit-related agendas, leaving



## Placing the environment on the trade union agenda is also a way toward democratizing the energy transition.

little room for long-term issues. Moreover, the trade union structure itself and the resources available limit the unions' capacity to engage in more complex agendas.

Another obstacle is the information and power asymmetry between workers and businesses. Environmental issues often involve technical knowledge, data on impact on production, and strategic planning, which leaves the unions at a disadvantage.

Regardless of these hurdles, there are potentialities too. The growing visibility of the climate crisis, the need to adapt to international commitments toward reducing emissions, and the mobilization of specific sectors like the oil and energy sector create favorable conditions to advance the theme. Furthermore, the intersection between workers' health and the environment can be leveraged as a point of entry for the enlargement of the bargaining agenda.

### DISTRIBUTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL CLAUSES

The study comprised more than 85,000 local and sectorwide collective bargaining agreements filed with the Mediator<sup>1</sup> system of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE, as per the Portuguese acronym), documents resulting from 47,560 distinct

negotiations carried out in 2023 and 2024. This set comprises a wide range of private sector occupations nationwide.

Of the total agreements researched, 1,181 had at least one clause dealing with the environment over the period, which accounts for 2.5% of all the agreements analyzed.

Environment-related clauses are slightly more frequent in sectorwide agreements, with 3.7% of cases, than in business-and-workers-only collective bargaining agreements, with only 2.2% of the cases (Table 1). As is known, sectorwide agreements are agreements entered into by union organizations representing both workers and employers and comprise workers of an entire industry. Collective bargaining agreements, in turn, are entered into by a trade union and a business, and are limited to the signatory parties.

**TABLE 1**

Number and percentage of collective bargaining agreements with environmental clauses by type of agreement. Brazil, 2023 and 2024.

Type of agreement	Nº	%
Business-only agreement	893	2.2%
Sectorwide agreement	288	3.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.181</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

Source: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Mediator.  
Prepared by: DIEESE.

Note: Survey of agreements filed with the Ministry of Labor and Employment's Mediator system up to September 2025.

Across economic sectors (Table 2), we observe a greater presence of environmental clauses in agreements entered into in the agricultural industry (5.4% of clauses) and in the manufacturing industry (3.5% of clauses negotiated).

As for economic activities, the highlights are: activities performed by commerce-related services, with 9.9% of the agreements

<sup>1</sup> Mediator is a digital platform of the Ministry of Labor and Employment (MTE) for the registration and formalization of collective bargaining agreements.

including environmental clauses; chemical and pharmaceutical workers, with 6.8% of agreed upon environmental clauses, private education, with 5.8% of cases, warehousing activities, with 5.2%, and construction and furniture workers, with 4.7% of environmental clauses in collective bargaining agreements.

As for the Brazilian territory as a whole (Table 3), it can be seen that nationwide negotiations are those presenting the greatest number of environmental clauses, which appear in 21.3% of the agreements. With a much lower percentage appear, almost tied, agreements conducted by unions from Brazil's Northern (2.9%) and Southeastern regions (2.8%), then come the remaining regions with percentages equal or closer to 2%.

Regarding states, the highlights are Roraima, where 5.8% of the collective bargaining agreements included environmental clauses; Acre (5.5% of the cases); Amapá (4.8%); Rio Grande do Sul (4.2%); Alagoas (4.1%); and Tocantins (4.1%).

## CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CLAUSES

Even though they account for a relatively small proportion of the 2023 and 2024 collective bargaining agreements, environmental clauses focus on a great variety of topics (Table 4). The most common types of guarantees are the promotion of sustainable development, the holding of educational campaigns and training programs, issues related to safety at the workplace, and compliance with environmental regulations. Yet there are many other guarantees dealing with

**TABLE 2**

Number and percentage of collective bargaining agreements with environmental clauses, by industry and economic activity. Brazil, 2023 and 2024.

