Big Meat and Human Rights Violations- A trade union perspective

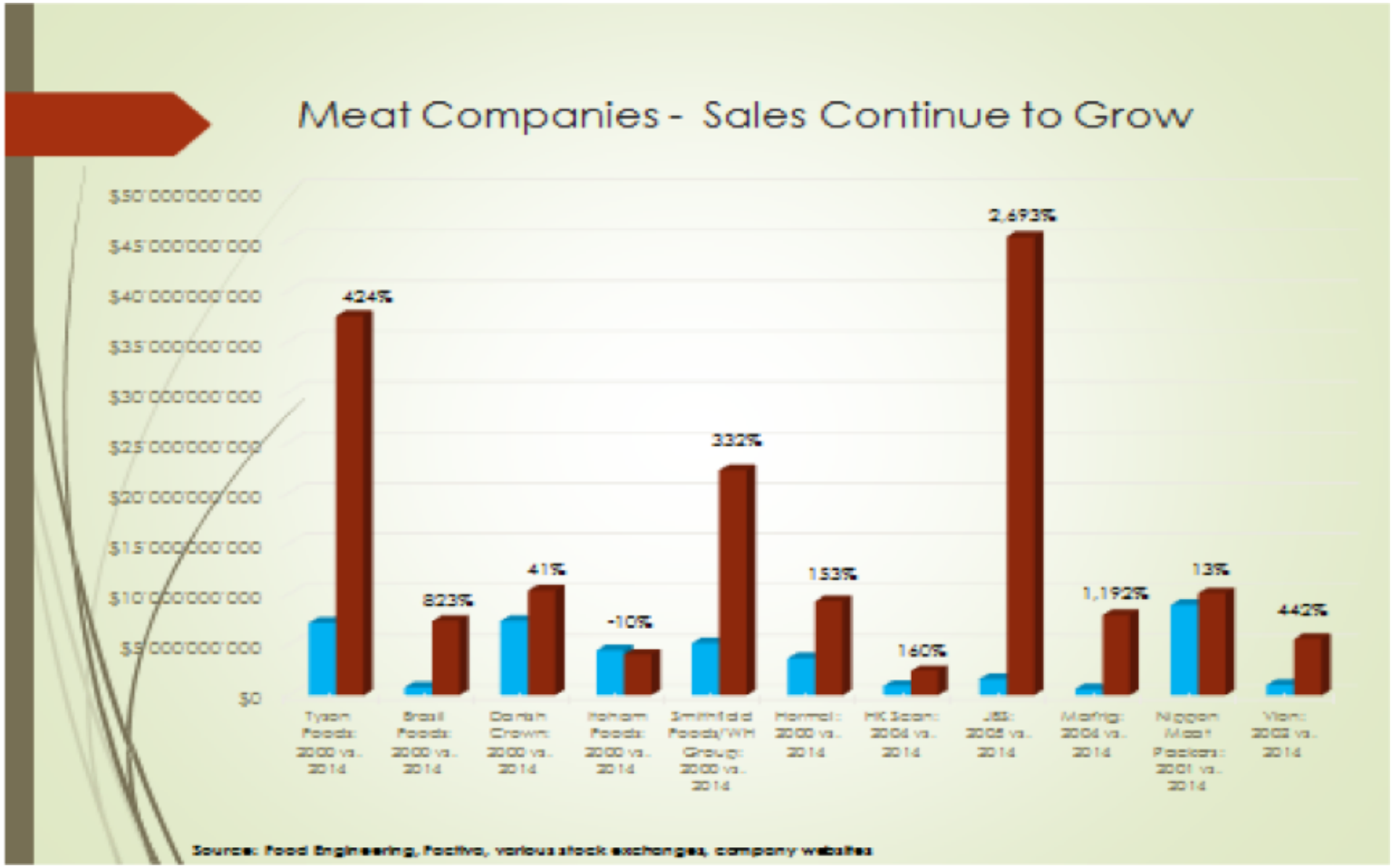
IUF

Uniting Farm, Food and Hotel Workers Worldwide

The IUF

- The IUF is composed of 430 affiliates in 130 countries representing 10 million workers
- It is focussed on defending our members rights within sectors, companies and their supply chains
- The IUF has a meat division comprised of affiliates with membership in red meat and poultry

2005-2014 A decade of huge growth in industrial meat



The political environment that supports Big Meat

The toll of violence against rural workers, peasants and all those defending human rights, the struggle for land and the rights of indigenous peoples in Brazil continues to rise. On January 9, rural worker and land reform militant Valdemir Resplandes was murdered by gunmen in Anapu, the city in the state of Pará where American activist nun Dorothy Stang was murdered in 2005.

