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1 **Media framing of migrant labour in UK fruit and vegetable production: an analysis of**
2 **reporting in UK farming and mainstream print press**

3 **ABSTRACT**

4 This study explores how UK mainstream and farming print press report the issues arising from the
5 prevalent use of migrant labour in UK horticulture. Domestic fruit and vegetable production is
6 central to achieving transition to a sustainable diet with positive health, environment and social
7 outcomes, including for its 80,000+ migrant workers. How policymakers understand the issues will
8 determine whether the policy actions they take will address the underlying causes of UK
9 horticulture's dependency on low-paid migrant labour. This study conducts a qualitative content
10 analysis of 92 articles in leading national farming and mainstream press between 01/02/2015 –
11 26/06/2020. Findings show that reporting in both press was significantly slanted toward concerns
12 and interests of farm business groups, correlated with prominent representation of this groups'
13 voice in reporting. This contrasts with minimal presence of the voices of migrant workers and social
14 reform stakeholders. Both press deployed an economic frame in which migrant workers were
15 discussed in purely commercial terms. The prevailing market model of journalism increases the
16 potential for well-resourced groups to dominate media reporting and shape framing. Such
17 stakeholder groups are unhindered – if not aided – by a largely absent neo-liberal state, creating
18 socio-political conditions which militate against policy reforms to bring about a more economically
19 and socially just supply chain.

20 **Keywords:** agricultural migrant labor, fruit and vegetable production, media framing, farming press

21 **1. INTRODUCTION**

22 The UK's neoliberal political economy has given rise to private sector governance (Lang *et al.* 2009)
23 and "supermarketisation" of food supply chains (Dixon & Banwell, 2016) which the literature
24 suggests militates against social and economic upgrading of migrant agri-workers (Geddes & Scott,
25 2010; Barrientos *et al.* 2011; Devlin, 2016). Whilst the issue of labour exploitation is often framed as
26 a problem of global – rather than domestic – supply chains, the issue is prevalent in the UK with
27 evidence suggesting "everyday" exploitation is becoming normalized within the legitimate labour
28 market (GLAA, 2018; Davies, 2019; Davies, 2020). Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic have revealed
29 the economic and social deficiencies in our dependence upon, attitudes to, and treatment of
30 migrant workers (Davies, 2019; Morrison, 2019; Barling, 2020), exposing the vulnerabilities of UK
31 domestic fruit and vegetable supply. The low economic and social status of agricultural work
32 reinforces British workers' negative perceptions, further embedding fruit and vegetable farmers'
33 dependency on migrant workers (Geddes & Scott, 2010 and Davies, 2019: 295-298). Despite
34 exploitation of migrant workers being a recognised and growing issue in the UK (ILO, 2003: 24-25;
35 GLAA, 2018 and Davies, 2019:298), it remains a neglected area of research (Crane et al, 2019: 86).

36 Studies have found a dualistic media framing of migrant workers, simultaneously framed as a
37 threatening "other" and as an indispensable economic asset, critical to the production process and
38 business/sector viability (Bauder, 2005 and Morrison, 2019). The comparative difference between
39 earnings in home and host nation is often the justification given by farm businesses for migrants' low
40 pay and poor working conditions, framed as an 'opportunity' for migrants to improve their lot
41 (Bauder, 2005: 46-52).

42 The media play an important role in defining a social problem and 'explicitly or implicitly assign[ing]
43 responsibility for the causes and solutions to social problems which in turn inform judgement and
44 actions on the part of citizens and policymakers' (Wells & Caraher, 2014: 1428). The tradition of
45 public service journalism - under threat in the market model of journalism - is crucial for

46 engendering a public discourse amongst citizens and policymakers that is inclusive not just of the
47 media's favoured elites and profitable target audiences, but also for the neglected voices of the
48 economically marginalized minority groups (Hodgetts *et al.* 2007: 62).

49 Migrant workers are the most powerless, voiceless actors in the supply chain (Davies 2020) and in
50 common with other non-elite groups at the margins of society, are among the most poorly
51 represented in media reporting of social problems (Wells & Caraher, 2014; McKendrick *et al.* 2008).
52 With trade unions struggling to represent a mobile and atomized labour force (Wilkinson, 2014: 508
53 and Bonnano, 2015: 257), migrant workers face considerable challenges in overcoming the power
54 differential that gives elite groups privileged access to the media (Dekavalla & Jelen-Sanchez, 2016:
55 460). This suggests an explanation as to why media reporting of social problems tends to focus on
56 concerns and outcomes that are peripheral to the core problems experienced by those most directly
57 affected (McKendrick *et al.*, 2008: 22-24).

58 An established literature shows that the way the media frame an issue has implications for policy.
59 Media framing is one of several significant factors (including, for eg., focusing events, interest group
60 lobbying, participation on advisory panels etc.) that reflect and shape public opinion and political
61 discourse and, ultimately, policy positions and priorities (Entman, 2007; Hodgetts *et al.* 2008; Buse,
62 2012). It therefore follows that media framing of the issues relating to the prevalent use of migrant
63 labour in UK fruit and vegetable production, can be a significant factor influencing policymakers'
64 understanding of the dominant issues, how problems are defined, and where responsibility lies for
65 causes and solutions (Wells & Caraher, 2014). This understanding will, in turn, influence their
66 decisions on what policy interventions are required to achieve an economically and socially resilient
67 supply chain to support the transition to a healthy, sustainable food system for all.

68 There is a paucity of research in the area of media framing of labour-related issues in UK food
69 production, described by Crane *et al.*, as a 'blind spot in the literature' (2019: 86). More-over,
70 research tends to focus only on mainstream media, paradoxically overlooking the farming press

71 which directly serves farmers. Searches of EBSCOhost and Scopus databases, and Google Scholar,
72 found that no such study has so far been undertaken. This study contributes to addressing both gaps
73 in research by conducting an analysis of media framing of issues relating to the prevalent use of
74 migrant labour in UK fruit and vegetable production, in UK mainstream and farming print press
75 between the period 01/02/2015 to 26/06/2020. It pays particular regard to the literature on framing
76 being shaped, in part, by a media organisation's affiliations and target audience (Entman, 2007), and
77 the role of elite actors, such as politicians and interest groups, in influencing media framing to align
78 with their own interests and concerns (Kingdon, 2014). The extent to which differences exist
79 between the two press in the issues reported and how they are framed is important to understand
80 because of the influence both press exercise in shaping the opinion of the publics they serve and
81 policymakers' understanding, judgement and decisions on actions to take (Hollifield, 1997; Buse,
82 2012 and Hilton *et al.*, 2012).

83 ***The roles of media and elite actors in framing a story***

84 The way the media decide to frame a story is highly influential in telling audiences what issues to
85 think about and how to think about them. This in turn informs judgements and decisions on actions
86 to take (Buse *et al.*, 2012: 77; Hilton *et al.*, 2012: 1965 and Vliengenthart *et al.*, 2016: 285).

87 Frequency of reporting is also known to be a factor in determining an issue's prominence for public
88 and policymakers (McCombs & Shaw, 1972 and Wood *et al.*, 2014: 583).

89 It is widely accepted that the media is not impartial with decisions on how to frame the issues
90 reported determined by commercial goals, political affiliations and values of news organisations'
91 owners, journalists, advertisers and audiences (Entman, 1993; Entman, 2007; Buse *et al.*, 2012;
92 Williams, 2010). This suggests the issue of migrant labour in UK fruit and vegetable production may
93 be reported differently by the farming press compared to the mainstream press. In the few studies
94 that compare framing in mainstream and farming press, some similarities have been found in
95 framing of contentious issues across both types of press (Morris *et al.*, 2016), but with the farming

96 press clearly reflecting the prevalent views and policy positions of its specific industry audience
97 (Naylor, *et al.*, 2017), typical of the specialist trade press genre. This close relationship between the
98 press and its audience raises questions about bias and lack of objectivity in reporting, with the
99 literature suggesting the trade press's primary role is to serve the interests of its industry rather than
100 the public interest (Hollifield, 1997: 759). Studies have found the specialist trade press is less likely
101 than the mainstream press to report on issues that have negative implications for industry
102 innovations or initiatives (Marti, 1980; Sweeney & Hollifield, 2000: 18-19).

103 Media's framing of issues can also be viewed as a function of its 'sense-making' role (Hodgetts,
104 2007), translating 'public opinion into a discernible narrative which in turn shapes politicians' own
105 policy positions and priorities' (Kingdon, 2014: 67; Vliengenthart, 2016: 285). The process is dynamic
106 with public opinion, media framing and discourse reacting to events, and to each other.

107 Focusing events can radically advance new or previously dormant issues on to the political agenda
108 (Birkland, 1998), opening policy windows through which problems and policy solutions can be
109 moved onto the Government's decision-making agenda (Kingdon, 2014). The outbreak of bovine
110 spongiform encephalopathy or 'mad cow' disease across UK cattle farming in the late 1980s, is an
111 example of a focusing event which transformed the niche issue of cattle health to a mainstream
112 public health crisis, forcing the issue to the top of the government's policy-making agenda and –
113 eventually – to the formation of the Food Standards Agency (Lang & Heasman, 2015). As a focusing
114 event, the Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to increase awareness of social issues arising from
115 the UK's dependency upon, and treatment of, migrant workers in domestic fruit and vegetable
116 production. However, substantive outcomes are largely dependent on the ability of pro-reform
117 groups to self-mobilize into well organized and sustained advocacy coalitions to take advantage of
118 opportunities to influence reporting (Birkland, 1998; Buse, 2012; Hilton *et al.* 2014:).

119 The state is protagonist, rather than bystander, of private governance of the food system, deploying
120 what Lang coins a "leave it to Tesco *et al*" attitude to regulation (2020: 62). Where the state does

121 intervene, policy is narrowly focused on market competition issues with social issues overlooked
122 (Lang *et al.*, 2009: 169). It is generally agreed by policy analysts that transformation of the food
123 system will not be achieved if left to market forces alone. Government needs to lead in setting
124 objectives across social, labour and agricultural policies and regulation (Lang *et al.*, 2009: 177 and
125 Devlin, 2016).

126 The state's framing of migrant workers in the public discourse appears capricious; it welcomes the
127 contribution of migrant workers to the economy so far as they are willing to fulfil essential but low-
128 paid jobs under conditions rejected by indigenous workers, whilst concurrently 'declin[ing] the
129 responsibility of providing [migrant workers] with the social and employment protections that would
130 traditionally attach themselves to citizenship.' (Wilkinson, 2014: 512).