Industry/Economic activity	Nº	%
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
Warehousing activities	37	5.2%
Wholesale and retail activities	94	2.0%
Minerals and petroleum byproduct activities	6	1.1%
Other commerce-related activities	1	0.3%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	<b>562</b>	<b>3.5%</b>
Food industry	128	4.4%
Shoe industry	11	2.3%
Construction and furniture	172	4.7%
Extractive industry	26	3.6%
Spinning and textile activities	3	0.5%
Metalworking, mechanical, and electric materials activities	70	1.7%
Chemical and pharmaceutical industry	135	6.8%
Urban	15	3.3%
Garment industry	12	1.3%
Other manufacturing industry activities	24	1.8%
<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
<b>Services</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
Commerce-related services	94	9.9%
Communications, publicity, and news companies	9	1.0%
Cultural activities	42	4.6%
Private education	35	5.8%
Liberal professions	10	1.2%
Private health	25	1.5%
Security and surveillance	1	0.2%
Transportation	108	1.5%
Tourism and hospitality	54	0.8%
Other services activities	16	0.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,181</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

Source: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Mediator.

Prepared by: DIEESE.

Note: 1) Survey of agreements filed with the Ministry of Labor and Employment's Mediator system up to September 2025; 2) Negotiations involving multiple sectors or activities were accounted for in each respective segment.

**TABLE 3**

Number and percentage of collective bargaining agreements with environmental clauses by Brazilian region and unit of the federation. Brazil, 2023 and 2024.

Brazilian region/unit of the federation	Nº	%
<b>Mid-Western region</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
Federal District	5	0.5%
Goiás	39	2.4%
Mato Grosso	24	3.3%
Mato Grosso do Sul	21	3.7%
<b>Northeastern region</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
Alagoas	14	4.1%
Bahia	29	3.0%
Ceará	39	2.9%
Maranhão	8	2.0%
Paraíba	7	1.1%
Pernambuco	21	1.4%
Piauí	6	2.7%
Rio Grande do Norte	14	2.5%
Sergipe	8	2.7%
<b>Northern region</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>2.9%</b>
Acre	4	5.5%
Amazonas	20	3.3%
Amapá	5	4.8%
Pará	40	3.2%
Rondônia	8	3.5%
Roraima	4	5.8%
Tocantins	9	4.1%
<b>Southeastern region</b>	<b>644</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
Espírito Santo	15	1.8%
Minas Gerais	90	1.9%
Rio de Janeiro	70	1.9%
São Paulo	483	3.4%
<b>Southern region</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
<b>Paraná</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
Rio Grande do Sul	231	4.2%
Santa Catarina	18	0.6%
<b>Nationwide</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21.3%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.181</b>	<b>2.5%</b>

Source: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Mediador.

Prepared by: DIEESE.

Note: 1) Survey of agreements filed with the Ministry of Labor and Employment's Mediador system up to September 2025; 2) Negotiations involving multiple regions or states were accounted for in each of the localities covered

such diverse themes as reduction of the use of paper, pesticide spraying, and the workweek. Next, some guarantees are highlighted, including examples of clauses agreed upon. The percentages used from this point onwards were calculated on the basis of the total number of agreements that contained environmental clauses, not the total number of agreements analyzed.

## PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The most frequent environmental clause in the agreements analyzed is about the promotion of sustainable development, agreed upon in 21.0% of the negotiations. Most of these clauses address sustainability in broad terms. Although these clauses are important for showing the parties' concern with the environment and sustainability, concrete actions to achieve these goals are not detailed.

In the clause below, which was agreed upon by unions representing self-employed commerce workers in several cities of the state of São Paulo, the parties state that they will endeavor to promote sustainable development.

### DECENT WORK

*The company will strive to promote decent work; protection against unemployment, sustainable development, respect for fundamental principles and rights such as trade union freedom, equal opportunity, free collective bargaining, and non-discrimination at the workplace; social protection practices; social dialogue; capacity-building programs and workers' health and safety.*



**TABLE 4**

Number and percentage of collective bargaining agreements with environmental clauses by type of guarantee. Brazil, 2023 and 2024.

Type of guarantee	Nº	%
Promotion of sustainable development	248	21.0%
Educational campaigns and training	191	16.2%
Safety at work	171	14.5%
Legislation	169	14.3%
Company policies	99	8.4%
Climate change	80	6.8%
Reducing paper use	57	4.8%
Separate waste collection	47	4.0%
Hazard prevention teams (CIPA)	35	3.0%
Food	33	2.8%
Pesticides/herbicides	28	2.4%
Unions	23	1.9%
Maritime transition	23	1.9%
Uniforms	19	1.6%
Awards	14	1.2%
Sustainable transport	12	1.0%
Telecommuting	8	0.7%
Vehicular inspection	5	0.4%
Other guarantees	10	0.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.181</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Mediador.

