

Dear Martin's Manager:

As a Martin's customer, I am writing to urge Ahold USA, parent company of Stop & Shop, Giant, Peapod, Ukrop's, and Martin's, to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), an internationally recognized farmworker organization, to address the sub-poverty wages and abuses faced by the farmworkers who pick your tomatoes.

The human rights crisis in Florida's fields is urgent. 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.

Farmworkers' grinding poverty leaves them vulnerable to the most exploitative employers, often resulting in appalling labor rights abuses, up to and including modern-day slavery. Indeed, there have been nine federal slavery prosecutions in Florida's fields in the past dozen years alone.



In December 2008, two farm labor employers were sentenced to 12 years each in federal prison on charges of conspiracy, holding workers in involuntary servitude and peonage. As stated in the U.S. Department of Justice press release on the farm bosses' conviction, they "*pled guilty to beating, threatening, restraining, and locking workers in trucks to force them to work as agricultural laborers. They were accused of paying the workers minimal wages and driving the workers into debt, while simultaneously threatening physical harm if the workers left their employment before their debts had been repaid.*" The Fort Myers News-Press reported on December 20, 2008 that the farm employers in this case "took their crews to work on farms owned by some of the state's major tomato producers: Immokalee-based Six L's and Pacific Tomato Growers in Palmetto. Both tomato growers are part of the Socially Accountable Farm Employers (SAFE) program."

In light of these revelations, I am extremely disappointed to see that Harriet Hentges, Ahold's Vice President for Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability, responded to an invitation to improve wages and conditions by instead claiming "our [tomato] supplier is audited by SAFE." It is appalling that Ahold is relying on a discredited, agricultural industry-controlled program that certified two farms where enslaved workers were taken to work as "socially accountable."

Fortunately, there is a clear path toward ensuring fair wages and conditions for those who pick Martin's tomatoes. Yum Brands, McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Whole Foods, Bon Appétit Management Co., Compass Group, Aramark and Sodexo are all already working with the CIW—which has a long track record of rooting out abuses in the fields, including the discovery and investigation of multiple slavery rings—to directly improve wages and conditions for the farmworkers who pick their tomatoes. Several Florida tomato growers—including East Coast Growers & Packers, the state's third largest tomato grower—are implementing these fair food agreements.

As a Martin's customer, I urge Martin's and its parent company Ahold USA to join other major food retailers in working with the CIW to ensure fair wages and conditions for the farmworkers who pick its tomatoes. Specifically, I urge Ahold USA to work with the CIW to:

- Pay an additional penny per pound for tomatoes purchased to directly increase the wages of tomato pickers;
- Implement an enforceable code of conduct to ensure safe and fair working conditions for farmworkers, including zero tolerance for modern-day slavery;
- Ensure a voice for farmworkers in monitoring improvements and reporting abuses.

Thank you,