131 As a source of information, politicians are an elite group particularly favoured by journalists, and
132 their voices tend to feature prominently compared to non-elite "ordinary people" in media reporting
133 (McKendrick *et al.*, 2008; Wells & Caraher, 2014 and Dekavalla & Jelen-Sanchez, 2016). The specialist
134 trade press, with their expert status and role to serve their industry audience, are known to be more
135 active than mainstream press at the early stage reporting of a policy-related issue in an attempt to
136 influence political elites whilst industry-related policy positions are being formed (Hollifield, 1997:
137 769).

138 An interest group is defined as 'a group or organisation with particular aims and ideas that tries to
139 influence the government' (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). Well-resourced political and business
140 groups are typically most effective at influencing the framing of issues to align with their vested
141 interests and political or campaign objectives (Kingdon, 2014 and Dekavalla & Jelen-Sanchez, 2016:
142 454). This is not to say that the presence of an issue or an interest group's view in reporting is the
143 sole determinant of framing. What and who is absent is of equal import (Entman, 1993).

144 The "market model" of journalism, in which news organisations are under increased pressure to
145 produce more content with fewer journalists is key in determining what stories are reported and

146 how they are framed (Davies, 2009 and Wells & Caraher, 2014: 1437). The model sets up an
147 exchange relationship between the press and elite sources such as business groups, in which content
148 is provided in return for coverage, ensuring businesses groups' framing of issues around their
149 interests and concerns feature prominently in reporting (Lewis *et al.*, 2008: 2; Dekavalla & Jelen-
150 Sanchez, 2016: 453-454 and Weishaar *et al.*, 2016: 9).

151 The main representative bodies for farmers and growers – the National Farmers Union and British
152 Summer Fruits - frame the issue of unequal power-relations as one impacting producers, with waged
153 labour framed in economic terms as a resource scarcity and factor of profitable production (Scott *et*
154 *al.*, 2012: 17; EFRA, 2017; NFU, 2017 and Pelham, 2017). Whilst this narrow economic framing of
155 labour is consistent with early GVC scholarship, it is increasingly understood that economic
156 upgrading of workers will only be achieved through social upgrading where workers are seen as
157 being socially embedded in the economy with recognized rights and entitlements (Barrientos *et al.*,
158 2011: 322).

159 ***The food policy context and research questions***

160 The literature suggests that the dynamics of the UK's fruit and vegetable buyer-driven supply chains
161 militates against securing thriving and resilient domestic fruit and vegetable production because the
162 governance ceded by state to supermarkets creates power imbalances that squeeze farmers' profit
163 margins leaving them little option but to exploit workers in order to meet supermarkets' onerous
164 contractual pressures (Davies, 2020). A vicious circle ensues in which the low economic and social
165 status of horticultural work reinforces negative perceptions among British workers, perpetuating the
166 sector's dependency on migrant workers (Geddes & Scott, 2010 and Davies, 2020).

167 By analysing media framing in mainstream and farming press, the study will contribute to an
168 understanding of the extent to which the different values, affiliations and audiences of the two types
169 of press (Entman, 2007 and Sweeney & Hollifield, 2000), shape differences in reporting and framing,
170 and what policy implications may arise as a result.

171 **2. METHOD**

172 A qualitative content analysis (QCA) of a sample of articles published in mainstream and farming
173 press between 01/02/2015 and 26/06/2020 was conducted. This section sets out the chosen
174 research methodology, the reasons for its selection, and the process undertaken to collect and
175 analyse data in order to address the research questions posed.

176 ***Theoretical approach***

177 The research is grounded in a constructivist epistemology where truth and meaning are constructed
178 through interactions with the world, resulting in different understandings of the same phenomena
179 (Gray, 2018: 22). This is consistent with the purpose of the research which seeks to establish how
180 media framing influences – and is influenced by – the interests, discourses and contexts of the
181 different audiences (Krippendorff, 2004:22-25) of mainstream and farming press, and how different
182 groups use frames to convince others of a particular understanding of an issue and a certain course
183 of action(s) to address it (Morris *et al.*, 2016: 45). At the data analysis stage, Qualitative Content
184 Analysis (QCA) provided the flexibility to build a combined data and concept driven coding frame to
185 enable the researcher to capture explicit meanings present in the text, and find the patterns of
186 deeper, implicit meanings of text through interpretation – rather than simple description - of texts
187 within the wider social context in which they exist (Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

188 The period from February 2015 to June 2020 was selected as it encompasses important events
189 germane to labour-related food policy events (see Section 3.3.3). A 5 year timeframe was selected,
190 as opposed to a shorter snapshot of time, to improve the value of findings by capturing the
191 discursive shifts and turns found to be present in media reporting of significant social issues
192 (Morrison, 2019).

193 **Research methodology**

194 QCA is defined as “the subjective interpretation of text data through the systematic classification
195 process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). QCA was
196 chosen as the research method because it is an established method for media analysis and because
197 its three main features suited the scope and purpose of this exploratory study: 1) analysis reduces
198 data, 2) it is systematic and 3) it is flexible in allowing for a combination of quantitative and
199 qualitative methods within the same coding frame (Schreier, 2014: 2) to discover and analyse
200 quantifiable and explicit (manifest) content as well as implicit and more context-dependent (latent)
201 content (Schreier, 2014: 173). The last feature was important to get beyond what Seale describes as
202 the ‘crass’ content of *what* is said in relation to reporting on migrant labour in UK fruit and vegetable
203 production, in order to interpret the implicit, underlying meanings in *how* it is said through the
204 narrative focus and framing of issues within the text (Seale, 2012: 460 and Hilton & Hunt, 2010: 942).

205 **Sampling strategy and data collection**

206 The objective of the sampling strategy was to create a sample that was relevant, representative and
207 manageable (Seale, 2012: 461). To ensure a relevant and representative sample, the sampling
208 strategy selected from lead publications - as measured by the Audit Bureau for Circulation (ABC) –
209 from the national farming and mainstream press (see Tables 1 and 2). The sample was limited to
210 print media to ensure it was manageable within study constraints. Print media is an accessible and
211 reliable format for study (Wells & Caraher, 2014: 1430), and the Nexis UK news database provided a
212 comprehensive archive of UK newspaper and trade press. To aid meaningful comparison between
213 the two types of press, selection criteria was designed to ensure – so far as possible – similarity in
214 publication format, i.e. titles being i) leading national print publications by circulation ii) publication
215 intervals no greater than weekly iii) publications with general editorial coverage, e.g. not specialist
216 addressing just the economy or just horticulture and iv) for sale through open access model, i.e.
217 from retail outlets.

218 **National newspapers**

219 Table 1 lists the leading national UK newspapers using a common typology of ‘popular’ (tabloids)
 220 aimed primarily at a working-class readership, ‘mid-market’ aimed at a more middle-class
 221 readership, and ‘qualities’ (broadsheets) aimed at a middle-to-upper class readership (Hilton *et al.*,
 222 2012). The leading national newspapers remain an important source of information with potential to
 223 influence policy-making and public opinion in line with their political positions. The mid-market
 224 Daily Mail and Daily Express are politically right-leaning. Newspapers in tabloid and broadsheet
 225 categories are more mixed in their political alignment, although most UK broadsheets are politically
 226 aligned with the right with the exception of The Guardian which is on the left. All the newspapers
 227 selected for study are in the top 10 for circulation according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC)
 228 and have digital formats carrying broadly similar content. Analysis of print formats therefore
 229 provides an indication of how issues are reported on-line.

230 **Table 1: Average circulation, UK national newspapers for period July-December 2019**

Publication (daily titles)	Circulation	Circulation - Sunday counterparts
Populars		
The Sun	1,238,307	1,050,779
Daily Mirror	468,088	382,985
Daily Star	294,789	175,814
Mid-markets		
Daily Mail	1,151,305	968,007
Daily Express	301,738	261,649
Qualities		
The Times	370,621	653,981
The Daily Telegraph	314,687	248,619
I	223,669	-
Financial Times	165,647	-
The Guardian	130,090	The Observer

231 (source: Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2019b)

232 **Farming press**

233 Competition from digital media has led some specialist farming print publications to transition to
 234 digital formats as a result of the steady decline in demand for the print publications
 235 (landscapejuice.co.uk, 2011). Table 2 shows the leading national farming publications. Farmers
 236 Guardian (bmcontent.affino.com 2020), Farmers Weekly (fwi.co.uk, 2020b) and The Scottish Farmer
 237 (the Scottishfarmer.co.uk), were the only 3 titles meeting the selection criteria (see Section 3.2), and
 238 cover all the principal commercial fruit and vegetable producing countries and regions of the UK
 239 (Table 3). Whereas national newspapers are politically aligned, farming titles are industry aligned,
 240 although as such can be understood to be primarily focussed on the concerns and interests of the
 241 farming and growing businesses rather than agricultural workers.

242 **Table 2: Average Circulation, UK national farming print press**

Publication	Type	Distribution area	Circulation		Period
			Print	Digital Visits/mth	
British Farmer & Grower	Monthly	NFU membership	48,437	-	Jan-Dec 2019
Farmers Weekly	National, weekly	UK	41,533	623,231	"
Farmers Guide (free listing magazine – no editorial)	Monthly	UK	30,285	-	"
Farmers Guardian	National, weekly	UK	28,149	370,000	"
The Scottish Farmer	Scotland – National, weekly	Scotland	13,557	-	Jan-Dec 2018 *

243 (source: Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2018; Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2019a; bmcontent.affino.com, 2020
 244 and fwi.co.uk,2020a)

245 * the last audit period before ABC stopped auditing circulation of The Scottish Farmer

246

247 **Table 3: Principal regions of UK horticulture**

Country/region	Region's agricultural output value (£m)	% of region's total agricultural output value
East Midlands	300	10.4
West Midlands	168	7.3
East of England	307	9.6
South East	266	12.0
Tayside, Scotland	318	10.0

248 (source: Scottish Government, 2018; Scottish Government, 2019 and DEFRA, 2020)

249 The final selection of print titles provides a relevant and representative sample, all being high
 250 circulation national print titles from both farming and mainstream press, with the mainstream titles
 251 representing a range of readership profiles from across all the 3 newspaper genres:

- 252 • **Mainstream print newspapers (and Sunday editions where available):** The Sun, The Sun on
 253 Sunday, Daily Mirror and the Sunday Mirror, Daily Mail and The Mail on Sunday, Daily
 254 Express, Sunday Express, The Times, The Sunday Times, The Guardian, The Observer, The
 255 Daily Telegraph, The Sunday Telegraph.
- 256 • **Farming publications:** Farmers Weekly, Farmers Guardian and The Scottish Farmer.