Prepared by: DIEESE.

Note: The sum of the parts is greater than the total because an agreement can ensure more than one type of guarantee.ia.

In this other clause, agreed upon in several food industry agreements entered into in the São Paulo City metropolitan area, the union recommends the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, established by the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)**

*The union recommends the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

**Roraima, Acre, and Rio Grande do Sul states lead the number of environment-related clauses adopted in collective bargaining agreements.**

*as established by the world agenda comprising 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030. This global agenda was adopted by the United Nations in 2015 and signed by 193 countries, including Brazil.*

*With reference to the SDGs, actions included refer to:*

- 1. No poverty: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than USD 2.15 a day;*
- 2. Zero hunger: By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.;*
- 3. Good health and well-being: By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births;*
- 4. Quality education: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes;*
- 5. Gender equality: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;*

**Sectorwide collective bargaining agreements are more likely to include environmental clauses (3.7%) than local agreements (2.2%).**

*6. Drinking water and sanitation: By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all;*

*7. Affordable and clean energy: By 2030, ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services;*

*8. Decent work and economic growth: Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries;*

*9. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure: Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all;*

*10. Reduced inequalities: By 2030, progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40 per cent of the population at a rate higher than the national average;*

*11. Sustainable cities and communities: By 2030, ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums;*

*12. Responsible consumption and production: Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries;*

*13. Climate action: Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries;*

*14. Life below water: By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans;*

*15. Life on land: By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements; also, by 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally;*

*16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions: Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere. End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children;*

*17. Partnerships: Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through*

*international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection. Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources.*

*Note: all these elements are related to sustainability in its multiple social, economic, and environmental aspects. This breadth shows the boldness of the union and the company as regards this new undertaking.*

## EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS AND TRAINING

The second most agreed-upon type of guarantee over the period was the holding of educational campaigns or workers' training programs on topics related to environmental preservation. Clauses thereto were agreed upon in 16.2% of the bargaining processes.

In most of the agreements, educational campaigns should be part of the Internal Week for the Prevention of Work Hazards (SIPAT), an event organized by the Internal Commission for Accident Prevention (CIPA), as can be observed in the clause below, agreed upon in different sectors and states.

### ENVIRONMENT WEEK / RECOMMENDATION

*It is recommended that companies, within their possibilities, seek to promote, on an annual basis, a week dedicated to environment preservation activities.*

There are clauses addressing specific issues within the broader environmental protection agenda, such as the one

observed in an agreement entered into by a water treatment and supply and sanitation services company in the city of Rio de Janeiro/RJ, which establishes water awareness events.

### WORLD WATER DAY

*The Company commits to promoting environmental awareness events with its staff every 22nd of March in honor of the world water day.*

In the example below, taken from a bargaining agreement for street cleaning and conservation in Campos dos Goytacazes, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the company committed to placing signs and billboards targeting the local population focusing on the importance of environmental preservation and waste sorting.

### EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGN

*The company may promote an educational and publicity campaign with signs and billboards for the purpose of warning the population of Campos about the preservation of the environment and waste collection of recyclable packaging.*

With this clause, agreed upon by a construction company and workers from several cities of Mato Grosso do Sul State, the company pledged to engage the local community in social and environmental actions.

### SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DAY OF ACTION

*The Company agrees to hold a social and environmental day of social and environmental action in 2024, in*

## Collective bargaining can become a strategic instrument toward aligning environmental protection with decent work advocacy.

*partnership with the local community. This action will aim to promote social sustainability and to implement environmental improvements, contributing to the region's quality of life and environmental preservation.*

A clause agreed upon in a collective bargaining process with a metalwork, mechanical, and electric materials group of factories in the city of Manaus/AM established that a campaign be carried out for the purpose of fighting against food waste and promoting composting.

### **CLEAN PLATE**

*The companies shall commit to a campaign to end food waste – CLEAN PLATE – with nothing left, both habitually and permanently, designed to use green food waste for composting. Likewise, plastic cups, bags, and bottles must be delivered to a recycling center.*

In a sectorwide agreement of charitable, religious, and philanthropic institutions in the Federal District, the parties signed a clause in which they highlight the importance of engaging workers and employers toward a more sustainable environment.

