

Motorcycle taxi and labor shortage in the agricultural production basin of Foubot (West Cameroon)

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Abstract

This article evokes a dynamic that should mechanically operate in view of the demographic change of an aging agricultural workforce and the phenomenon of motorcycle taxis as a new source of employment in the Foubot production area (West-Cameroon). The data were collected using a questionnaire administered to 379 heads of farm households that were selected by the stratified random sampling technique. Analysis of the data collected reveals that this motorcycle driving activity, generating task income (1000-5000 FCFA / day) attracts young people aged 18 to 40 who were involved in the execution of agricultural work. The results reveal that two very distinct agricultural professions emerge: paid labor by the task and especially labor non-paying. The peasants interviewed generally point out the shortage of manpower in quantity and in particular of qualified manpower. This lack of manpower results above all from the arduous working conditions, the aging of the heads of households, illnesses and wage conditions with the task offered is 1000 FCFA / day, this last factor being largely responsible for the abandonment of agricultural work in favor of driving a motorcycle taxi.

Keywords: Agricultural Labor, motorcycle taxis, West-Cameroun, Cultural Hardness

Introduction

Foubot (map 1), this 579km² space located in the west of Cameroon, commonly known as the "granary of central Africa" due to its fertile highlands, sometimes from the volcano, benefits from an important agricultural dynamic (Segalen, 1967). Its 78,000 inhabitants are linearly concentrated around the national highway, leaving the space for agricultural production (Ngapgue, 2014). In this region, agriculture remains the main sector of the economy like other parts of Cameroon.

This agriculture is based on smallholder farms whose basic socio-economic characteristic is household (3-5 members / families). This production area registers an

average annual growth rate of less than 2% and more than 43,000 agricultural workers of various geographic (Map 2).

West Cameroon was considered in the 1960s as the "lung" of coffee growing, this region quickly turned away from it for merchant food because of the total fall in coffee production which lasted more than 30 years, having first undergone the abandonment of large European farmers such as COC (Compagnie de l'Ouest du Cameroun), CIAC Compagnie industrielle et Agricole du Cameroun), SPHB (Société des Planteurs du Haut Bamoun), SAF (Société Agricole de Foubot), SPM (Société de Plantation de la Momo), SPF (Société de Plantation de Foubot), SACA (Société Agricole de Café

Arabica). This fall in production will provoke an agricultural mutation in favor of market gardening intensively practiced near rivers (Ngagoue et al. 2011; Kuété, 2008; Morin, 1994). But today, with the attraction of driving motorcycle taxis since 2000, by the new generation of young agricultural workers (20-40), although this activity has some social benefits, it has rather created another problem. in agricultural human resources, which is already acute for both small and medium-sized farmers (Parh, 1991).