257 ***Timeframe and search terms***

258 The chosen timeframe 01/02/2015 – 26/06/2020 encompassed key events germane to the research:

- 259 1) February 2015 announcement of Groceries Code Adjudicator's (GCA) investigation of Tesco plc
 260 (gov.uk, 2015).
- 261 2) the period pre and post Brexit referendum on 23/06/16.
- 262 3) May 2018, publication of Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) report into the nature
 263 and scale of labour exploitation in the UK (GLAA, 2018).

264 4) September 2018, publication of Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) report on the nature and
265 impacts of migration of people into the UK from the European Economic Area (MAC, 2018).
266 5) first confirmed Covid-19 case in UK on 31/01/20 (BBC, 2020).

267 An initial search of Nexis UK database using the following search terms: horti! OR fruit OR veg! and
268 labour! OR migrant! OR picker! OR work! and "United Kingdom", returned >2,000 results across
269 mainstream newspapers. A number of conditional filters were applied until a search of the
270 mainstream press and the farming press returned 237 and 89 articles respectively which was
271 considered a manageable number of articles. These searches were labelled "Mainsteam A" and
272 "Farming A" (see Table 4). A skim-read of articles found articles mentioning exploitation only
273 referred to workers in other countries supplying produce to the UK. A second search labelled
274 "Mainstream B" and "Farming B" was conducted with search terms altered to include exploit! OR
275 abuse OR pay! OR price! and supermarket! This added another 18 relevant articles in total, including
276 ones mentioning exploitation of workers in the UK domestic supply chain (Lawrence, 2015 and Case,
277 2018).

278

279 **Table 4: Details of searches of Nexis UK database**

Search terms appearing in body of article:	(atleast3(fruit! OR veg!) AND w/20 (migrant! OR "migrant labour" OR "EU migrant labour" OR labour OR pick! OR work!)) AND ((farm! or horti! or agri! or "supply chain") AND (harvest! or crop or season!) and (UK OR "United Kingdom" OR Brit! OR Eng! OR Scot!)) and length > 300 AND NOT restaurant! AND NOT cook!		
Period:	01/02/2015 – 26/06/2020		
“Mainstream A”	237 articles found	After removal of group duplicates/letters/ international news/other irrelevant:	41 articles selected
“Farming A”	89 articles found		33 articles selected
Total articles selected:			74
Search Terms appearing in body of article:	(("fresh produce" OR fruit OR veg!) AND "supply chain" w/20 (work! OR farm! OR migrant! OR supermarket!) AND (exploit! OR abuse OR pay! OR price!) AND (UK OR "United Kingdom" OR Brit! OR Eng! OR Scot!)) and length > 300		
Period:	01/02/2015 - 26/06/2020		
“Mainstream B”	131 articles found	After removal of group duplicates/letters/ international news/repeats from Search A/ other irrelevant	9 articles selected
“Farming B”	42 articles found		9 articles selected
Total articles selected:			18
TOTAL NUMBER OF ARTICLES FOR CODING			92

280 (Source: Author)

281 The quality genre newspapers accounted for 306 of the 368 articles found. Only 62 articles were
 282 published in mid-market or popular newspapers. Of these most were assessed as irrelevant to the
 283 research topic. Removal of duplicates, letters, international news, and articles assessed as not having
 284 sufficient focus on the research topic resulted in a final corpus of 92 articles (see Table 4 and
 285 Appendix A for list of articles).

286 **Analysis**

287 According to Schreier (2012), QCA comprises 3 principal stages: i) designing the coding frame, ii)
288 carrying out a pilot study and iii) conducting the main analysis. A combined concept and data driven
289 approach was taken to build the coding frame (Schreier, 2014: 89-90) with the 5 main thematic
290 categories arrived at deductively, informed by the literature and the research questions. These were:
291 issues, framing, solutions, focusing events, and voices (Appendix B) which were used to code the
292 body text of selected articles.

293 Manifest data was defined as the date and name of publication, author (where relevant), word
294 length, headline, and frequency of different types of actors mentioned or quoted. As well as this
295 quantifiable data, manifest data also included concepts and ideas explicitly communicated in the
296 text (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and were coded under the thematic categories of issues, solutions,
297 focusing events and voices.

298 In addition to coding the body text, headlines which provide an important signal about the focus and
299 trajectory of a story (Hilton & Hunt, 2010: 942), were coded against 4 categories: “concern for farm
300 business”, “concern for farm workers”, “concern for food supply”, and “other”.

301 Latent data was defined as the discourses and frames emerging from the text (Wells & Caraher,
302 2014), which were coded under the thematic category of framing. The two framing sub-categories -
303 Economic (workers as a factor of production) and Social (workers as having/lacking rights and
304 entitlements) - were informed by the literature, in particular on the social and economic upgrading
305 of workers in global production networks (Barrientos *et al.*, 2011).

306 Sub-categories, for both manifest and latent thematic categories, emerged inductively from reading
307 of the text. Using a strategy of subsumption, sub-categories were created for new themes or
308 subsumed into an existing sub-category where relevant, until the process was exhausted. This
309 ensured everything of relevance was captured by the coding frame including unexpected but
310 relevant data (Schreier, 2012: 115-116).

311 A pilot study was undertaken to check the reliability and validity of the coding frame before
312 proceeding with the main stage of coding (Schreier, 2012: 146), following which the coding frame
313 was reevaluated to produce the final version. The coding frame demonstrated a sufficient degree of
314 validity and reliability to proceed to the main analysis stage (Appendix C).

315 The main analysis stage involved the coding of the entire corpus of 92 articles. Each article was
316 assigned a unique identifier for ease and accuracy of identification. Each article was read twice: first,
317 to code for manifest data, then a second, more immersive reading allowed for in-depth
318 interpretation of discourses and frames (Rivas, 2012: 368). This phase allowed for the analysis of the
319 role of different stakeholder groups in influencing media framing (Kingdon, 2014 and Weishaar *et*
320 *al.*, 2016), and how – if at all - the mainstream and farming press differed in their framing of issues. A
321 technique of colour-coding segments of text and hand-written notation was used to identify the
322 implied and often context-dependent wording of ideas and concepts within the text. See Appendix D
323 for examples of the latent coding process.

324 All the manifest and latent data derived from the coding frame was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet
325 to allow for further analysis to establish frequency, and patterns and correlations in the data.

326 Findings were reproduced in graphical form where it aided clarity of presentation and supported by
327 discussion in the text. Hand-written notations of latent data to capture the nuances and implied –
328 sometimes hidden – meanings of different framings and discourses were compared, interpreted and
329 discussed in the text.

330 Coding of manifest data was used to examine which issues were reported and with what frequency,
331 as well as which voices were represented or quoted and with what frequency. Coding of latent data
332 was used to examine the frames used in the different publications and how – if at all – framing
333 changed between the types of press and following the outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK.

334

335 **3. FINDINGS**

336 This chapter begins with findings from the manifest data, followed by findings from interpretive
337 analysis of frames and discourses which emerged from the coding process. Data has been compared
338 between the farming and mainstream press, and between pre and post Covid-19 reporting.

339 **3.1 Manifest Data**

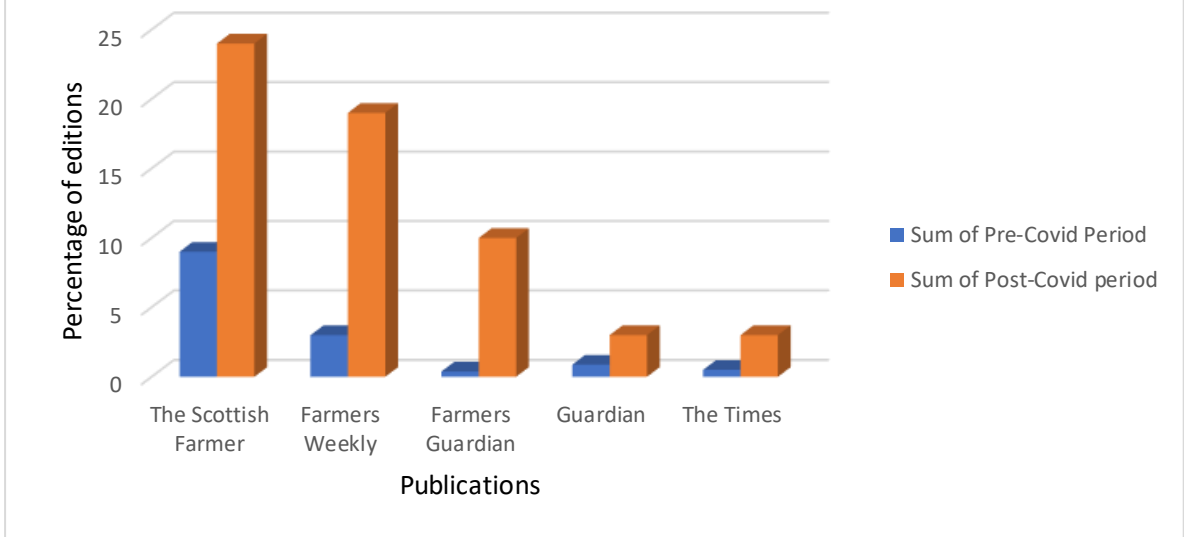
340 **Frequency, distribution and type of coverage.**

341 The corpus of 92 articles comprised 42 (46%) from the national farming press and 50 (54%) from the
342 national mainstream press. 66 (72%) of the 92 articles were written between 01/02/15 – 30/01/20,
343 referred to as the pre Covid-19 period; 35 (53%) in the mainstream press and 31 (47%) in the
344 farming press. 26 (28%) of the 92 articles were written after the first confirmed Covid-19 case in the
345 UK on 31/01/20 (BBC, 2020), referred to as the post Covid-19 period; 15 (58%) in the mainstream
346 press and 11 (42%) in the farming press.

