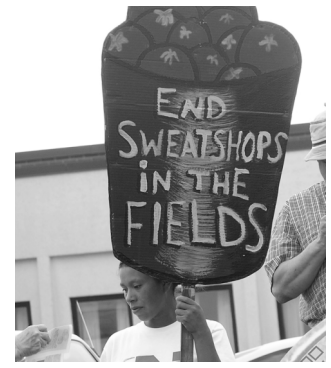


The Campaign for Fair Food

Farmworkers and consumers advancing human rights and social responsibility

The Campaign for Fair Food calls upon retail food corporations to end the poverty, forced labor and other human rights abuses faced by Florida farmworkers by establishing socially responsible purchasing practices. Led by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a human rights award-winning farmworker organization in Immokalee, FL, the Campaign for Fair Food is supported by religious, human rights, student and sustainable food organizations across the nation.



The Campaign for Fair Food has been successful in achieving landmark agreements between the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and some of the largest food corporations in the world: Yum! Brands (Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, KFC and others), McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Whole Foods Market, Bon Appétit, and Compass Group (food service). These agreements are changing the very structure of the food system so that it ensures the well-being of the men and women who harvest. Together, consumers are working side-by-side with the CIW farmworkers toward a more sustainable and just food system.

Conditions in the Fields According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Florida supplies over 90 percent of the domestically grown tomatoes consumed by Americans from October to May. However, tomato pickers harvesting in Florida toil long days in pesticide laden fields for 40-50 cents per 32-lb bucket of tomatoes, with no right to overtime pay, no health insurance, no sick leave, no paid vacation, and no right to organize to improve these conditions. In the most extreme cases, workers are held against their will and forced to work through violence or threat of violence, in modern-day slavery rings. The CIW has worked with the US Department of Justice and FBI to successfully investigate and successfully prosecute 7 cases of slavery in recent years, freeing more than 1,000 workers. These cases have been prosecuted using laws put on the books following reconstruction or under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act passed in 2000. The conditions in the fields are appalling and systemic. But through the CIW's Fair Food agreements we are seeing, as one US Senator stated, "the beginning of the end of this harvest of shame."

Forging a Solution In 2001, the CIW launched the Campaign for Fair Food, an innovative, worker-led campaign for the elimination of human rights violations in the US agricultural industry. The campaign identifies the links between the brutal farm labor conditions in US fields and the retail food giants that buy the produce grown in those fields. The high degree of consolidation in the food industry today means that multi-billion dollar brands on the retail end of the industry not only profit from farmworker exploitation, but actually play an active role in that exploitation by leveraging their volume purchasing power to demand ever-lower prices.ⁱ Lower produce prices in turn create downward pressure on farmworker wages. The Campaign for Fair Food seeks to reverse that process, enlisting the resources of retail food giants to improve farmworker wages and harnessing their demand to reward growers who respect their workers' rights.

Specifically, through its "Fair Food" agreements, the CIW is raising the tomato harvesting wage floor, establishing a voice for farmworkers in the agricultural industry, and enforcing the first ever market consequences for growers that use forced labor.

In March 2005, the CIW established the critical precedent of corporate accountability with regard to farmworker wages and working conditions in the fast-food industry through its victory in the four-year Taco Bell Boycott. Because consumers and farmworkers worked together, the CIW forged a ground-breaking agreement with Yum! Brands, the largest fast food company in the world and parent company of Taco Bell, KFC, Pizza Hut, Long John Silvers' and A & W Restaurants, in which the company committed to (a) pay farmworkers at least an extra penny per pound for tomatoes harvested for growers that supply the company, (b) establish a human-rights based code of conduct for their grower/suppliers with a zero-tolerance policy for modern-day slavery, and (c) ensure the full participation of farmworkers in the creation and

monitoring of these agreements. Since then, the CIW has achieved agreements with McDonald's (2007), Burger King (2008), and Subway (2008) in the fast-food industry, as well as Whole Foods Market (2008) in the grocery industry, Bon Appétit (2009) and Compass Group (2009), one of the nation's largest food service providers.

How the Fair Food Agreements Address Modern-Day Slavery in the Fields Modern-day slavery doesn't occur in a vacuum; it flourishes in degraded work environments with poverty wages and few rights. The agreements between the CIW and food corporations insist that the corporations use their power to enforce a zero-tolerance policy for slavery in their supply chains. How does this work? In the case *U.S. vs. Navarette*, two farm labor supervisors were sentenced in federal court for enslaving farmworkers, including locking tomato pickers in a cargo truck, chaining them to posts, and forcing them to work in the fields of two Florida growers. Following the sentencing in 2009, for the first time ever, a federal slavery conviction led to direct market consequences for the growers involved, triggering the zero tolerance for slavery provisions in the CIW's agreements with retail food corporations which caused the growers to lose business.

Further, the agreements address the poverty and abuses that allow slavery to flourish by enforcing the code of conduct for fair working conditions and the penny per pound wage increase. In this way the agreements address particular instances of slavery as well as re-direct the market forces toward the elimination of the soil in which modern-day slavery flourishes.

Implementation of the Agreements and Next Steps In March 2009, after meeting in Tallahassee with CIW members and slavery victims, Florida Governor Charlie Crist wrote in an open letter to the CIW:

I have no tolerance for slavery in any form, and I am committed to eliminating this injustice anywhere in Florida. I unconditionally support the humane and civilized treatment of all employees, including those who work in the Florida agricultural industry. Any type of abuse in the workplace is unacceptable. I support the Coalition's Campaign for Fair Food, whereby corporate purchasers of tomatoes have agreed to contribute monies for the benefit of the tomato field workers. I commend these purchasers for their participation...ⁱⁱ

Governor Crist's support of the CIW's Campaign for Fair Food sent a powerful message to the retail food industry leaders who had yet to support the Fair Food principles.

Today, though much progress has been made, much remains to be done. Specifically, the crucial supermarket industry has been slow to adopt the higher standards accepted by the fast-food industry, continuing to turn a blind eye to the inhumane conditions in the fields where its tomatoes are grown. Emblematic of this indifference has been the reaction of Florida's largest grocer (and the state's largest privately-held company), Publix.

When the CIW asked Publix to adopt the principles of the Campaign for Fair Food – principles, including a zero tolerance policy for slavery, designed to eliminate forced labor and its causes – Florida's largest supermarket chain turned its back. Instead, Publix continued to purchase tomatoes from the very farms tainted by the latest slavery prosecution. When asked why, Publix spokesperson Dwaine Stevens told the *St. Augustine Record*: "... the chain does purchase tomatoes from the two farms but pays a fair market price."ⁱⁱⁱ

But there is no "fair market price" for slavery, and there will be no end to modern-day slavery until companies like Publix and other grocery chains stop turning a blind eye to human rights abuses in their suppliers' fields.

For more information visit www.ciw-online.org.

ⁱ Oxfam America, *Like Machines in the Fields: Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture*, Boston, 2004.

ⁱⁱ Charlie Crist, "Memorandum: Letter to Coalition of Immokalee Workers," <http://www.flgov.com/release/10630>, accessed January 27, 2010.

ⁱⁱⁱ *St. Augustine Record*, "Farmworkers protest supermarket tomatoes," November 24, 2009.