

Dear Publix Manager,

As a Publix customer and supporter of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' (CIW) groundbreaking Fair Food Program, I **am writing to urge Publix to work with the CIW and with the Florida tomato industry to help end forced labor, poverty wages and other human rights abuses historically faced by Florida farmworkers who harvest your tomatoes.**

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 nearly 2 ½ tons of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday.



In addition to grinding poverty, Florida farmworkers have long suffered some of the worst working conditions of any job in the country. Wage theft, verbal and physical abuse, and sexual harassment are common. This climate of poverty and powerlessness gives rise to the most extreme labor rights violation: forced labor. **Federal Civil Rights officials have successfully prosecuted seven slavery operations involving over 1,200 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.

The good news is that a new day in the fields is underway. An historic partnership among farmworkers, tomato growers, and ten leading food corporations – among them McDonald's, Subway, Whole Foods Market and Trader Joe's – is building a new tomato industry that advances the human rights and dignity of farmworkers.

These corporations have committed to the *Fair Food Program*, through which they are demanding more humane labor standards from their Florida tomato suppliers, paying a small premium for more fairly produced tomatoes (as Publix pays for its own Greenwise-branded Fair Trade coffee), and buying only from growers who meet those higher standards.

It is imperative that Publix seize the opportunity to be part of the solution to Florida's longstanding history of farmworker exploitation. At the table is a proven model, backed by the expertise of the CIW and the tomato industry itself, and a tremendous opportunity for Publix – Florida's quintessential company – to be a leader in advancing the principles of Fair Food throughout Florida's agricultural fields and communities.

Publix founder George Jenkins used to say, "Don't let making a profit get in the way of doing the right thing." More recently, Publix CEO Ed Crenshaw declared, "Social responsibility is the life blood of our company."

As a Publix customer, I look forward to your company doing the right thing and implementing genuine social responsibility by working with the CIW and with Florida's tomato growers through the Fair Food Program to ensure human rights and humane wages for Florida farmworkers who harvest the tomatoes sold in your stores.

For more information, please contact the CIW at 239-657-8311 or workers@ciw-online.org.

Thank you,