347 Table 5 shows the distribution and frequency of articles by publication. To provide a meaningful
348 comparison between the two types of press Table 5 shows articles as a proportion of total editions.
349 To allow for the substantially different time range between the pre Covid-19 period (260 weeks) and
350 the post Covid-19 period (21 weeks), Table 5 also shows articles as a proportion of total editions for
351 the pre and post Covid-19 periods, summarized in Figure 1. This clearly shows a significant increase
352 in reporting in the farming press in the post Covid-19 period. In the mainstream press coverage also
353 rose, with the most extensive coverage in the quality genres at 3% of all editions.

354 Reporting in mainstream national newspapers was overwhelmingly dominated by the quality genre
355 newspapers, accounting for 42 (84%) of all articles in the mainstream press. The Guardian was the
356 most prolific in its coverage, accounting for 44% of all mainstream newspaper coverage. The mean
357 article word count was 843. 25% (22) of articles were >1000 words, with 86% of them published in
358 the quality genre newspapers.

Figure 1: Top Five publications by percentage of editions which included articles covering issues relating to migrant workers in UK fruit and vegetable production



359

Table 5: Reporting of issues relating to use of migrant workers in UK fruit and vegetable production, in UK farming and mainstream press.

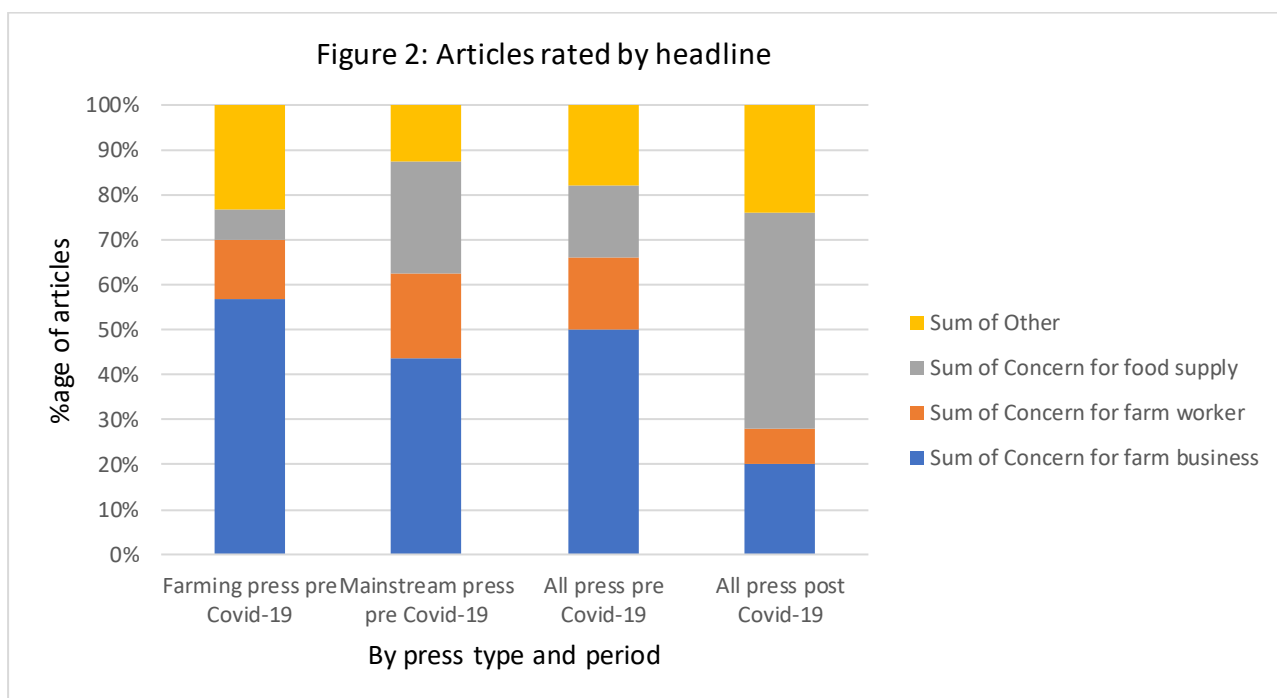
(source: Author)

				Whole sample period 01.02.15 to 26.06.20			Pre Covid-19 period 01.02.15 – 30.01.20		Post Covid-19 period 31.01.20 – 26.06.2020	
Type	Genre	Interval	Name	No. of articles	%age of all articles published	%age of all published editions	No. of articles	%age of published editions	No. of articles	%age of published editions
Farming press	Specialist trade	weekly	The Scottish Farmer	28	30%	10%	23	9%	5	24%
			Farmers Weekly	11	12%	4%	7	3%	4	19%
			Farmers Guardian	3	3%	1%	1	0.38%	2	10%
			TOTAL for Farming Press	42	46%	15%	31	12.38%	11	53%
Mainstream press	Qualities	daily	The Guardian & The Observer	20	22%	1%	16	0.88%	4	3%

		The Times & The Sunday Times	14	15%	0.71%	9	0.50%	5	3%	
		The Daily Telegraph & The Sunday Telegraph	8	9%	0.41%	4	0.22%	4	3%	
		TOTAL for Qualities	42	46%	2.12%	29	1.59%	13	9%	
	Mid-markets	daily	Daily Mail & The Mail on Sunday	6	7%	0.31%	4	0.22%	2	1%
			Daily Express & Sunday Express	1	1%	0.05%	1	0.05%	0	0%
			TOTAL for Mid-markets	7	8%	0.36%	5	0.27%	2	1%
	Populars	daily	The Sun & The Sun on Sunday	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0	0%
			Daily Mirror & Sunday Mirror	1	1%	0.05%	1	0.05%	0	0%
			TOTAL for Populars	1	1%	0.05%	1	0.05%	0	0%
			TOTAL for mainstream press	50	55%	2.53%	35	1.91%	15	10%
			Overall Total	92	100%	n/a	66	n/a	26	n/a

378 **Headlines**

379 49% (31) of all articles written in the pre Covid-19 period were coded as having a headline “concern
380 for farm business”, increasing to 55% in the farming press (Figure 2). In the post Covid-19 period
381 headlines changed substantially, with “concern for food supply” headlines increasing from 16% to
382 48%. Articles having a headline “concern for farm workers” were in the minority at 15% of all articles
383 written pre Covid-19, and 8% of articles written post Covid-19.



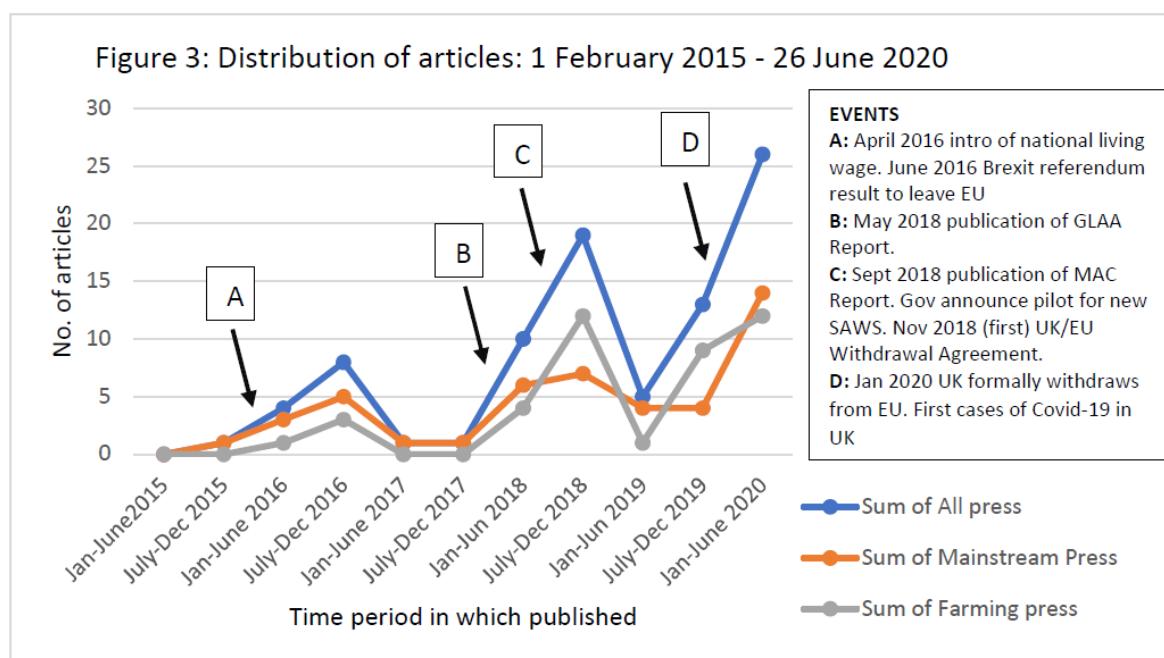
384

385 **Focusing Event**

386 In the pre Covid-19 period Brexit was the most frequently mentioned focusing event in both the
387 farming and mainstream press, with 22 (71%) farming press articles and 27 (77%) mainstream press
388 articles citing Brexit as the event causing significant change to the status quo. All post Covid-19
389 articles mentioned Covid-19 pandemic as the focusing event.

390 Figure 3 shows a pattern of increased reporting following significant and relevant political or policy
391 events. The outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK was followed by a significant increase in articles
392 reporting on the need to find solutions to UK horticulture’s labour crisis in order to maintain supply
393 of fruit and vegetables (Case 2020; Dixon, 2020 and Henderson, 2020). Whilst both press broadly

378 followed the same pattern of distribution, there was a greater frequency of reporting in the farming
 379 press following a call for evidence in February 2018, to the re-opened DEFRA inquiry into agri-labour
 380 constraints (parliament.uk, 2018), triggering an intense lobbying and media campaign by the NFU for
 381 a new Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS), (NFU, 2018). Of the 13 articles published in
 382 the farming press between 1 July – 31st December 2018, 10 (77%) reported on the need for a new
 383 SAWS to solve horticulture’s labour crisis.



384

385 **Issues**

386 In terms of the reporting of issues causing or driving the prevalence of migrant labour in UK fruit and
 387 vegetable production, Figure 4 shows that both press were generally similar in frequency of
 388 reporting across the various issues. Government featured significantly as the main protagonist. The
 389 effect of incoherent or undermining government policy was the predominant issue reported in 29
 390 (69%) articles in the farming press and 31 (62%) articles in the mainstream press. The associated
 391 issue of “government not listening/acting” was reported in 17 (40%) of articles in the farming press,
 392 and 15 (30%) in the mainstream press.

378 By contrast, the issue of “government policy enables worker exploitation” was reported in only 2
379 (5%) articles in the farming press and 4 (8%) articles in the mainstream press. Overall, it was the
380 least reported issue in mainstream and farming press.