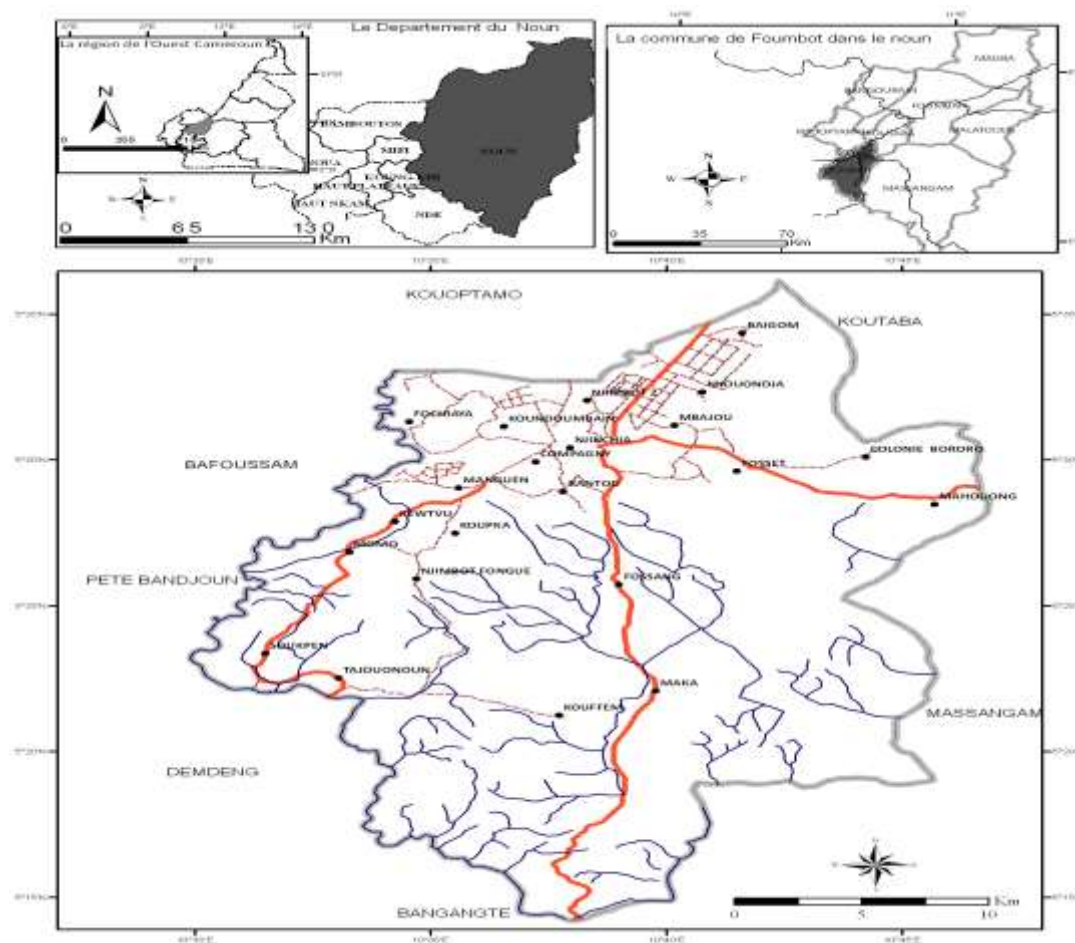
Indeed, the labor market among peasants, even in sufficient and even qualified quantities, has become a real problem for production (Nkendah and Temple, 2003; Dufumier, 1996). Agricultural practices being carried out mainly by hand (stump removal, clearing, plowing, ridges, mounds, weeding, semi, spreading of fertilizer, harvesting, drying ...), many farmers find it difficult to use hoes, machetes and especially have to face the arduousness of the work.

The low price per task (1,000 FCFA / day) encourages the abandonment of agriculture by the new rising generation in favor of other activities deemed to generate more income and the rural exodus of certain young people to the big cities. From Central Africa (Douala, Yaoundé, Libreville, Malabo...) to exercise other non-agricultural activities. Although some small farms manage to use unpaid family labor, other farmers find it

