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## Working conditions and health of workers in Ethiopian flower farms

Vegard Mjelde Hanssen  
University of Bergen, Norway

Flower production is increasing rapidly in several low-income countries, including Ethiopia. Working conditions in greenhouses are characterized by reduced exchange of air, high temperatures and high humidity within semi-enclosed areas. This may contribute to prolonged exposures to occupational hazards for the workers, including pesticides. The majority of the workers are females, who harvest and weed flowers inside greenhouses or trim and pack roses in a pack-house. The aim of this cross-sectional study was to evaluate the working conditions in three Ethiopian flower farms, and to study the health of their workers. Methods used were work place surveillance with checklist, and questionnaire-based interviews of the greenhouse workers, asking for symptoms related to the skin, the respiratory system and the central nervous system. A control group outside the greenhouse was interviewed as well. The walk-throughs showed limited use of PPE, limited access to sanitary facilities and unsafe practices when handling pesticides. The female workers working inside the greenhouse had significantly higher prevalence of respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath (71%) and morning cough (44%), and dermal symptoms such as rash (34%), than female workers outside the greenhouse (48%, 22%, and 14% respectively ( $p < 0.05$ )). Working conditions in greenhouses in Ethiopia show several deficiencies, and workers report more health complaints than a control group, but more research is still needed in this field.

### Biography

Vegard Mjelde Hanssen is a medical student in his final year at the University of Bergen. During his studies, he has participated in the Student Research Program at the University of Bergen, and has experience from field work in Ethiopia.

[vegard.hanssen@uib.no](mailto:vegard.hanssen@uib.no)

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