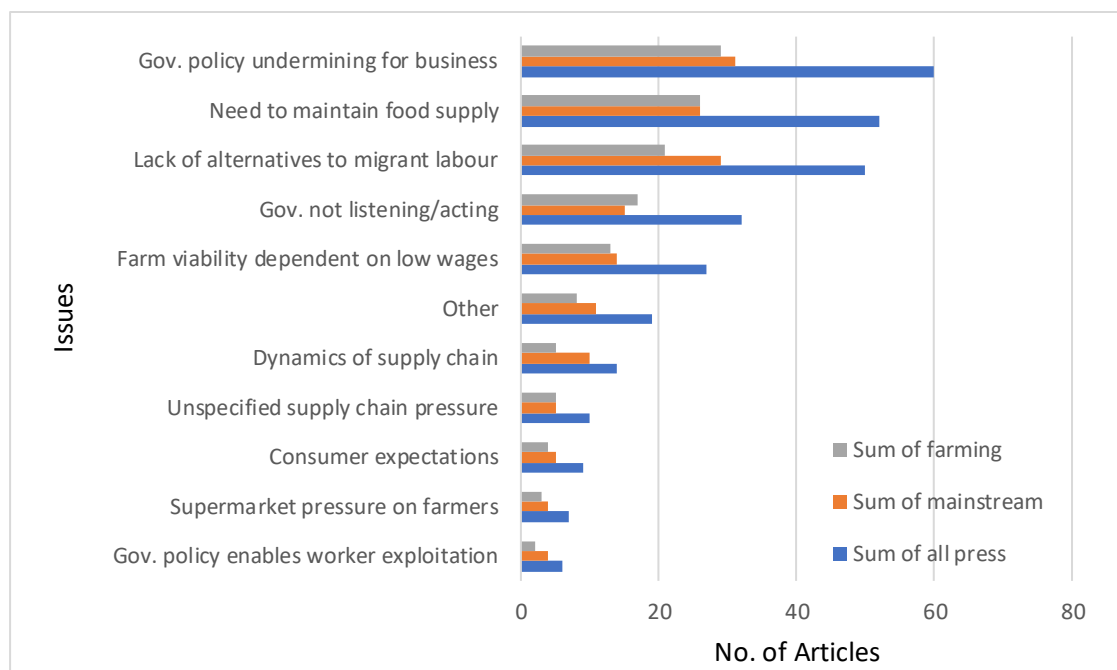
381 The lack of alternatives to migrant workers, such as automation or availability of an adequate
382 domestic workforce, featured prominently in both press, mentioned in 29 (58%) articles in
383 mainstream press and 21 (50%) articles in farming press.

384 The need to maintain supply of fruit and vegetables was a prevalent issue driving horticulture’s
385 dependency on migrant labour, reported in 26 (52%) articles in the mainstream press and 26 (62%)
386 articles in the farming press. Prevalence increased in both press during the post Covid-19 period with
387 the issue being reported in 20 (77%) of articles compared to 31 (47%) articles in the pre Covid-19
388 period.

389 Of the three issues in which the supply chain was identified as the main protagonist, supermarket
390 pressure of farmers was the least reported, mentioned in 3 (7%) articles in the farming press and
391 4(8%) articles in the mainstream press. The issue of unspecified supply chain pressure was
392 mentioned in 5 (12%) articles in the farming press and 5 (10%) articles in the mainstream press. The
393 third issue of dynamics of the supply chain was mentioned in 10 (24%) articles in farming press and 5
394 (10%) articles in mainstream press.

395

378 **Figure 4: Frequency of issues reported in relation to use of migrant labour in UK horticulture**

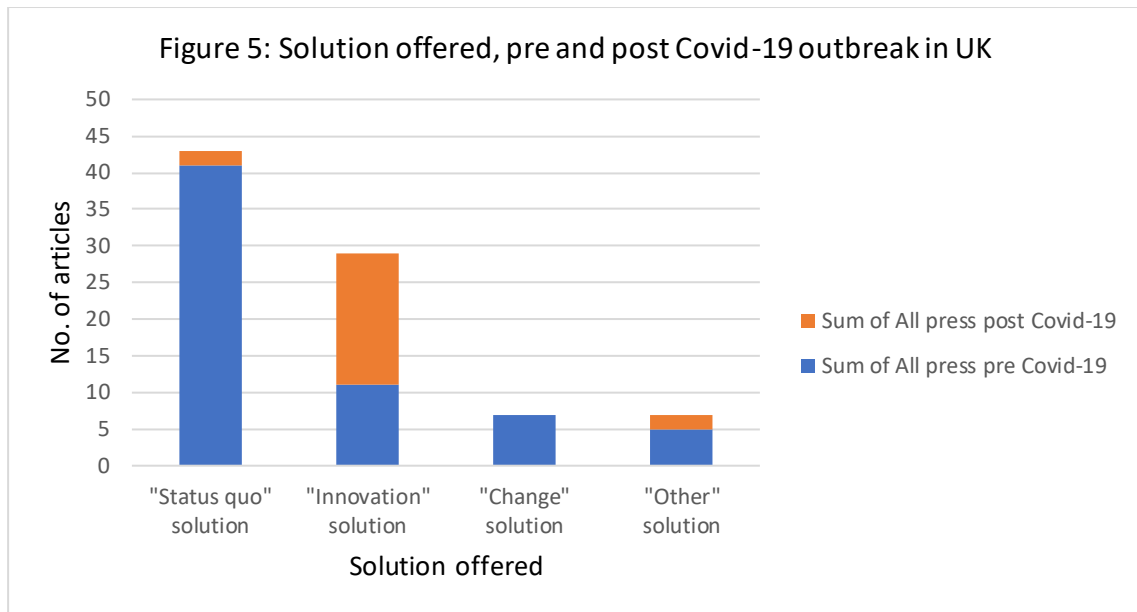


379

380 ***Solution(s) offered***

381 Articles which offered a suggested solution to the issue(s) covered by the article were coded as
 382 follows i) policy to enable or support the status quo – address sector’s need for more seasonal
 383 labour within the same industry system/structure, for example with calls for government to bring
 384 forward or expand a seasonal worker scheme ii) policy to enable or support change – improve pay,
 385 conditions, rights to workers (migrant and indigenous iii) innovation – through technology or
 386 “outside the box” thinking such as new business models or creative problem solving and iv) other –
 387 where none of the above.

388 These 4 solution codes are referred to as “status quo”, “change”, “innovation” and “other”. Figure 5
 389 shows a breakdown of articles by type of solution offered pre and post Covid-19. Most notable is the
 390 changing focus from a status quo solution in the pre Covid-19 period, to an innovation solution in
 391 the post Covid-19 period. 41 (62%) of all articles written in the pre Covid-19 period offer a status quo
 392 solution. In the post Covid-19 period, the predominant solution shifted from “status quo” to an
 393 “innovation” solution found in 18 (69%) articles.



378

379 Analysis found a strong correlation between headline rating “concern for farm business” and
 380 solution type “status quo” for articles written pre Covid-19. Of the 31 articles with a headline coded
 381 “concern for farm business”, 24 (77%) were coded for a status quo solution. The focus shifted in the
 382 post Covid-19 period with 9 (35%) articles having a “concern for food supply” headline and an
 383 “innovation” solution.

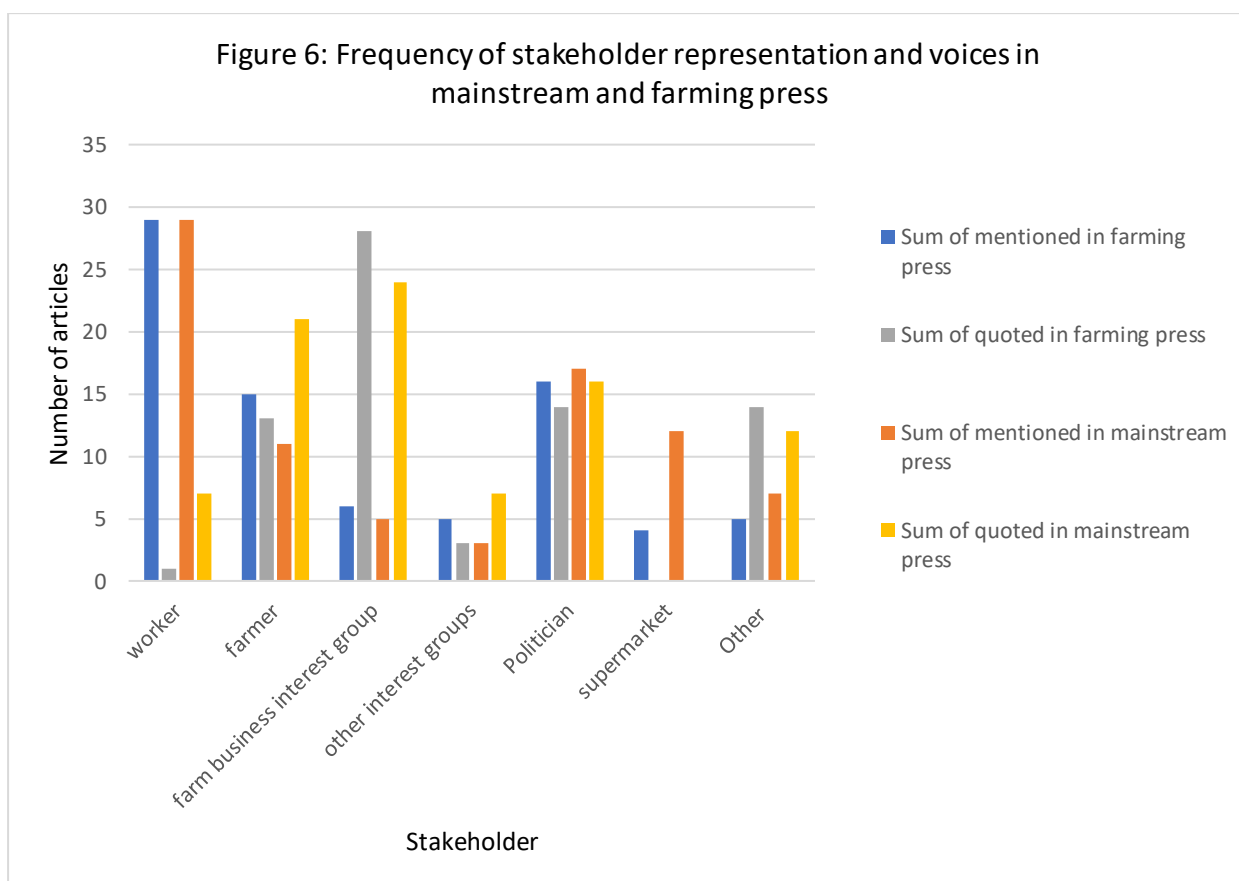
384 ***Stakeholder representation and voices***

385 Figure 6 shows the frequency with which stakeholders were mentioned or directly quoted. Workers
 386 were both the most frequently mentioned and the least quoted stakeholders in all articles. In the
 387 farming press workers were mentioned in 29 (69%) articles but only quoted in 1 (2%) articles. In the
 388 mainstream press workers were mentioned in 30 (60%) articles and quoted in 8 (16%) articles, of
 389 which 6 were “quality” newspapers. In 7 of the 8 articles, workers were quoted alongside their
 390 employer, reinforcing – or at least not disagreeing with - the point(s) made by the employer.