Brazil's *bancada ruralista*, the powerful agribusiness lobby whose votes in Congress help sustain President Temer, has aggressively pursued its agenda aimed at rolling back land rights and legal protections for small farmers and indigenous communities to feed their expanding appetites. Impunity protects the perpetrators of violence.

In September 2017, following the murders of Terezinha Rios Pedrosa and her husband Aloísio da Silva Lara, rural worker, peasant and cooperative leaders in the state of Mato Grosso, the IUF Latin American regional secretariat addressed a letter to the Brazilian authorities, asking how long union and peasant leaders and those defending the environment would continue to be murdered with impunity. There was no reply.

By the end of October 2017, the Catholic Church's Pastoral Land Commission had already recorded 63 targeted rural assassinations - higher than any year since 2003.

Brazil: Slavery & Forced Labour

- JBS and BRF say they have *supplier monitoring programs to ensure compliance with labor laws.*
- Monitoring and auditing does not work
- The only guarantee of rights is the existence of an independent democratic trade union in the workplace.
- This is the 24/7 auditor

Heath and Safety Regulations Brazil

- 2013 – after a 15 year fight by IUF affiliates, Lula Govt passed comprehensive health & safety legislation for the meat sector which affects 1 million workers
- Regular breaks, ergonomic design, mandatory union participation in health & safety
- Comprehensive union education campaign
- 2017 Temer Govt attack on trade unions- weakens ability to monitor and enforce.

Slavery and trade

- Cost pressures from major retailers, deregulation and trading practices which devalue human rights all contribute to slavery and forced labour.
- South Africa poultry body will ask Brazil to explain claims of slavery in chicken industry.
- FAWU, the union representing poultry workers in South Africa has declared support for the poultry Assn and requested urgent intervention by their Govt.

EU and Brazilian chicken dumped in South Africa

Slavery and Forced labour Australia

http://www.smh.com.au/comment/companies-must-ensure-suppliers-dont-use-forced-labour-20150504-ggu52a.html

Slavery and forced labour Thailand

- **Thailand: poultry workers cry fowl amid claim they 'slept on floor next to 28,000 birds'**
- Workers at farms supplying one of Thailand's largest chicken export firms say they suffered labour abuses including 22-hour shifts and the seizure of passports

- https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/aug/01/thai-chicken-farm-workers-slept-on-the-floor-next-to-28000-birds

Slavery and Forced Labour UK

- Court finds UK gangmaster liable for modern slavery victims
- Landmark civil ruling finds in favour of six trafficked Lithuanian men who were exploited by Kent chicken-catching firm
- https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/jun/10/court-finds-uk-gangmaster-liable-for-modern-slavery-victims-kent-chicken-catching-eggs

Slavery and Forced labour USA

- Decmber 2017, UFCW President writes to the National Chicken Council calling on the Council to promote responsible employment policies and condemn forced labour, false rehabilitation programs, payment of sub minimum wages and employment of under age workers.
- All of these practices are documented

The Fight For Rights

- Agitate to strengthen and enforce ILO Conventions 87 & 98- the rights to join a union and enter into collective bargaining
- Regulation is needed rather than de-regulation, voluntarism and self auditing
- All workers are equal no matter where they come from and who they are. The rights of migrant workers and women workers must be fought for

The Fight For Rights (2)

- Precarious work driven by employment agencies undermines employment rights
- The real employer must be held accountable through multiple layers of outsourcing
- Disguised employment relationships in which workers are classified as independent contractors must be exposed.

And Finally

- A research project that investigates the link between OSH practices and food recalls may be a useful exercise
- Intuitively good worker health and safety implies a rigorous approach to safety generally, including food hygiene.