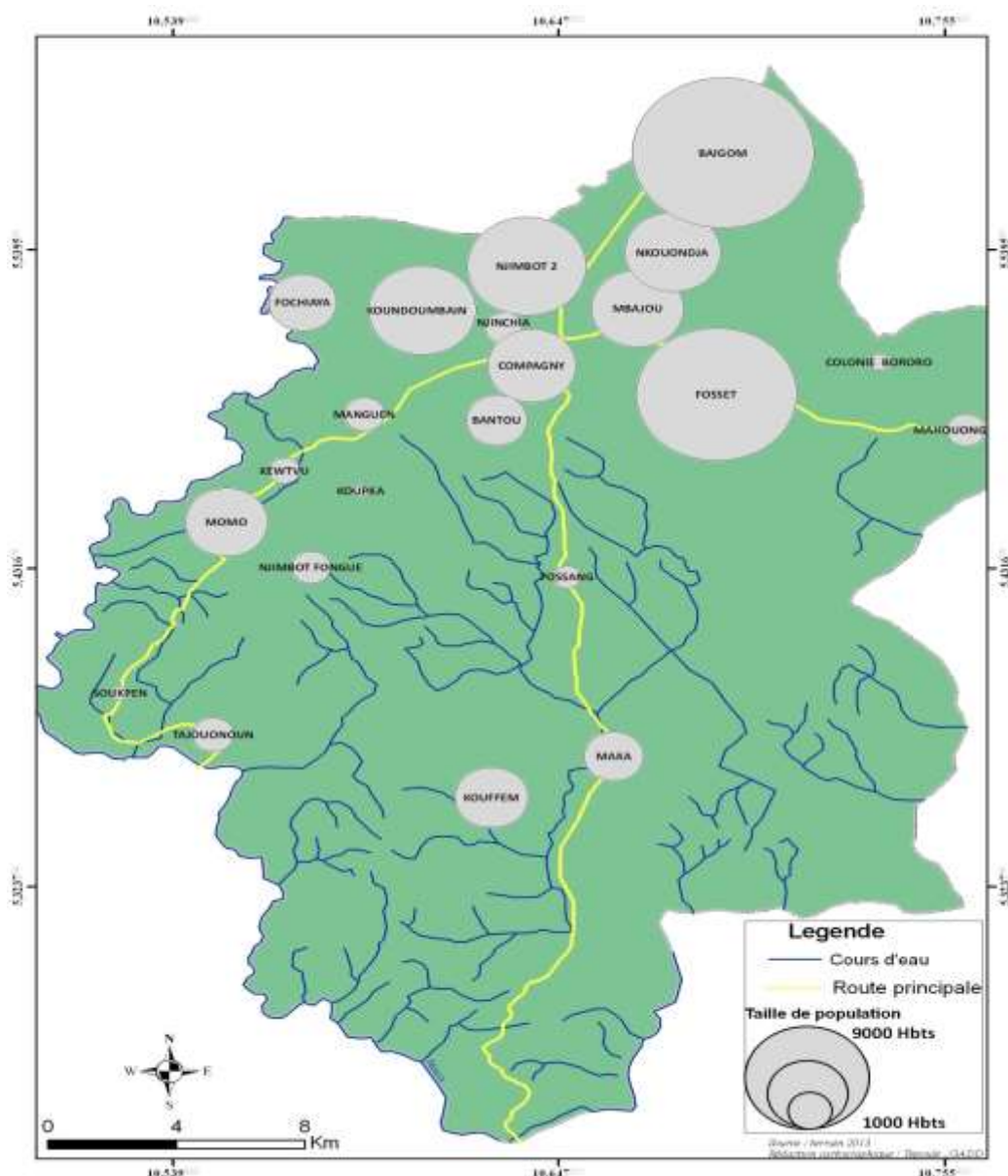
difficult to find them for their own farms. It is necessary to seek this agricultural workforce further in other regions (Bafoussam, Dschang, Bamenda ...) with difficulties of acceptance and expensive means of transport.

In addition to the motorcycle taxis, encouraged by politics (Keutcheu, 2015), offering new jobs to young people, is added to this factor responsible for the scarcity of the workforce the aging of the workforce former peasants, which leads to a question: can agricultural development be maintained in the face of the challenges associated with significant mutations of intergenerational dimension which refuse the land and prefer the driving of motorbikes taxis?

The general objective was to analyze more of the factors responsible for the scarcity of human resources which becomes a headache, even for small and large farms. The specific objective consisted of determining the priorities in terms of workforce development, actor training and employment in agriculture, and analyzing government support to farmers for the management of human resources. and the organization of work and also the development of continuous training of human resources in agriculture with mechanical support for the work.



Map 1: Location of Foubot in the West Cameroon region
Source: Tepoule, GADD (2013)



Map 2: Population by village in the commune of Foubot
Source: Tepoule, GADD (2013)

Materials and Methods

Study Area

The study was conducted in the West Cameroon region, especially in Foubot council among households, with farmers and actors in charge of the rural world (ministry, NGO, association). It differs from other regions of Cameroon by its geographical position, its demography and its economy. Foubot has 22 villages. It is between Latitude 10°52' North and Longitude 14°09' East in the Noun Division. Foubot is characterized by a tropical sudano Guinean climate with a long rainy season spread over eight four (8) months (march to October) and a short dry season of about four (4) months (November-January). Annual rainfall varies from 2500 to 5000 mm with an average of 3750mm. The minimum temperatures

are around 18°C with a maximum of 26°C and an annual average of 22°C. We note the presence of strong winds which change direction and strength according to the seasons. The period from march to october is the mildest and corresponds to the rainy season. The study was conducted during this period. The population is estimated at 76 486 inhabitants covering an area of 579 km².

