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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Florida Farmworkers and Consumers to Hold Procession and Vigil Outside of Major Chipotle Festival, Calling on the Denver-based Restaurant Chain to Include Farmworkers in ‘Food with Integrity’ Vision

Denver, CO (October 6, 2012): On Saturday, Oct. 6th, the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](http://www.ciw-online.org) (CIW)—an organization of Florida farmworkers—will be joined by Denver Community members to hold a peaceful procession outside the gates of Chipotle Mexican Grill’s “Cultivate Festival” in City Park, urging the Denver-based corporation to include farmworkers in Chipotle’s vision for a sustainable supply chain. Beginning at 4:00 P.M., the procession will gather at the Denver Museum of Natural Science (Colorado Blvd. & E. Montview Blvd.), and make its way around the perimeter of the festival. Following the procession, the group will gather for a vigil led by prominent Denver community leaders and clergy, to begin at 5:30 P.M.

The events are designed to highlight a key ingredient missing from Chipotle’s recipe for “Food with Integrity”: the farmworkers themselves who harvest the tomatoes sold in Chipotle locations across the U.S. “There can be no legitimate definition of ‘integrity,’ sustainability or social responsibility when it comes to food without the participation of farmworkers and respect for our fundamental human rights,” said the CIW’s Oscar Otzoy.

The protest coincides with Chipotle’s “Cultivate Festival”—a celebration of the restaurant chain’s commitment to ethical purchasing practices, “bringing together food, farmers, chefs, artisans, thought leaders, and musicians,” and is part of a larger, national Fair Food movement, asking Chipotle to join the CIW’s innovative Fair Food Program and respect farmworkers’ rights and dignity.

“As farmworkers – the human beings actually confronting the poverty wages and labor abuses every day in the fields – we have yet to have a role in Chipotle’s vision,” explained Gerardo Reyes of the CIW. “Instead, Chipotle insists on pursuing an impossible ‘go it alone’ approach to social responsibility. Under their plan, Chipotle says it will review its own code of conduct and decide if any changes are needed, Chipotle will check its own payments for accuracy under its penny per pound plan, and Chipotle will verify its own compliance with the changes it is proposing. That’s just not credible. Transparency, verification, and commitment are essential elements of the agreements we have reached with other fast-food leaders, and they are fundamental aspects in any defensible definition of social responsibility.”

The [Fair Food Program](http://www.fairfoodprogram.org) is a unique partnership among farmworkers, tomato growers, and ten leading food retailers – including major fast food corporations Subway, McDonald’s and Burger King – that advances both the human rights of farmworkers and the long-term interests of the Florida tomato industry. It is the first large scale program for real, lasting social accountability in the domestic produce industry. The program improves the wages and working conditions of Florida farmworkers by committing major buyers of tomatoes to pay a premium of a “penny per pound” for tomatoes to be passed through to farmworkers by the growers for whom they work. Additionally, retailers commit to target their purchases to growers willing to implement the Fair Food Code of Conduct developed together by farmworkers, growers, and buyers. The Fair Food Program combines worker-to-worker education, a 24-hr complaint line that is confidential and free of retaliation, ongoing audits that follow up on complaints and uncover issues workers might not be aware of, and, most importantly, real-market consequences for failure to comply with the Fair Food Code of Conduct.

Chipotle has built its nearly \$3 billion revenue on an image of serving “Food with Integrity,” assuring consumers that the ingredients served at their restaurants “are grown, made and shipped without exploiting people.” While Chipotle has taken admirable steps in assuring they source from farms that can demonstrate humane treatment for animals, when it comes to

human rights, they have yet to join the Fair Food Program, instead taking an approach that is not only unverifiable, but means that Chipotle is under no obligation to stop buying tomatoes from growers where workers' rights are violated, the cornerstone of the Program's success.

Background: Florida farmworkers have long faced [brutal conditions](#) in the fields, including sub-poverty wages, widespread labor rights violations, and even modern-day slavery. Today, however, change is underway, thanks to the efforts of farmworkers, fair food activists, Florida tomato growers, and ten food industry leaders who have joined in support of the CIW's Fair Food principles, including a penny-per-pound piece rate wage increase, a strict code of conduct, a cooperative complaint resolution system, a participatory health and safety program, and a worker-to-worker education process. In November 2010, the CIW and the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange (FTGE) [signed an agreement](#) to extend these principles to over 90 per cent of Florida's tomato fields.

Without the participation of Chipotle and the remaining purchasers of Florida tomatoes, the unprecedented farm labor transformation promised by the CIW's landmark agreement with the FTGE is significantly diminished. Each buyer must commit to direct its purchases to those growers complying with the code of conduct – and away from those who don't – in order to provide the market incentive to improve working conditions in the fields. “Everybody in the system has to be invested for it to work,” [said Reggie Brown of the FTGE](#).

About the Coalition of Immokalee Workers:

The [CIW](#) (www.ciw-online.org) is a community-based farmworker organization headquartered in Immokalee, Florida, with over 4,000 members. The CIW seeks modern working conditions for farmworkers and promotes their fair treatment in accordance with national and international human rights standards. The CIW's Campaign for Fair Food has won unprecedented support for fundamental farm labor reforms from retail food industry leaders. The Campaign for Fair Food taps the unique powers of all the elements of our country's food industry:

- **of consumers**, to demand the highest ethical standards for food production;
- **of food retailers**, to use their tremendous buying power both to demand higher labor standards of their suppliers and help raise farmworkers out of poverty through a price that supports sustainable production;
- **of growers**, to continuously improve their operations and meet consumer demand, keeping pace with an evolving marketplace, and,
- **of farmworkers**, to help expose and fix the worst abuses and apply their unique knowledge toward modernizing, and humanizing, our farm labor system.

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