

ALLIANCE FOR FAIR FOOD

PEOPLE OF FAITH IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR FOOD

People of faith have become a vital force in the struggle for justice in the fields, contributing profoundly to realize farmworkers' dream of dignity. Alongside students and youth, food justice advocates, and consumers of conscience, people of faith from a number of traditions and denominations represent a central constituency in the vibrant multi-cultural and multi-generational Alliance for Fair Food.

Working in partnership with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, an internationally-recognized worker-based organization successfully transforming human rights in U.S. agriculture, people of faith in the Alliance for Fair Food are united by our commitment to follow farmworkers' leadership in putting faith into action in our own communities.

Beginnings: Abuse in the fields

When a group of six farmworkers first came together in 1993 for a now-fabled meeting to discuss conditions in the fields, they found welcome in Immokalee's Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, which understood their pursuit of justice as part of a critical creed of all religions: that true justice would be done when the poor and oppressed arise to change conditions for themselves and those coming after them. Within a couple years, thousands of farmworkers laboring in Florida's tomato fields had come together with the vision of transforming the agricultural industry to eliminate declining, sub-poverty wages, abusive working conditions, and modern-day slavery. They called themselves the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW).

By 1997, workers had organized hundreds of meetings, led dozens of demonstrations, and held three community-wide work stoppages, all for the simple request that growers engage with them in dialogue. At the end of that year, six farmworkers undertook a thirty-day hunger strike broken with communion by Bishop Nevins of the Diocese of Venice before a thousand parishioners. Meanwhile, congregations of many faiths outside of Immokalee heeded the call and formed Religious Leaders Concerned, later to become Interfaith Action and, finally, today's Alliance for Fair Food.



Today: A new day for farmworkers



In the nearly two decades since, people of faith have followed farmworkers' lead in calling on major food retailers to forge agreements with the CIW in the Campaign for Fair Food (2001 - ongoing), participating in fourteen major accords with corporations such as McDonald's and Walmart. Collectively, these victories enabled the birth of the Fair Food Program (2011 - ongoing), a proven mechanism for preventing abuses in the agricultural industry, called on the front page of the *New York Times* "the best workplace monitoring program... in the U.S." Communities and individuals of faith from all across the country have contributed

spiritual uplift, grounding in religious tradition, and the moral weight of voices of faith in society. Houses of worship have been centers of mobilizing, moving community members from pews to peaceful, public witness while housing and feeding innumerable farmworkers and allies during tours and demonstrations.

Denominations have passed national and state-wide resolutions calling on corporations to join the Fair Food



Program (and most recently, endorsing the Wendy's Boycott); religious bodies and orders have helped to pass shareholder resolutions at corporations' annual general meetings; and thousands of people of faith have joined farmworkers year-round in putting their faith in action through prayers, pickets, pray-ins, fasts, and marches.

The result of 25 years of farmworker leadership and 15 years of people of faith and conscience standing with them has been nothing short of astonishing. The Fair Food Program has ushered in a transformation of human rights in the Florida tomato industry, ensuring never before-seen rights, from access to shade and water to freedom from sexual harassment and

slavery. Nearly \$20 million have been paid by the corporations participating in the Fair Food Program into workers' paychecks as the first real wage increase in thirty years. Said one worker recently, "Our dignity has been restored."

The future of farmworkers' rights is far from guaranteed. Get involved!

The CIW has already proven that the dream of dignity in the fields is possible. But in order to secure the rights of tens of thousands of farmworkers, as well as expand these gains to thousands more across the country, we must bring more corporations into the Fair Food Program. To this end, the involvement of people of faith in the Campaign for Fair Food is now more important than ever. Currently, the Campaign for Fair Food is focused on Wendy's, the only major fast food retailer still refusing to respect farmworkers' human rights. After three years of Wendy's negation of the FFP, a national boycott was launched by farmworkers in March 2016. The Campaign also focuses on supermarket holdout Publix Supermarkets, the predominant grocer in the Southeast U.S.

Join the historic movement for farmworker justice! Here are just a few ways you can become involved:

- **Participate in the latest call to action** in the Campaign for Fair Food, featured on our website.
- **Contact us** to arrange for a farmworker to speak with your congregation about the ongoing struggle for justice.
- **Write a piece** for your congregation's bulletin, email list, or website on the issues facing farmworkers. Contact us for a campaign-specific bulletin insert.
- **Seek endorsement of the Wendy's Boycott** from your congregation, denomination, tradition, or organization.
- **Submit a letter to the editor or an op/ed** to your local paper to amplify farmworkers' call for Fair Food. Contact us for a how-to guide.
- **Organize a group to visit Immokalee** to meet with farmworkers and witness first-hand the profound changes of the Fair Food Program in workers' living and working conditions.
- **Become a Fair Food Sustainer** by committing a monthly financial contribution, in order to support the advancement of farmworkers' fundamental human rights through the Fair Food Program and the Campaign for Fair Food.
- **Pray for or reflect on the reality of all workers**, especially those who work under sweatshop-like conditions and those who are leading their own struggle for justice