Data collection and processing

Data were collected on the basis of socio-economic characteristics; former area of large coffee plantation using a questionnaire administered to 379 heads of farm households that were selected by the stratified random sampling technique; the survey was also carried out on the academic level, quality and quantity of agricultural labor; and working conditions (tools, equipment, housing,

remuneration, etc.), workers, wages and hours of agricultural activities, a last survey was done on the labor market and the sector's need for development of human resources. The other target groups or respondents are technical departments of agriculture: delegation from the Ministry of Agriculture, delegation from the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises; members of NGOs and members of peasant associations. The data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20 (SPSS 2014) and Microsoft Excel 2013 software

Results and discussions

Actors and agricultural development in the Foubot production area

Historically, the fall in coffee production has caused an intense agricultural mutation in favor of market gardening and cereal cultivation (Uwizeyimana (2009). This

agriculture remains "traditional", and above all "family", in the hands of the composite population of Foubot (indigenous, non-indigenous), due to the difficult mechanization policy and land speculation economically belonging to customary powers, and poor availability of improved seeds. Cereal cultivation (corn, rice) is leading to the concentration of farms agricultural methods and the standardization of family food methods and only surplus harvests are sold.

In terms of operation, these farms specialize mainly in market gardening (tomatoes, peppers, cabbage, potatoes, etc.) or in the production of cereals (corn, rice); three types of producer actors have been identified in the Foubot production area. This production is ensured by large farmers (5%) "peasant-market gardeners or grain farmers" well provided with factors of production (land), these owners do not work on the farms themselves and they bring human capital from other localities as well as material capital, pay the labor and have large farms with large areas, between 10 to 20 hectares (figure 1).

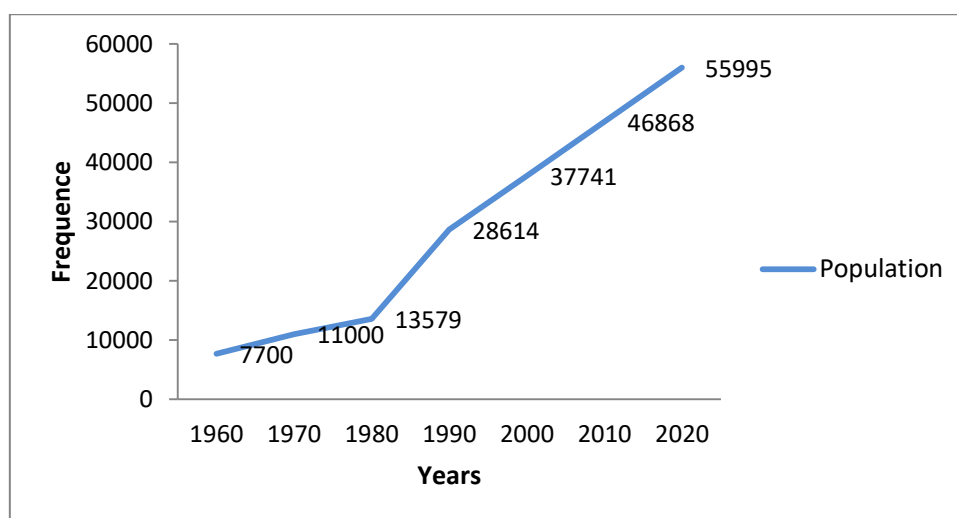


Figure 1: population growth of Foubot (urban)
Source: FAOstat (2017)

This figure (Figure 1) shows that the population is growing but the new generation of the workforce (75%) is turning towards the motorcycle taxi sector, which explains the scarcity of the workforce shows. Small peasant-market gardeners or grain farmers (20%) whose task is carried out by themselves and sometimes with the support of agricultural labor paid by the task. The latter have areas of farms which vary around 5 to 8 hectares. Finally, the third type of agricultural actor corresponds to the popular layer (75%) "Family peasant": it concerns small farms which mobilize family and especially unpaid labor with reduced farm areas (1 to 3 hectares). This last case is of the "traditional" type where the peasants use small areas, either for vegetable crops or for cereals with only family labor and where the production is intended for self-consumption and the sale, surplus on the local Foubot market.

