

Dear Burger King Manager,

**There is, today, a human rights crisis in Florida's tomato fields.**

Tomato pickers in Florida face sweatshop conditions every day:

- **Sub-poverty wages** - Tomato pickers make, on average, \$10,000/year;
- **No raise in nearly 30 years** - Pickers are paid virtually the same per bucket piece rate (roughly 45 cents per 32 lb. bucket) today as they were in 1980. At today's rate, workers have to pick nearly 2 ½ TONS of tomatoes just to earn minimum wage for a typical 10-hr day;
- **Denial of fundamental labor rights** - Farmworkers in Florida have no right to overtime pay, even when working 60-70 hour weeks, and no right to organize or bargain collectively.



Even worse, numerous modern-day slavery rings, in which workers are held against their will and forced to work through violence or threats of violence, have been discovered in the fields. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) has assisted the Department of Justice in uncovering, investigating, and successfully prosecuting 5 such cases – involving more than 1,000 workers -- since 1997.

**Burger King is a major purchaser of Florida tomatoes.** Burger King is able to pool the buying power of thousands of restaurants across the country to extract the lowest possible tomato prices from its suppliers. But while cheap tomatoes may be good for Burger King's bottom line, they come at a high cost for farmworkers in the form of ever-lower wages and increasing exploitation.

**In recent years, a new hope for real labor reform in Florida's fields has emerged.** In 2005, after a 4-year national boycott, Taco Bell reached an historic agreement with the CIW to directly improve wages and working conditions in its tomato suppliers' operations by paying a penny more per pound for its tomatoes and working with the CIW to enforce a code of conduct to protect farmworkers' rights. In April 2007, McDonald's and the CIW reached a similar agreement that not only met the standards set in the Taco Bell agreement, but also committed the fast-food leader to collaborate with the CIW in the development of a third party mechanism for monitoring conditions in the fields and investigating abuses.

**Burger King, however, has publicly rejected the CIW's offer to work together to ensure fair wages and conditions for the workers who pick its tomatoes.** In a February 2007 announcement, Burger King cited a widely discredited "study" to assert that farmworkers earn substantially higher than poverty wages. In addition, Burger King claimed that it is impossible to replicate the penny-per-pound payment in its supply chain, despite earlier statements to the contrary by Burger King executives and the living examples of the Taco Bell and McDonald's agreements.

Instead, Burger King announced its own solution for farmworker poverty and human rights abuses, offering to "retrain" disgruntled farmworkers for employment at Burger King restaurants. To eliminate farmworker poverty by eliminating farmworkers cannot be considered a serious offer.

**Please contact Burger King Corporate Headquarters and let them know that you and your consumers want them to join with Taco Bell and McDonald's as leaders in true corporate social responsibility by:**

- Paying a penny more per pound for the tomatoes that Burger King purchases and ensure that this increase is passed along to tomato pickers in the form of increased wages,
- Working with the CIW to implement an enforceable code of conduct to ensure fair and safe working conditions for farmworkers in Burger King's tomato supply chain.

Thank you,