

## **Resolution of the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church, 2007**



**Resolved,** That the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church meeting in Portland, Oregon March 2-4, 2007, calls on the church to promote principles and practices of socially responsible purchasing in the corporate food industry in order to advance the human rights of farmworkers by (1) encouraging study and appropriate action on these matters by missions, parishes, dioceses and provinces of The Episcopal Church; and (2) urge the church at every level to respond to possible calls for boycotts and other actions, shareholder resolutions, and peaceful public witness as means of advancing the goals of the resolution.

### **EXPLANATION**

The Episcopal Church has a history of supporting a living wage for all workers and concern for migrant workers (GC Resolutions 1997 - A129 and D082, 2000 - A081, and 2003 - A130). Farm workers earn sub-poverty wages for picking tomatoes for suppliers of the retail food industry. Their wages (40-45 cents per 32 pound bucket) have remained stagnant for more than 25 years and their median annual income (roughly \$10,000) is far below the poverty level. Farm workers are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act and therefore lack basic rights guaranteed workers in most other industries. Some farm workers are being held in modern-day slavery.

Corporate food buyers such as McDonald's, Wal-Mart and Burger King are responsible for helping create these conditions by demanding high-volume, year-round, low-cost tomatoes, and they have the power to change these conditions. After a 4-year boycott of Taco Bell, led by the farm workers of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) and endorsed by the Episcopal Migrant Ministries and the Diocese of Southwest Florida, the CIW and Taco Bell reached a precedent-setting agreement for change in the fields. This agreement instituted the first-ever direct, ongoing payment by a fast-food company to farm workers in its supply chain that nearly doubles the per bucket earnings for workers who pick tomatoes for Taco Bell. It also instituted the first-ever enforceable Code of Conduct for agricultural suppliers to the fast-food industry and involves farm workers in the protection of their own rights.

We commend to Episcopal institutions partnership with their own local groups like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and The Alliance for Fair Food – a network of human rights, religious, student, labor, and grassroots organizations.

Completes Resolution B010 passed by the House of Bishops.

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