

May 30, 2012

Chipotle
3040 Excelsior Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416

Dear Manager of the Excelsior Boulevard Chipotle:

We are a group of organizations that advocate for healthy food systems and the fair treatment of all people working in the food system. As individuals, many of us enjoy eating at Chipotle and appreciate your commitment to “food with integrity”, and particularly applaud Chipotle’s leadership on issues pertaining to the humane treatment of farm animals and limiting the use of antibiotics in animal agriculture.

Yet we also cannot ignore the exploitation of workers anywhere in the food chain. We are contacting you, as a manager of a Minneapolis Chipotle, to urge Chipotle management to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and help end forced labor, poverty wages and other human rights abuses faced by farmworkers harvesting tomatoes for the U.S. retail food industry.

The CIW is an internationally recognized, award-winning farmworker organization based in Immokalee, Florida. It has assisted the FBI and U.S. Department of Justice in successfully investigating and prosecuting six cases of modern-day slavery in Florida agriculture. The CIW is also spearheading an innovative effort to promote principles and practices of socially responsible purchasing in the retail food industry that advance and ensure the human rights of farmworkers.

There is a well-documented human rights crisis in Florida’s fields, and conditions facing farmworkers who harvest your company’s tomatoes are as urgent as they are appalling. Tomato harvesters are still paid by the piece. The average piece rate today is 50 cents for every 32 lbs. of tomatoes they pick, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged since 1980. As a result of that stagnation, a worker today must pick more than 2.25 TONS of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday – nearly twice the amount a worker had to pick to earn minimum wage thirty years ago, when the rate was 40 cents per bucket.

Grinding poverty leaves farmworkers vulnerable to the most exploitative employers, often resulting in egregious labor rights abuses. In the most extreme conditions, farmworkers are held against their will and forced to work for little or no pay, facing conditions that meet the stringent legal standards for prosecution under modern-day slavery statutes. Federal Civil Rights officials have successfully prosecuted seven slavery operations involving over 1,000 workers in Florida’s fields since 1997, prompting one federal prosecutor to call Florida “ground zero for modern-day slavery.” In 2010, federal prosecutors indicted two more forced labor rings operating in Florida.

Today several Florida tomato growers are implementing the CIW’s Fair Food agreements with retail food industry leaders Yum Brands, McDonald’s, Burger King, Subway, Whole Foods Market, Compass Group, Bon Appétit Management Co, Aramark,

Sodexo and Trader Joe's. The agreements require those corporations to demand more humane labor standards from their Florida tomato suppliers, to pay a premium price for more fairly produced tomatoes, and to buy only from growers who meet those higher standards.

Chipotle's refusal to sign the Fair Food Agreement is troubling, particularly for a company that so effectively markets its "food with integrity". We note that your neighbor in this plaza, Whole Foods, has signed the Fair Food Agreement. We ask that you live up to Chipotle's fine reputation and work with the CIW to ensure humane wages and working conditions for the people who harvest its tomatoes. Your leadership is necessary if we are to end this human rights crisis once and for all.

For more information, please contact the Coalition of Immokalee Workers at 239-657-8311 or workers@ciwonline.org.

Thank you,

Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha

Centro Campesino

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

Land Stewardship Project

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