391 Farm business groups were the most frequently quoted interest groups across both press, quoted in
 392 28 (67%) articles in the farming press and 24 (48%) articles in the mainstream press. The NFU
 393 (including NFU Scotland) was the most frequently quoted, appearing in 36 (72%) of all articles in
 394 which an interest group was quoted. Table 6 shows the 3 individuals most frequently quoted are all

378 farming industry representatives. By contrast, interest groups other than those representing farming
 379 interests, were rarely mentioned, quoted in just 3 (7%) of farming press articles and 7 (14%) of
 380 mainstream press articles. After interest groups, the next most frequently quoted stakeholders were
 381 farmers and politicians, the latter being quoted in 14 (33%) articles in the farming press and 17 (34%)
 382 articles in the mainstream press. Farmers were quoted in the farming press in 13 (31%) articles and
 383 in 21 (42%) articles in the mainstream press. Labour providers accounted for the majority of quoted
 384 stakeholders in “other” with CEO, Stephanie Maurel, the 6th most frequently quoted individual
 385 overall (see Table 6).

386 It is interesting to note which ‘elite’ voices were absent. None of the 92 articles included quotes
 387 from trade unions or supermarkets. Social or food policy experts from academia were also less
 388 present in reporting than might be expected: only quoted in 3 (3%) articles which were all published
 389 in The Guardian.



390

378 **Table 6: Individuals most frequently quoted in articles**

Individual quoted	Farming Press	Mainstream Press	Total All Press (number & %age)
Alison Capper Farmer and Chair NFU Horticulture Board	7	10	17 (18%)
Nick Marston CEO, British Summer Fruits	6	9	15 (17%)
James Porter Farmer and Chair, Horticulture Committee, NFU Scotland	9	5	14 (16%)
Unnamed Government Spokesperson	1	7	8 (9%)
Andrew McCornick President NFU Scotland	6	1	7 (8%)
Stephanie Maurel CEO, Concordia	0	6	6 (7%)
George Eustice MP DEFRA Minister	1	5	6 (7%)
Jack Ward CEO, British Growers' Association	0	5	5 (6%)
Michael Gove MP DEFRA Secretary of State	3	1	4 (4%)
Meg Marshall Director, Peter Marshall & Co Farms	2	2	4 (4%)

379 (source: Author)

380 **3.2 Latent Data**

381 The framing of UK horticulture’s use of migrant labour was coded for using the following categories:

- 382 • Economic frame: workers as a factor of production.
- 383 • Social frame: workers as having/lacking rights and entitlements.
- 384 • Other frame

385 The “economic” and “social” frames were informed by the literature (Section 3.4.1 on designing the

386 coding frame). The 3 framing options are hereafter referred to as “economic”, “social” and “other”.

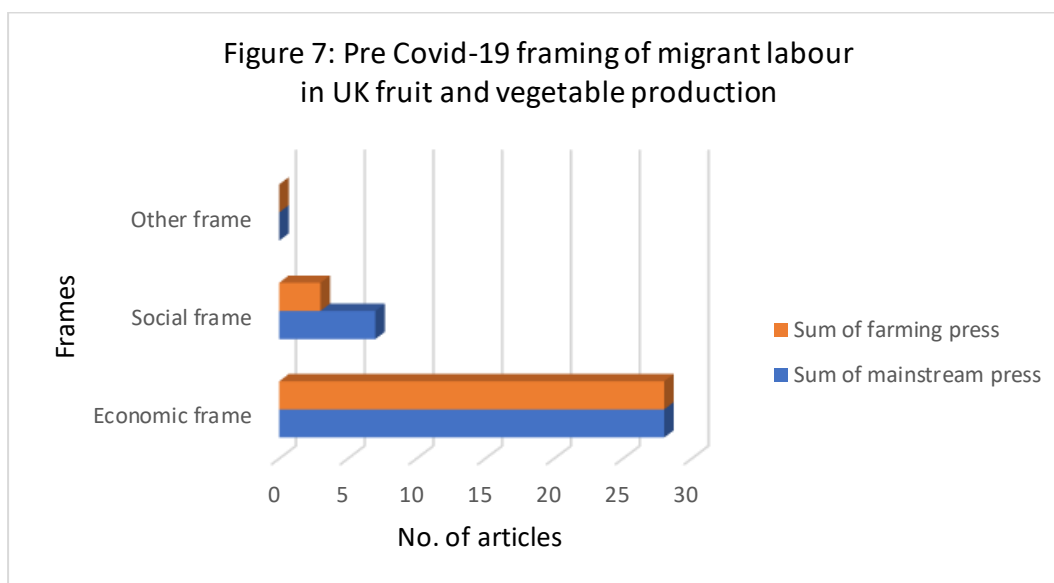
387

378 Whilst analysis found subtle differences in the use of frames between mainstream and farming
 379 press, the most notable difference in framing was found between articles written in the pre and post
 380 Covid-19 period, and findings are therefore logically organized into these two periods. It is noted
 381 that the small sample of post Covid-19 articles can only provide an indication – rather than a
 382 conclusive pattern – of framing.

383 ***Framing in the pre Covid-19 period***

384 All articles in the pre Covid-19 period were found to use either an economic or social frame as
 385 shown in Figure 7.

386



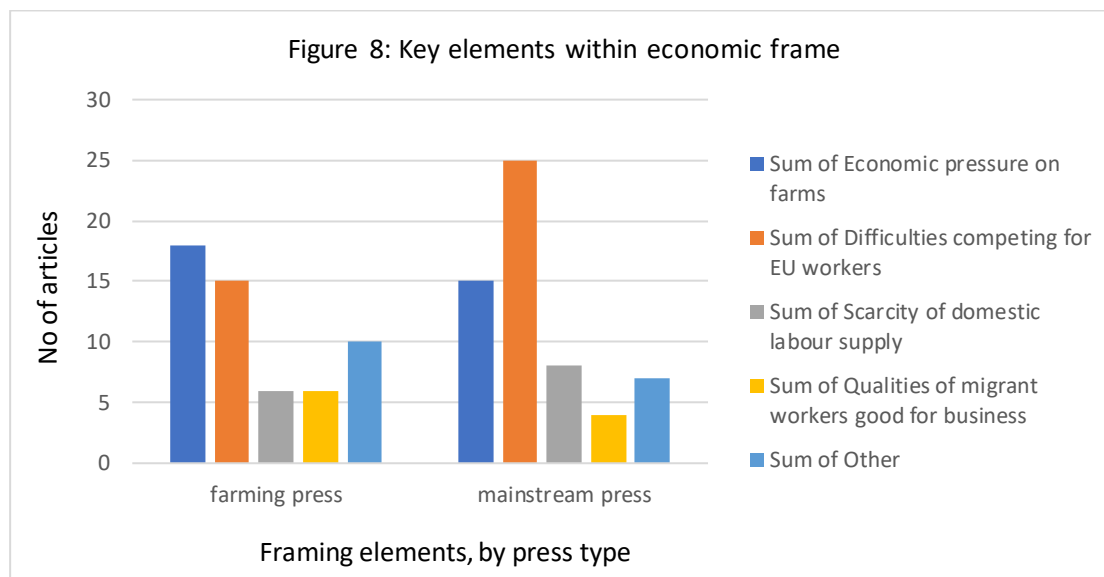
387

388

389 The economic frame was dominant across all press, present in 28 (90%) articles in the farming press,
 390 and 28 (80%) articles in the mainstream press.

391 The economic frame comprised 4 key framing elements plus “other”. Figure 8 shows the prevalence
 392 of these individual framing elements in both press. The most dominant element of the economic
 393 framing in the farming press was the economic pressure on farms to remain productive, competitive
 394 and profitable, present in 18 (64%) articles coded for economic framing, compared to 15 (43%) in
 395 the mainstream press.

378 The difficulty competing for EU seasonal workers was a more prevalent element of framing in the
 379 mainstream press, present in 25 (71%) articles compared to 15 (48%) in the farming press.
 380 Of the 10 (32) articles in the farming press coded for “other” framing element, 6 articles mentioned
 381 the dependence of annual farm profitability on sufficient experienced pickers in the critical few
 382 weeks of peak season.



383
 384
 385 The social frame was less prevalent, present in 7 (20%) articles in the mainstream press, and only 3
 386 (10%) articles in the farming press.