The study shows that it has always grown: agricultural solidarity and unity through diversity among small producers with mutual aid and tontines, in order to promote relations of solidarity between the actors. The

NGOs and associations that have emerged are working for marketable, quality, local agriculture, however, requesting the assistance and assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture for the introduction of agricultural machinery, either for hire or wishing to obtain strong agricultural credit and technical support for producers. These movements believe that the State must fully play its role of accompaniment with credit at low interest rate of reimbursement (1%) or even with agricultural subsidies. Faced with the various difficulties encountered in the agricultural sector (fall in the workforce, land disputes, environmental dead ends), the most striking fact is the abandonment of agriculture as the main activity pushing young people to driving motorcycle taxis.

Profile of the agricultural labor

The labor force of the household comes first from the people who make it up and especially from the demographic size of this household. Thus, the parameter academic level also influences agricultural yield, and it

emerges from our study that the heads of household surveyed all spent a school stay before giving up to enter professional life when some even received training agronomic (20%).

It should be noted that the agricultural activities are functions of the agricultural calendar and especially rain-fed agriculture which begins regularly in March to September of the year, then irrigated agriculture, practiced near the rivers and the Noun river especially for market gardening. During agricultural practices, the heads of farms classified in the third category solicit local agricultural labor and throughout the region of West and North West Cameroon.

The number of registered farm managers stands at over 43,000 workers. The hiring of non-family chores (39%) is remunerated at 1,000 FCFA / day. Together, by sector by sex (rain-fed or irrigated agriculture), women (66%) outnumber men (34%) in jobs in the main agricultural sectors (Table 1 and 2).

Thus, these sectors account for 39% of the non-family and paid workforce, men occupy 12% against 25% of women. For the entire workforce, it is the rain-fed agriculture sector which registers and mobilizes the agricultural population more. Although less numerous as farm managers, women occupy more total labor in agriculture in the production area.

Table 1: The predominance of the agricultural labor

L / Sex	Agricultural producers	Agricultural labor	Total
Men	20,84	12,93	33,77
Women	40,36	25,85	66,23
Total	61,21	38,78	100

Source: surveys on a sample of 379 actors

Table 2: Agricultural population and level of education

Sex/S	Men	Women	Total
Primary	19,26	47,23	66,49
Secondary	11,08	18,46	29,55
University	3,43	0,527	3,9577

Source: surveys on a sample of 379 actors

In the Foubot region, the relative importance of the different types of labor (in terms of quantity of work) involved in the cultivation of cereals and pulses intended for both self-consumption and sale among farmers surveyed are as follows: 61% for female and paid labor, against 39% for men; family labor is regularly involved in agricultural work when the need arises.

In fact, for vegetable crops (tomatoes, peppers, watermelons, etc.), family labor is used mainly during the harvest period. Sometimes we record some mutual aid during this period. A farm manager who manages to finish his work quickly can go to work as a laborer, paid by the task in the field of another farmer without complex (table 3).

Table 3: Relatively young agricultural labor

Age	Men	Women	Total
<15	4,76	3,4	8,16
15-30	8,16	17,01	25,17
30-35	14,28	19,73	34,01
≥35	11,56	21,08	32,65
Total	38,77	61,22	100

Source: surveys of a sample of 147 agricultural labor

When asked if there is an abundance of paid agricultural labor, the producers interviewed on the availability of labor for agricultural activities are unanimous: the labor force is aging and young people today prefer to drive motorcycle taxis or migrate to capital cities (Yaoundé, Douala, Libreville).

On the other hand, the study shows that the large producers (10%) who are relatively wealthy, respond that agricultural workers exist and that they can be found at

any time outside the Foubot area (Bafoussam, Bouda, Bamenda...) if we needs them and that it is simply necessary to go about it in time by going to seek them elsewhere. In times of major construction. Because a very large number of farm managers request the maneuvers, they are relatively rare and become more demanding from the point of view of the amount and time of their remuneration (3000FCFA / day). It is observed

that the peasant who treats the agricultural laborer well with incentive remuneration keeps the strong labor force.

Type of soil and difficult working conditions

Foumbot has little evolved soils, mainly young soils derived from loose, basic volcanic rocks (ash and lapilli) emitted during the quaternary volcanic phases of more than IV century. These are black, sandy-loamy, fine lumpy, very porous soils, not very coherent with ash grains (Segalen P., 1967). This type of soil is highly favorable for agriculture and requires little amendment when fertilizing.

