



Coalition of Immokalee Workers

ABOUT THE FAIR FOOD PROGRAM

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The leading edge of human rights in agriculture

In 2010, the Campaign for Fair Food resulted in the creation of the CIW's Fair Food Program (FFP), a groundbreaking model for social responsibility based on a unique partnership among farmworkers, Florida tomato growers, and participating buyers. The FFP has been called "one of the great human rights success stories of our day" in a Washington Post op-ed, "the best workplace monitoring program" in the U.S. in the New York Times, and a "smart mix of tools" that "could serve as a model elsewhere in the world" by the United Nations Working Group on Business and Human Rights.

Within the Fair Food Program, participating buyers pay the "penny per pound" premium which tomato growers pass on to workers as a line-item bonus on their regular paychecks (Since January 2011, over \$20 million in Fair Food Premiums have been paid into the Program). The Program also includes a human-rights-based Code of Conduct, involving six main elements:

1. A pay increase supported by the "penny per pound" paid by participating buyers, such as Taco Bell, Whole Foods;
2. Compliance with the Code of Conduct, including zero tolerance for forced labor and sexual assault;
3. Worker-to-worker education sessions carried out by the CIW on the farms and on company time to insure workers understand their new rights and responsibilities;
4. A worker-triggered complaint resolution mechanism (including a 24-hour hotline staffed by the FFSC) leading to complaint investigation, corrective action plans, and, if necessary, suspension of a farm's Participating Grower status, and thereby its ability to sell to Participating Buyers;
5. Health and safety committees on every farm to give workers a structured voice in the shape of their work environment; and
6. Ongoing auditing of the farms to insure compliance with each element of the FFP.

The FFP standards are backed by the market consequences established in the CIW's Fair Food Agreements, in which participating buyers commit to buy Florida tomatoes only from growers in good standing with the FFP, and to cease purchases from growers who fail or refuse to comply with the Program.

The 14 participating buyers include: Taco Bell (Yum Brands!), McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, Compass Group, Whole Foods Market, Trader Joe's, The Fresh Market, Chipotle Mexican Grill, Aramark, Sodexo, Bon Appétit Management Co., Ahold USA and Walmart.



To ensure and monitor the implementation of the Fair Food Program, a separate not-for-profit organization, the Fair Food Standards Council, was created with the sole function of overseeing the Program. The FFSC is responsible for both financial and systems audits of participating farms and retailers, for staffing a 24-hour toll-free complaint line, for investigating and resolving complaints that arise, and for otherwise helping growers and corporate buyers comply with the requirements of the Program.

The implementation of the Fair Food Program on the farms of 90% of Florida growers across the state is reflective of a sea change in the relations between Florida tomato growers and farmworkers, with implications for fruit and vegetable production throughout the eastern seaboard and indeed the entire country. This paradigm shift from conflict to cooperation – including agreement upon unprecedented worker protections that are fundamentally changing the labor environment in Florida's fields – is a direct result of the CIW's years of tireless organizing and careful, detailed implementation of the FFP.

Praise for the Fair Food Program: From the White House to the United Nations

As a testament to its unique and effective approach, the Fair Food Program has garnered praise and recognition from across a wide spectrum. In April 2014, an A-1 article in the New York Times called the Fair Food Program “the best workplace monitoring program in the U.S.” In the same article, the Program was credited with transforming the Florida tomato industry from “being the worst [work environment in American agriculture] to being the best” in only three years. The FFP has been called “a brilliant model” and “one of the great human rights success stories of our day” in a Washington Post op-ed.



In April 2013, the White House lifted up the FFP in a major new report of recommendations to President Obama, describing the FFP as “one of the most successful and innovative programs” in the world today in the fight to uncover – and prevent – modern-day slavery.

The Fair Food Program has also been recognized as pathfinding by a diverse array of international experts. The Geneva-based U.N. Working Group on Business and Human Rights, after an unprecedented 10-day mission to the United States this May, stated in a nationwide press conference that they were “impressed” by how the Fair Food Program “innovatively addresses core worker concerns,” and “governance gaps relating to labour issues” through its “independent and robust enforcement mechanism.” The U.N. Working Group also noted that the Fair Food Program was positively perceived both by business owners who “spoke of the advantages enjoyed by their business operations” and by workers who “related the improvement in working conditions.” Most recently, in light of Walmart joining the Program, the U.N. Working Group called the model a “smart mix of tools” that “could serve as a model elsewhere in the world”.

In 2013, the hard-hitting documentary team at PBS Frontline completed *Rape in the Fields*, which examines the epidemic of sexual abuse of female farmworkers in the United States. In an interview, producer Andres Cediel lifted up the Fair Food Program as a remarkable and unique solution:

“... (The Fair Food Program was) the first time that we saw an economic incentive placed on anti-sexual harassment policies...”

... women are therefore educated about their rights through the Program. We see auditors going out to the fields and talking to women about their experiences and creating much more awareness and also empowering people to come forward...

... What we’ve seen in other parts of the country is that sexual harassment policies are being put into place, such as in California there are sexual harassment trainings going on with supervisors. The difference is not seeing it get to the field worker level as directly as what we’ve seen in Immokalee. So it’s really, after going around the country, some of the most proactive policies that we’ve seen have been coming out of Florida.”



As a companion piece to its documentary, PBS Frontline posted an excellent short video highlighting the Fair Food Program as one of the few reasons for hope – and the one true “voice of the workers”– in the battle against widespread sexual harassment.