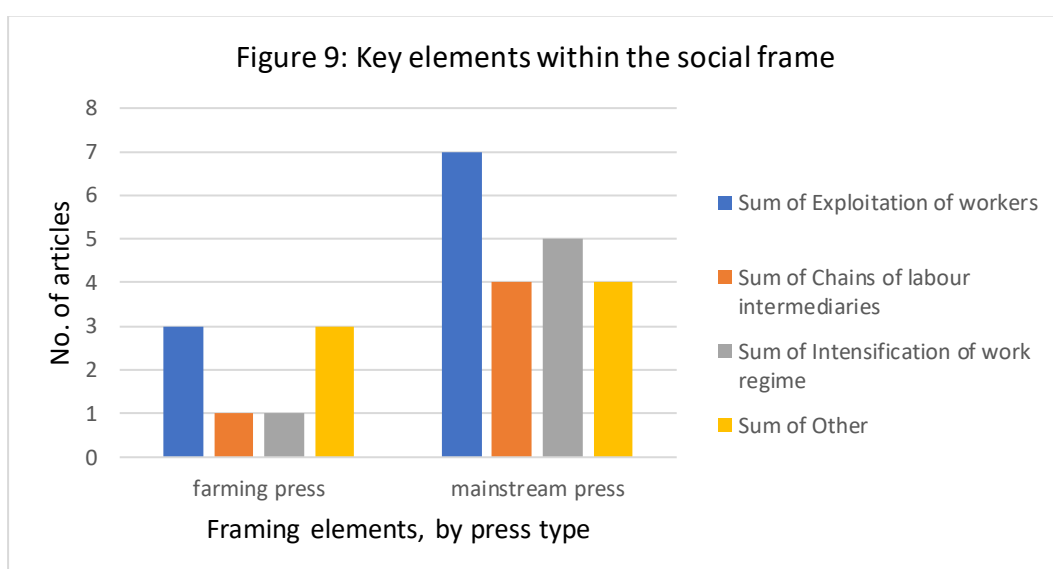
387 The social frame comprised 3 key framing elements plus “other”. Figure 9 shows the prevalence of
 388 these individual framing elements in both press. Articles in the farming press were less likely to
 389 mention key elements of the “social” frame in reporting with exploitation of workers mentioned in
 390 10% of articles compared to 20% in the mainstream press, labour chains mentioned in 3% of articles
 391 compared to 11% in the mainstream press, and intensification of the working environment
 392 mentioned in 3% of articles compared to 14% in the mainstream press.

393 Together, exploitation of workers and chains of labour intermediaries was present in 31% of articles
 394 in the mainstream press compared to 13% of articles in the farming press. Intensification of the

378 working environment, barely mentioned in the farming press, was mentioned in 5 (14%) articles in
 379 the mainstream press.

380 The majority of articles coded for the “other” element of the social frame mentioned the Brexit
 381 discourse that migrants were not welcome in Britain, such as *Brexit could herald end to British fruit*
 382 *and veg sales, producers warn*: “[fruit farmer] Davidson said ‘we are genuinely concerned. People
 383 over there are feeling they are not wanted here.’” (Carrington, 2016).

384



385

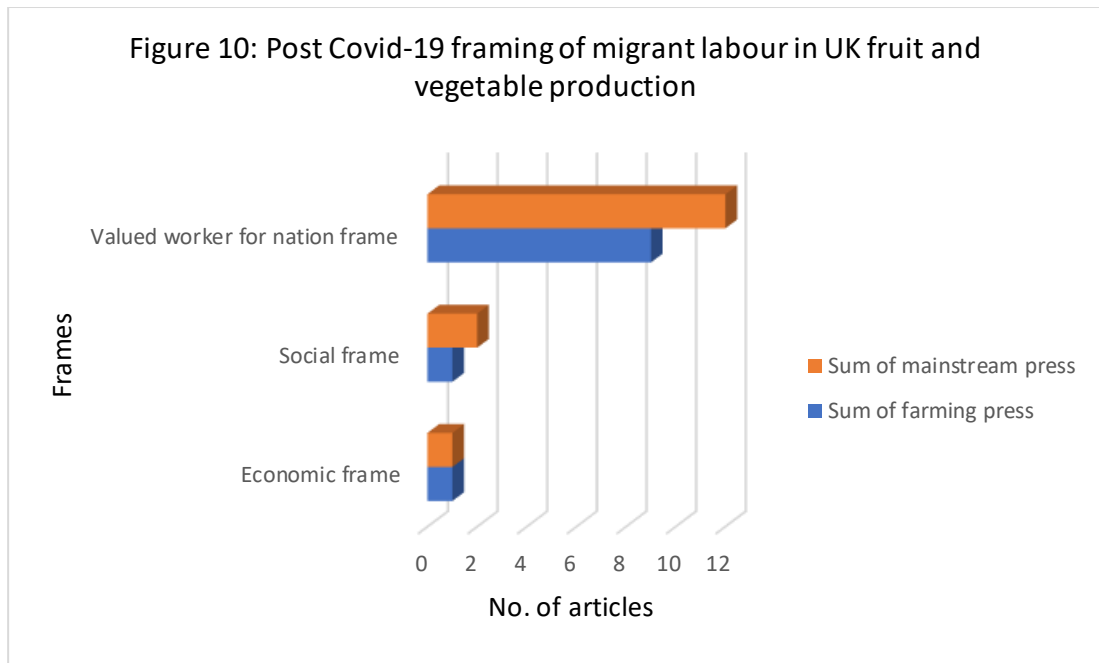
386 ***Framing in the post Covid-19 period***

387 Figure 10 shows the framing used in articles in the post Covid-19 period. Framing in pre and post
 388 Covid-19 periods was similar to the extent that social framing never exceeded 20% of articles over
 389 either period. The only post Covid-19 article in the farming press framing the issue as a matter of
 390 workers’ rights and entitlements, was an opinion piece in *Farmers Weekly* by Nicola Ray, Head of
 391 Regulation at the GLAA, 05/06/20, *Pandemic is no excuse for labour protection to slide* (Clarke,
 392 2020). In the mainstream press, the 2 articles deploying a social frame focused on the intensification
 393 of the working environment as the principal reason why the call for a “Land Army” of furloughed
 394 workers to pick fruit would ultimately fail to materialise.

378 Framing changed in the post Covid-19 period in two key respects. First, prevalence of the economic
379 frame fell sharply in the post Covid-19 period, deployed in just 1 article apiece in the mainstream
380 and farming press. Second, a new frame emerged in which the social status of both the work and
381 workers became elevated, with nostalgic evocations of the national effort of World War II. The
382 researcher called this the “valued workers for the nation” frame, present in 12 (80%) articles in the
383 mainstream press and 9 (81%) articles in the farming press. Analysis found this frame comprised a 3-
384 stage narrative arc, beginning at the end of March 2020 after the launch of the joint government and
385 industry “Pick for Britain” campaign (pickforbritain.org.uk, 2020). This stage was characterized by
386 stirring calls for British workers to come forward to do the skilled and important harvesting work to
387 help feed the nation. Interestingly, this narrative often included a comment about earnings
388 representing a “top up” to 80% furlough pay.

389 The second narrative stage saw reporting focus on farmers’ discretionary preference for migrant
390 labour because of concern that British workers would not respond in sufficient quantity with the
391 qualities required.

392 Finally, a third narrative stage described a back-lash from British workers who felt passed-over for
393 picking work because of farmers’ preference for migrant labour.



378

379

380 **4. DISCUSSION**

381 The findings show greater similarity than difference in reporting between mainstream and farming
 382 press with reporting strongly slanted towards issues impacting farm businesses. The frequent focus
 383 on government appears consistent with the view of policy analysts that the transformation of the
 384 food system will only be achieved by government taking the lead (Lang *et al.*, 2009: 177). However,
 385 deeper analysis of frames and discourses shows the focus on government’s role is framed as one of
 386 policy fixing to “tweak” the system to support the status quo rather than policy reform to bring
 387 about fundamental change to the system. The need to maintain the food supply was another
 388 dominant issue mentioned. By contrast, supermarkets as the cause or driver of farmers’ dependency
 389 on migrant labour was barely mentioned. This was unexpected given the substantial evidence that
 390 the dominance of supermarkets has been the major factor in farmers’ loss of value (Doolan, 2004;
 391 ILO, 2007: 25; Fuchs & Kalfgianni, 2010 and Dixon & Banwell, 2016). The fact that the issues of
 392 “unspecified pressures” and “supply chain dynamics” were mentioned with greater frequency in the
 393 farming press suggests more nebulous references may act as code for a farming sector hesitant to

378 publicly criticize supermarkets as the principal cause of low farm margins and workers' wages. This
379 is, perhaps, understandable given supermarkets' role as regulator and gatekeeper to the sector's
380 biggest market. While the scope of this study is too limited to arrive at a firm conclusion as to why
381 this might be, it may warrant further investigation.

382 The clear slant in reporting towards business was found to be mirrored in headlines with many
383 articles in the pre Covid-19 period coded as having a headline "concern for farm business". Further,
384 a strong correlation was found between this headline and solution type "status quo" (i.e. policy to
385 address the sector's need for more seasonal labour within the same industry system/structure). This
386 correlation is consistent with business groups who tend to act as defenders of the status quo,
387 preferring stability over the risk of uncertainty and loss of power brought about by pro-change
388 groups (Birkland, 1998). Headlines coded as "concern for farm workers" were few for both types of
389 press.

390 The crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic did bring significant change to the focus of headlines and
391 solutions offered. The predominant focus of headlines across both press switched to "concern for
392 food supply" with an "innovation" solution (i.e. use of technology, adoption of new business models,
393 creative, unusual problem solving). It shows that whilst crisis can be the catalyst for change in the
394 framing of established policy issues and decisions on actions to take, such events, by themselves, do
395 not bring about a change of framing in favour of under-represented non-elite groups. None of the
396 articles in the post Covid-19 period were coded for a "change" solution (i.e. policy to improve pay,
397 conditions, rights to workers). Overall, few articles were coded for a "change" solution, strongly
398 suggesting reporting lacked the frequency required to influence public or policymakers' opinions or
399 priorities (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 177 and Wood *et al.*, 2014: 583).

400 The chief difference in reporting between mainstream and farming press was in frequency. As might
401 be expected, the farming press, with its primary role to deliver highly targeted content to its specific
402 sector audience (Peck, 2015), reported with greatest frequency, particularly in the post Covid-19

378 period. This supports the literature which has found the specialist trade press to be more active than
379 mainstream press in early stage reporting of an industry-related issue in an attempt to shape
380 policymakers' understanding and policy positions (Hollifield, 1997: 769). Findings showed that this
381 trait was also in evidence in 2018 in the run up to the government's decision on whether to pilot a
382 new SAWS scheme.

383 Whilst the farming press' long-standing practice of sourcing content from farmers (Fussell, 1932)
384 ensures the practitioners' voice is included in reporting, the prevalence of certain stakeholder voices
385 being represented more frequently than others raises questions of bias and lack of objectivity arising
386 from the close relationship between publication and its primary audience (Entman, 2007; Hollifield
387 1997 and Sweeney & Hollifield, 2000).

388 In both press in the post Covid-19 period, the tone of headline shifted from concern for farm
389 businesses to concern for the food supply. Whilst solutions also shifted towards "innovation" to get
390 the harvest in for the nation, the nature of solutions remained focused on solving problems for farm
391 businesses rather than applying innovative thinking to improve conditions for workers.

