

## Dear Trader Joe's Manager:

As a Trader Joe's customer, **I am contacting you to urge your company to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) to help end forced labor, poverty wages and other human rights abuses faced by farmworkers harvesting tomatoes for the U.S. retail food industry.**

**Since 2007, the CIW and its allies have called upon Trader Joe's to join the Fair Food program, an innovative solution to the human rights crisis in Florida's fields.** Trader Joe's has consistently rebuffed this invitation, all the while continuing to wield its purchasing power to demand deep discounts from its suppliers. Unfortunately for farmworkers, it is precisely this type of high-volume, low-cost purchasing that has created strong downward pressure on wages and working conditions as suppliers look to cut costs in order to maintain profit margins.



**Florida farmworkers** – like the ones who founded the CIW over fifteen years ago – **have long suffered the lowest wages and worst working conditions of any job in the country.** The US Department of Labor estimates that Florida farmworkers earn around \$10,000 per year. Wage theft, verbal and physical abuse, and sexual harassment are commonplace in the fields. This climate of poverty and powerlessness also gives rise to the most extreme labor rights violation imaginable: forced labor. **Since 1997, the US Department of Justice has successfully prosecuted seven farm labor slavery operations in Florida involving well over 1,000 workers, and two additional federal indictments were unsealed last year.** The Florida tomato industry produces virtually all of the fresh, field-grown tomatoes in the U.S. from October through June each year, including the tomatoes for sale in many of your stores.

Fortunately, there is hope on the horizon. **Over the past decade, the CIW has forged a coalition of retail food industry leaders, Florida tomato growers, and farmworkers committed to structurally addressing farm labor poverty and degradation.** These nine multi-billion dollar food retailers (including Whole Foods Market, McDonald's, Subway, and Burger King) and the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange, which represents 90% of the state's tomato growers, have agreed to support the CIW's Fair Food principles, including a 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. This program has the potential to dramatically improve the lives of 33,000 farmworkers throughout the state.

Currently there is no credible or transparent mechanism for Trader Joe's to verify that its own minimal supplier standards are being met, much less a commitment to forge a higher set of standards through direct partnership with farmworkers themselves. Moreover, recent statements by Trader Joe's spokespeople – compounding several years of corporate inaction – make it increasingly clear that the company has no interest in joining the Fair Food program. Having witnessed the effectiveness and tenacity of the CIW, as well as the dedication of consumers to this particular issue, I believe this is a misstep on the part of Trader Joe's.

**I strongly urge your company to reconsider this position and instead agree to pay an extra penny per pound for Florida tomatoes and to sign a Fair Food agreement with the CIW** conditioning these purchases to the Fair Food principles.

Thank you,