### **UNITED FOR NATURE**

*It is acknowledged that protecting*

*and preserving the environment is of great importance for public health and sustainable development. Therefore, the parties shall jointly promote continuous professional capacity-building and educational campaigns geared to workers and open to the communities for the purpose of raising awareness and the adoption of ecologically correct practices. These campaigns shall seek to engage all the stakeholders, encouraging concrete actions that may contribute to a healthier and more sustainable environment for future generations. Together, employees and employers can make a difference and ensure a greener and healthier future for all.*

In the clause that follows, taken from a gypsum extraction and processing industry sectorwide agreement, the unions pledged to engage public agencies and other organizations in activities focused on environmental issues.

### **ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

*The signatory unions commit to promoting jointly with public agencies and related organizations seminars/ debates aiming to raise the ecological consciousness of our population and to preserve our woods.*

### **SAFETY IN THE WORKPLACE**

The risk to the environment stemming from issues related to safety in the workplace was addressed in 15.5% of the negotiations involving environmental preservation. The parties involved in the negotiations seek to prevent hazards caused by waste, contaminants, and pollutants that may result in damage to the environment.

The interruption of activities that may cause damage to the environment was agreed in several negotiations, as for instance the clause below taken from an extractive industry spread over several cities of the state of Amazonas.

### **RIGHT TO REFUSE**

*When the employee, while performing their activities, based on their training and experience, after having taken corrective measures, has a reasonable justification to believe that their own and/or their coworkers' life and/or physical well-being, and/or the facilities and/or the environment, is at serious and imminent risk, they can suspend these activities provided this fact is immediately communicated to a hierarchical superior who, after assessing the situation and should the serious and imminent risk condition be confirmed, shall maintain the suspension of the activities until the situation has been normalized.*

The next clause, included in several food industry agreements in the state of Ceará, highlights protection of the environment and natural resources as contained in the federally-mandated Environmental Hazards Prevention Program (PPRA).

### **ON WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES**

*In addition to measures appertaining to the Labor Regulatory Norms, the collective and individual measures established in the PPRA or Environmental Hazards Prevention Program, aiming not only at workers' health, but also at the safety and protection of the environment and natural resources. As well as in the*

*PCMSO or Occupational Health Medical Control Program, which is fully focused on the issue of workers' health. The company shall keep a team of safety and occupational medicine technicians on Sundays and/or holidays, and may even adopt other complementary measures for any task whose environment is deemed unhealthy or hazardous.*

### **LEGISLATION**

Another widely adopted item in agreements addressing environmental preservation was compliance with the environmental law. Clauses are emphatic about the mandatory compliance with the Constitution, the laws, and normative and administrative directives aimed at ensuring environmental preservation.

In a number of agreements in the rural sector of cities in the state of São Paulo, a clause stood out that ensures respect for the environment as mandated by provisions in the Federal Constitution and the environmental legislation.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

*Any economic activity developed within the scope of this collective bargaining agreement shall comply with what is provided for in the Federal Constitution and the environmental legislation with regard to respect for the environment.*

In the clause below, introduced in a number of agreements entered into by Santa Catarina State workers in the handling and distribution of goods industry, the parties committed to complying with the National Policy for the Environment, alongside any legal, normative, and administrative acts related to the environment.



The integration of workers' health and the environment may open new doors for collective bargaining.

### **PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

*The parties commit to protecting and preserving the environment, as well as preventing and banning practices that may be harmful to it, delivering its services in compliance with the legislation in force as regards the National Policy for the Environment and Environmental Crimes, and legal, normative, and administrative acts regarding the environment and related areas emanating from the federal, state, and municipal spheres.*

In an agreement entered into by goods handling and distribution workers in the city of Campos Lindos (TO), the parties agreed to comply with the environmental law to prevent environmental damage

### **NEW STIPULATIONS**

(...)

*Both parties pledge to comply with environmental laws and regulations, and shall furthermore adopt every applicable measure and procedure in order to prevent any aggression, hazard, or risk of damage to the environment.*

(...)

In several construction industry agreements in cities in the state of São Paulo involving subcontractors and outsourced firms, the parties underscored these companies' responsibility for complying with the environmental legislation.

### **CONTRACTORS/SUBCONTRACTORS/ SELF-EMPLOYED WORKERS**

(...)

