

Jim Skinner, CEO
McDonald's Corporation
McDonald's Plaza
Oak Brook, IL 60523

Dear Mr. Skinner:

We believe that God created human beings in the divine image and appointed us stewards of creation. We are responsible for ensuring the well-being of all through our careful choices and the proper ordering of resources. We write to you because there is a human rights crisis in the tomato fields of Florida and McDonald's has a critical role to play in ending this needless human suffering.

Right now young men and women harvesting tomatoes are laboring for poverty wages that have been stagnant for almost 30 years. They lack the basic rights enjoyed by workers in other industries. In the most extreme cases they labor in conditions of modern-day slavery.

Many, if not all, of these problems are flourishing within McDonald's own supply chain. Ag-Mart, which according to the NY Times is a McDonald's supplier, recently re-hired a crew-leader convicted of slavery. Just a few weeks ago almost 200 farmworkers filed suit against Ag-Mart for not paying workers the minimum wage. Ag-Mart has also been convicted of housing workers in squalid conditions.

Yet, to date, McDonald's has denied the brutal impact that its high-volume, low-cost purchasing practices have on farmworkers and their families.

Instead, McDonald's announced last year that it would partner with the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association (FFVA) – the lobbying association for the very growers who have looked the other way while farmworkers have been abused and exploited for generations -- in developing a program to assure humane conditions in Florida's fields. The folly of this partnership was underscored late last year, when Ron Evans Sr., a labor contractor on the farms of Frank Johns, the 2004 Chair of the FFVA, was convicted of holding farmworkers in what prosecutors termed "a form of servitude" and was sentenced to 30 years in prison. After federal prosecutors had filed multiple charges against Mr. Evans, Mr. Johns publicly defended him, declaring Mr. Evans to be "above average crew leader."

The human rights abuses endured by tomato pickers are a moral outrage not only because they are grave, but because they are preventable. Within your hands lie both the power and the moral responsibility to end these horrendous conditions in your own supply chain. And there is a clear path forward: work together with the farmworkers who are harvesting your tomatoes, who are enduring and resisting these abuses, and who have established a proven model with Taco Bell for addressing them.

We urge you to immediately work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, to embrace the principles of the Taco Bell agreement that hold such great promise for improving the wages and working conditions for the workers who pick your tomatoes, and to implement them in your own tomato supply chain.

As religious leaders, we are committed to ensuring that the food we eat be produced without exploiting our sisters and brothers. We call upon you to act now. Do not let farmworkers and their families suffer one more day.

Sincerely,