392 Findings have shown a clear divergence between the literature and press reporting. The literature
393 focuses on the power dynamics of buyer-driven supply chains where supermarket dominance leads
394 to exploitation of migrant workers (Doolan, 2004; Barrientos *et al.*, 2011 and Davies, 2020). By
395 contrast, reporting in both press focuses on government's failure to bring forward policy to mitigate
396 the effects for farm businesses of buyer-driven supply chains in which migrant workers remain a
397 factor of production and a prerequisite to farmers' profitability (Bauder, 2005; Rogaly, 2008 and
398 Geddes & Scott, 2010). This difference may be attributable to the dominance and absence of the
399 different stakeholders.

400 In both press, migrant farm workers were the least quoted stakeholder group after supermarkets,
401 who were the only stakeholder group not quoted. Findings are consistent with studies analysing
402 media reporting of social issues where the voices of non-elite groups are an absent or minimal

378 presence (McKendrick *et al.*, 2008 and Wells & Caraher, 2014: 1439). Furthermore, findings show
379 that where migrant workers were quoted, it was alongside their employers, usually supporting – or
380 at least not disagreeing – with their employers’ views. Whilst the absence of workers’ voices is
381 consistent with other studies, it is not possible within the scope of this study to understand the
382 underlying reasons. Journalists may lack time and resources required to seek out the hard-to-reach
383 voices of temporary migrant workers. It may be farmers are reluctant to give journalist access to
384 their farm-based migrant workers, or workers may feel a risk to their employment or themselves if
385 they were to speak directly to the press.

386 It is interesting to note those potentially influential voices that were minimally present or absent.
387 Trade union, supermarkets and academics are all considered elite sources with potential to influence
388 media framing by virtue of their status (Dekavalla & Jelen-Sanchez, 2016). In relation to workers, the
389 trade unions, including those representing agricultural workers, such as the Landworkers’ Alliance
390 were entirely absent. Social and food policy academics were also rarely quoted in articles despite
391 their elite expert status which affords them privileged access to the media (Dekavalla & Jelen-
392 Sanchez, 2016: 455). Their near absence in reporting might account, in part, for the divergence
393 between the literature and press reporting. A stronger presence of academics in reporting might
394 result in a more effective counter-balance to the dominant business slant in reporting which focuses
395 on fixes to the system rather than reform.

396 Farm business groups were the most frequently quoted in both press, with greatest frequency in the
397 farming press, with the NFU most prominent. This is consistent with the literature which finds
398 business groups one of the most effective of the official elite groups influencing the media’s framing
399 of issues (Kingdon, 2014 and Dekavalla & Jelen-Sanchez, 2016). This is partly because they have well-
400 resourced media strategies, and partly because they are the preferred primary news source for
401 journalists who see them as credible and authoritative (Dekavalla & Jelen-Sanchez, 2016). It also
402 points to the consequences of the market model of journalism, where an exchange relation -

378 between journalists and the PR arms of well-resourced interest groups - helps print publications to
379 “square the circle” between declining revenues and the need to produce more content (Lewis *et al.*,
380 2008). This practice of “churnalism” (Davies, 2009) is pervasive across all genres of print media,
381 including the quality broadsheets, traditionally the home of independent journalism (Lewis *et al.*,
382 2008). Findings show that the market model of journalism enabled farm business groups to exert
383 considerable influence in setting and framing the debate and provides an explanation for the focus
384 on issues impacting business rather than workers, and the reason why Table 6 shows the top 3 most
385 quoted individuals all represent farming interest groups and 9 of the top 10 most frequently quoted
386 individuals were either representatives of farm business groups, farmers or government.

387 Economic framing in mainstream press articles most frequently mentioned the difficulty competing
388 with other EU countries for migrant workers. This may reflect the relevance of this issue beyond the
389 farming sector; freedom of movement was a key Brexit issue, of concern to many sectors of the
390 economy and central to the contentious issue of immigration control. The most dominant element
391 of the economic frame reported by the farming press was the pressure on farms to remain
392 productive, competitive and profitable. Similar to findings by Bauder (2005), intensification of the
393 work regime was an element of the social frame that was found to cross-over into the economic
394 frame in some articles in the farming press. This may be indicative of the normalisation of “awful but
395 lawful” practices (Passas, 2005) found to be present within the agri-sector (Davies, 2019). Farmers
396 quoted in reporting appeared unaware of the social implications of what they were saying (assuming
397 they have not been quoted out of context). This is often indicative of industry lexicon which has
398 developed around the use of low paid migrant labour, where worker “qualities” have become code
399 for worker compliance borne out of vulnerability (Bauder, 2005; Rogaly, 2008 and Geddes & Scott,
400 2010).

401 By contrast, the worker-focussed “social frame” of workers having (or lacking) rights and
402 entitlements, was present in a minority of articles. With trade unions absent in reporting, workers

378 are reliant on the vanishing practice of independent journalism to “find” their stories in order to
379 frame reporting as a social issue about workers’ rights and entitlements.

380 Whilst both farming and mainstream press were similar to the extent that the social frame was
381 found in a small minority of articles, there were some interesting differences of emphasis. The 3
382 main elements of the social frame (the 4th being “other”), were reported with greater frequency in
383 the mainstream press than the farming press. Exploitation of workers was mentioned more in
384 mainstream press than in farming press, along with intensification of the work regime and labour
385 chains (use of gangmasters). There are several reasons which might account for this difference. First,
386 farmers – operating in an economically challenging supply chain - may be inured to the “everyday”
387 exploitation of migrant workers. Second, farmers were frequently quoted in reporting saying how
388 they valued their migrant workers, many of whom were returnees to the farm over many years. It is
389 reasonable to assume that farming, like any other industry sector, has good employers and bad
390 employers. Many farmers will have honestly held views that they provide decent pay and conditions
391 for their migrant workers. Third, there is evidence to suggest that the farming press is less likely than
392 the mainstream press to report on issues that have negative implications for its industry sector
393 (Sweeney & Hollifield, 2000).

394 Analysis identified a 3 stage narrative arc, similar to Morrison’s study of UK newspapers’ reporting of
395 migrant workers following the 2016 Brexit referendum in which reporting was found to undergo a
396 number of ‘discursive shifts’ in a ‘frantic battle for sense-making’ (2019: 607). The 3 stage narrative
397 arc began with an evocation of a cohesive society united in a national war-time effort to “dig for
398 victory”, such as the article headline in The Daily Mail, *Who will dig for victory today?* (Adams, 2020).
399 In this stage, reporting focused on the joint initiative by government and industry for a new “land
400 army” of pickers to come forward to bring home the harvest for the nation. The 2nd stage of the
401 narrative arc focused on farmers’ discretionary preference for migrant workers over British workers
402 because of the former’s skills, experience and work ethic. The 3rd stage of the narrative arc took an

378 ironic twist as British workers complained of farmers passing them over for picking jobs in favour of
379 migrants.

380 The “valued workers for the nation” frame reveals some lack of social consciousness by a farming
381 industry and government that did not appear to see inconsistency or irony in rallying people to work
382 for the national good when most of that work has been, and continues to be, done by migrant
383 workers themselves excluded from entitlements only associated with citizenship. Nor was there a
384 sense of any inequality or injustice in framing pay rates as good wages for migrant workers, but only
385 a nice “top up” to wages for British workers.

386 What the findings (although limited in sample) appear to show is that, as a focusing event, the
387 Covid-19 pandemic had not yet brought a radical change of media reporting from an economic to
388 social frame in which the social deficiencies in the UK’s dependence upon, attitudes to, and
389 treatment of migrant workers are critically explored. However, the limited scope and timing of this
390 study, undertaken at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak in the UK, means our findings will
391 undoubtedly benefit from further research to ascertain whether a more dominant social frame
392 emerges in a later, more reflective stage of reporting as the Covid-19 pandemic develops and
393 matures. Similarly, further research to incorporate analysis of digital media would improve the
394 reliability of findings and provide a more comprehensive picture for policy-makers and analysts to
395 act upon.

396

397 **6. CONCLUSION**

398 This study’s findings contribute to filling a knowledge gap as social and food policymakers consider
399 how to re-orientate the UK’s fruit and vegetable production towards a socially just and sustainable
400 post-Brexit, post-pandemic future. This study’s comparative analysis of farming and mainstream
401 press is important for policy analysts and policymakers for two reasons. First, it provides insights into

378 what the priority issues are for the UK's fruit and vegetable producers, and how they understand
379 those issues in terms of causes, responsibilities, and solutions. Differences in the farming press are
380 subtle rather than substantive, but nonetheless important, and provide those involved in food and
381 agricultural policy with a window into the "world-view" of our primary food producers - an
382 important food system stakeholder. Second, it provides a benchmark against which to compare the
383 mainstream press. The dominant slant in the farming press' reporting towards the interests and
384 concerns of farm business is to be expected of a specialist trade press. Of greater implication for
385 policy makers is the fact that the mainstream press was found not to differ substantively in what it
386 reported and the framing used. Both mainstream and farming press focus on economic symptoms
387 rather than underlying socio-political root causes, embedded in our neo-liberal political economy.
388 While reporting most frequently mentions government as being culpable for issues relating to UK
389 horticulture's use of, and dependency upon, migrant labour, it is not framed in the context of
390 government's responsibility to undertake fundamental social and economic reform. Rather, the
391 focus of reporting was on government's responsibility to undertake policy fixes for the benefit of
392 those who currently benefit from the status quo. This study finds that the most influential factor
393 shaping mainstream print media's reporting is the dominant market model of journalism in which
394 those with the most resources – human and financial – get to shape reporting, and by extension,
395 policy-making. This applies across all genres of newspapers where 'meaningful independent
396 journalistic activity ... is the exception rather than the rule'. (Lewis *et al.*, 2008: 17). The study clearly
397 shows that farm business groups were highly effective in mobilizing their media strategies to take
398 every opportunity to ensure their framing of the issue was prominent in reporting.

399 The evidence that mainstream print media predominantly reflects the interests of elite groups, can
400 help policy-makers to prioritise engagement with a broad range of media to inform their opinions
401 and policy positions. Notably, social media has been found to provide a more accessible and
402 effective platform than 'old media' for non-elite stakeholders to frame the debate on their own
403 terms. Stakeholder groups campaigning for a more socially-just system within food - and other areas

378 of the economy with similar issues of precarity - may use this evidence to consider how to
379 develop strategies to achieve comparable levels of access and impact to establish a more prominent
380 countervailing social framing in media reporting.

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