*The "CONTRACTOR" is solely responsible for compliance with legal obligations, their effects, and the respective implementation of guidelines and procedures, using thereto every technical, administrative, and financial resource available toward protecting the environment and the worker's health and safety.*

(...).

### **STAFF NORMS**

In 7.8% of the agreements, the parties dealt with staff norms that directly or indirectly ensured the preservation of the environment or mitigated any environmental damage. Staff norms are rules and guidelines governing labor relations and the behavior of individuals in the workplace.

Prohibition of hunting, fishing, and extracting trees was addressed in a rural sector agreement in the city of Campo Novo do Parecis (MT).

### **HOUSING**

(...)

*Paragraph 4 – Hunting and fishing within company premises is prohibited, as well as extracting trees, native vegetation, and permanent preservation areas and forest reservations..*

(...).

In the clause that follows, included in several agreements entered into by the food industry of cities of the state of Minas Gerais, the use of cell phones in the workplace was

prohibited based on the argument that their use involved potential risks of serious accidents that could cause damage to the environment.

### **ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE USE OF CELL PHONES**

*Considering that the use of cell phones in the workplace causes loss of attention, which increases the risk of serious accidents and damage to the environment and to one's health, the use of cell phones, smartphones, tablets, and similar devices, especially in operational activities, is prohibited during working hours under penalty of applicable disciplinary measures.*

## **CLIMATE CHANGES**

References to climate change appear in 6.8% of the negotiations involving environmental issues. Most of the clauses were negotiated in response to floods that ravaged the state of Rio Grande do Sul in April and May of 2024. In these negotiations, the parties agree on emergency measures in response to interruptions of the companies' economic activity, including bonus payments, the adoption of remote work, and the granting of "collective vacations".

With the clause below, included in several transportation workers' collective bargaining agreements in different cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the companies agreed to pay a salary bonus.

### **SALARY BONUS**

*Considering the climate events in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in the year 2024, the company will grant workers a bonus amounting to BRL 400.00 (four hundred*

*reals) that will be deposited into the employee's bank account by August 8, 2024.*

*Sole paragraph: The parties acknowledge that the extraordinary indemnity bonus granted by the company shall be exclusively temporary and will not be added to the salary for any reason whatsoever, as it shall not be used to calculate the social security contribution and any other payroll-related taxes, including severance fund FGTS. Furthermore, the parties agree that this extraordinary arrangement is limited to one payment and that the company's obligation is fully met once the deposit described in the heading is made.*

## **REDUCTION IN THE USE OF PAPER**

The reduction in the use of paper was the subject of 4.8% of the agreements. The clauses stipulated that receipts and vouchers be made available in virtual manner to avoid consuming paper.

In the clause below, agreed upon by a transportation and furniture cross-sector agreement within the jurisdiction of the state of Goiás, the parties underscored ecological benefits to justify the provision of documents by electronic means.

### **ON THE SENDING AND PROVISION OF DOCUMENTS BY ELECTRONIC MEANS**

*The companies are authorized to send and provide documents to the staff by electronic means (e-mail or messaging application WhatsApp).*

*§1º Sending vacation notices, work attendance records, and pay slips by electronic means is allowed.*

The green agenda is also a social agenda: there is no environmental justice without labor justice.

*§2º The employee may directly ask the company to receive any printed documents provided the request is made previously and in writing.*

*§3º The replacement of paper for electronic means must take place, for it is faster and less costly, does not consume paper, ink, and toner and, foremost, for a number of ecological benefits.*

## WASTE SORTING

The commitment to adopt waste sorting within company premises was agreed upon in 47 negotiations (4.0%), as for instance, in the clause below, taken from construction and furniture industries cross-sector agreements in several cities in the state of São Paulo.

### ENVIRONMENT

*The company shall keep in place a permanent environment preservation incentive program, encouraging through in-house campaigns the recycling of materials, waste sorting, and respect for local fauna and flora.*

In several private health agreements in the city of Pouso Alegre (MG), the company pledged to collect recyclables and to raise workers' awareness about preserving the environment.

