

## Dear Manager:

As a customer of your supermarket, I am contacting you to urge your company to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to help end forced labor, poverty wages and other human rights abuses faced by farmworkers harvesting tomatoes for the U.S. retail food industry.

The CIW is an internationally recognized, award-winning farmworker organization based in Immokalee, Florida. It has assisted the FBI and U.S. Department of Justice in successfully investigating and prosecuting six cases of modern-day slavery in Florida agriculture. The CIW is also spearheading an innovative effort to promote principles and practices of socially responsible purchasing in the retail food industry that advance and ensure the human rights of farmworkers.



**There is a well-documented human rights crisis in Florida's fields, and conditions facing farmworkers who harvest your company's tomatoes are as urgent as they are appalling.** Tomato harvesters are still paid by the piece. The average piece rate today is 50 cents for every 32 lbs. of tomatoes they pick, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged since 1980. As a result of that stagnation, a worker today must pick more than 2.25 tons of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday - nearly twice the amount a worker had to pick to earn minimum wage thirty years ago, when the rate was 40 cents per bucket. Grinding poverty leaves farmworkers vulnerable to the most exploitative employers, often resulting in egregious labor rights abuses.

In the most extreme conditions, farmworkers are held against their will and forced to work for little or no pay, facing conditions that meet the stringent legal standards for prosecution under modern-day slavery statutes. **Federal Civil Rights officials have successfully prosecuted seven slavery operations involving over 1,000 workers in Florida's fields since 1997, prompting one federal prosecutor to call Florida "ground zero for modern-day slavery."** In 2010, federal prosecutors indicted two more forced labor rings operating in Florida.

Fortunately, your company has a new opportunity to support social responsibility in the Florida tomato industry. **Today the members of the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange - representing 90% of Florida's tomato growers - are implementing the CIW's Fair Food agreements with retail food industry leaders Yum Brands, McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Whole Foods Market, Compass Group, Bon Appétit Management Co., Aramark and Sodexo.** The agreements require those retailers to demand more humane labor standards from their Florida tomato suppliers, to pay a premium price for more fairly produced tomatoes, and to buy only from growers who meet those high standards.

The news of farmworkers, growers, and retail food corporations cooperating to produce a fairer tomato prompted U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, a longtime observer of the campaign, to note, "Today marks the beginning of the end of the harvest of shame that has existed for far too long in Florida's tomato fields." Yet much remains to be done. It is imperative that your company seize the opportunity to be part of the solution to Florida's longstanding shame of farmworker exploitation. **At the table is a proven model, the expertise of the CIW, and a tremendous opportunity to join other major food retailers in advancing the principles of Fair Food.**

I look forward to your company living up to its reputation as a good neighbor by working with the CIW to ensure humane wages and working conditions for the people who harvest its tomatoes. Your leadership is necessary if we are to end this human rights crisis once and for all.

For more information, please contact the Coalition of Immokalee Workers at 239-657-8311 or [workers@ciw-online.org](mailto:workers@ciw-online.org).

Thank you,