Generally speaking, farmers know the types of equipment suited to their needs and especially for this type of (light) soil. Regularly, the work is done by hand with hoes, or machetes for preparation, plowing, sowing mainly during the agricultural season. This period often involves all members of the family and a low paid workforce. The level of knowledge of the use of agricultural equipment goes from parents to sons, whether they are trained or not. Note the diversity of sources of supply for these different types of equipment (hoes, machetes, boots, sprayers, etc.) that are purchased locally.

In addition to the low task wages, the working conditions of farm managers and agricultural labor are marked by factors of physical hardship: standing, sometimes moving heavy loads, tiring movements, with the risk of injuries or accidents linked in particular to the manual use of hoes or machetes result in low attractiveness for agricultural labor. Farmers are still waiting for the technological innovation (agricultural machinery) proposed in the new government policy on third generation agriculture to implement new farming practices and reduce the hardship of farming. Only less than 1% of the land of large producers receives mechanized work, especially for plowing and weeding, which involves manual labor.

Motorcycle taxi work: a low agricultural workforce

In a shortage of rural and urban transport, some young agricultural workers have converted to driving motorcycle taxis, which plays a social role with a daily gain of around 1,000-5,000 FCFA. This activity has taken away a large agricultural workforce (60%) in the production area. Today's retraining is pushing farm managers to make frequent use of outside labor from nearby areas (Bafoussam, Bamenda, etc.), which often forms small groups of 5 to 10 people. The latter with their agricultural equipment often wait in popular crossroads called "labor market" to wait for potential recruiters.

Technical factor of labor shortage

Foumbot's agricultural economy depends on the mass of its unskilled labor to maintain its position as the breadbasket of Cameroon. But, this space benefits from the activity of motorcycle taxis which rather creates a mechanism of underemployment and makes very visible the continual arduousness of the work and low wages by the task (1000FCFA / day). To this must be added the

continuous rest of the elderly and aging peasants, the poor support for farmers by technicians and engineers in charge of the rural world who threaten the vitality of this economy.

Social factor of labor shortage

In a context marked by accelerated changes in the preference for motorbike riding considered more remunerative and by the multiple uncertainties of young unemployed and diverse graduates about the low workforce, the recruitment of young people becomes increasingly complex. Mainly because of the arduousness of the work, in particular the vegetable plantations where the work is more arduous at the beginning of the agricultural season. Recruitment is now becoming difficult upstream in agricultural practices which take a lot of time compared to the downstream season which corresponds to the harvest period when some young people wish to return.

Economic factor of labor shortage

The economic crisis that has raged in Central Africa since 2014 obscures the shortage of labor, in several activities, and particularly, in the agricultural field where 60% of the farmers questioned claim to suffer from it. It appears that the plowing period (February-March) recorded difficulties in recruiting young people for the task because of the arduousness of manual work with a hoe.

The survey shows that 20% of the large farmers interviewed set up strategies to recruit workers; by seeking to recruit in the North West Cameroon region to face the situation. These peasants must finance the transportation of this workforce to the Foumbot production areas. The shortage may in the long term penalize the agricultural economy of the region.

Conclusion

Foumbot's agricultural practices remain dependent on his unskilled labor to maintain his position as a leader on the national scene, while production is threatened due to the scarcity of this agricultural labor, which remains buoyant of several traditional first order changes.

The reconversion of the new generation in driving mototaxis has created a drop in farming in this large production area. Consequently, although relying on family labor, farmers are increasingly resorting to external labor in the region of North West Cameroon. Almost all market and non-market crops use seasonal labor during the period of plowing and weeding or even harvesting. We must add to the driving of the mototaxis the degradation of the road infrastructure of the villages.

Despite the technical support development programs of the ministries in charge of the rural world, the rural exodus continues to increase towards the big cities accusing manual agriculture of arduousness and low wages by the task (1000 FCFA / day). Thus, many producers experience difficulties when it comes to farming practices. To this must be added the aging of former peasants, which is due to the need for family

demographic replacement, whose descendants refuse agriculture as their main activity because of non-mechanization. Employers sometimes cultivate prejudice against older workers, already weakened by the arduous nature of the work. There are also difficult, even conflicting, relationships with young people active in the distribution of work.

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