### WASTE SORTING

*The company commits to carrying out waste sorting, promoting the recycling of materials among the staff, donating them to freely chosen social organizations, and keeping employees aware of environmental preservation. Any profits arising thereof shall be credited to the workers as an incentive for such practice.*

## INTERNAL COMMISSION FOR ACCIDENT PREVENTION (CIPA)

The Internal Commission for Accident Prevention (CIPA) was addressed in 3.0% of the negotiations. Most of the clauses provided for the holding of educational campaigns during the Internal Week for the Prevention of Work Hazards (SIPAT), as mentioned earlier. However, some clauses referred to other CIPA duties, as in the clause below, adopted in several chemical and pharmaceutical industry agreements in a few cities in the state of Rio de Janeiro, making it mandatory for the Internal Commission for Accident Prevention to participate in inspections and investigations related to environmental preservation.

### CIPA

*The CIPA shall be competent to identify and monitor impacts stemming from how the production and work are organized and those stemming from technological and organizational innovations, as well as to submit feasible proposals and measures to improve the working environment, permanently tracking such measures, while also being granted access to any information required to perform their duties.*

*Paragraph I - CIPA is entitled to follow expert assessments, evaluations, or inspections conducted by public or private agencies, along with investigations into the causes of workplace accidents and environmental preservation.*  
(...)

In this clause included in hospitality and tourism industry agreements legally binding in the state of São Paulo, environment preservation was highlighted as an issue to be defended by the CIPA.

### **ELECTIONS OF WORKERS' REPRESENTATIVES TO CIPA**

(...)

*g) The Internal Commissions for Accident Prevention shall also defend the environment, ecological balance, and public health;*  
(...).

## **FOOD**

Clauses addressing workers' meals in combination with environmental preservation were the subject of 2.8% of the agreements. Several food industry agreements in municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul included a clause encouraging the use of organic, agroecological, and pesticide-free products in food programs.

### **HEALTH AND FOOD SECURITY COMMISSION**

(...)

*Companies in this industry shall, within their possibilities, use in their food programs family farming, organic, agroecological, and pesticide-free*

*products thus providing healthy food to their workers.*

While in the clause below, included in a transportation workers' nationwide agreement, the parties agreed to hold organic and agroecological products fairs.

### **AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS FAIR**

*The company, aiming at promoting healthy food, will provide spaces within its units and administrative buildings to hold fairs where employees will be able to buy organic and agroecological products, mostly from family farming.*

*Sole paragraph – The company's Health, Environment, and Safety and Corporate Social Responsibility areas will be responsible for supporting company units in the organization of said fairs.*

## **SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION**

Incentives to transport-related sustainable practices is agreed upon in 1.0% of the negotiations, with clauses promoting the use of collective transport and alternative modes of transport like the bicycle.

In several Pará State transport-related agreements, the companies pledged to keep paying transport vouchers to any workers using their bicycles on their way to and from work.

### **TRANSPORT VOUCHER/PROVISION**

*Companies in this sector will keep, as of May 2023, supplying transport vouchers to workers who use their bicycles as a means of transportation to and from home and work as health and environmental preservation incentives, for the nonpolluting component of the bicycle*

The environmental theme appears more strongly in the chemical, construction, private education, and rural industries.

*as a mode of transport. This benefit will only be granted to the employee who uses the bicycle as a mode of transport, all other employees being subject to the laws in force.*

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Examination of the collective bargaining agreements from an environmental point of view reveals a field in formation, still marked by gaps, yet also by possibilities of expansion. Building on the present analysis, a few central points can be highlighted:

1. The environment still occupies marginal space in collective bargaining agreements, with a reduced occurrence and concentrated in specific sectors.
2. The energy transition and climate crisis pose new challenges to the world

of work, thus making the broadening of this agenda indispensable.

3. Collective bargaining may constitute a strategic space for building a fair transition, while ensuring protection to workers and the inclusion of social perspectives in the process.

4. The field of environmental labor studies provides a theoretical framework to understand the intersection between labor and nature, reaffirming the importance of incorporating sustainability into trade union practices.

Thus, we conclude that collective bargaining processes involving the environment are the expression of a wider reshaping of the role of trade unionism and labor relations. Rather than being restricted to wages, collective bargaining agreements have the potential to contribute toward an environmental governance that encompasses economic, social, and ecological interests. The challenge lies in transforming this potential into actual practice, overcoming its present low occurrence and strengthening labor's bargaining capacity around decisive issues for the future of work and the planet.





MINISTÉRIO DO  
TRABALHO  
E EMPREGO

GOVERNO DO  
**BRASIL**  
DO LADO DO POVO BRASILEIRO

**DIÁLOGO**

