

December 7, 2009

Mr. Joseph Neubauer, Chairman and CEO
Aramark
1101 Market St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Mr. Neubauer,

As allies of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), we gather today to yet again urge Aramark to help end forced labor, poverty wages and other human rights abuses faced by farmworkers harvesting tomatoes for the U.S. food industry. The human rights, student, community, and sustainable food and agriculture organizations we represent work in partnership with the CIW, an internationally recognized, award-winning farmworker organization based in Immokalee, Florida.

As you surely know, 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. In December 2008, two farm labor employers in Immokalee were sentenced to twelve years apiece in federal prison for enslaving nearly a dozen tomato harvesters. Workers were held against their will, beaten, chained, locked in box trucks at night, and forced to work harvesting tomatoes. U.S. Attorney Doug Molloy called it one of Florida's "biggest, ugliest slavery cases ever." This is the seventh such farm labor operation – involving well over one thousand workers in total – to be prosecuted for servitude in Florida in the past decade. (The CIW assisted the FBI and U.S. Department of Justice in successfully investigating and prosecuting six of those cases.)

Fortunately, Aramark has a new opportunity to support social responsibility in the Florida tomato industry. **On September 25, the CIW, Compass Group North America, and East Coast Growers and Packers announced sweeping changes to improve tomato harvesters' wages and working conditions.** Compass joins Bon Appetit Management Company, Yum Brands, McDonald's, Burger King, Subway, and Whole Foods Market in working with the CIW to address the human rights crisis in Florida's fields.

Today three Florida tomato growers – including East Coast, the state's third largest producer – are implementing the CIW's Fair Food agreements. The news of farmworkers, growers, and retail food corporations cooperating to produce a fairer tomato prompted U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders, a longtime observer of the campaign, to note, "Today marks the **beginning of the end of the harvest of shame that has existed for far too long in Florida's tomato fields.**" What's more, just days ago the CIW and Verite – a non-governmental organization that promotes and monitors fair labor practices across the globe – **announced a program for the implementation and monitoring of these Fair Food accords**, including the ongoing, independent verification that farmworkers are receiving the "penny-per-pound" raise.

Yet much remains to be done. In recent weeks we have become increasingly concerned over the refusal by local Aramark representatives to even discuss these issues with students on several college and university campuses, and frustrated by boilerplate responses that originate from your company implying that Aramark has already entered into a working agreement with the CIW. Rest assured, we will only be satisfied when Aramark shows a real commitment – backed by a binding agreement – to working together with farmworkers to implement these changes in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership. Until then, we will continue to educate our peers and take action on our campuses, where Bon Appetit and Chartwell's have distinguished themselves as responsible alternatives to Aramark.

It is imperative that Aramark seize the opportunity to be part of the solution to Florida's longstanding shame of farmworker exploitation. At the table is a proven model, the expertise of the CIW, and a tremendous opportunity to join other major food service providers and food retailers in advancing the principles of Fair Food. We urge you to meet as soon as possible with the CIW to discuss how Aramark can become a leader in socially responsible purchasing practices that ensure the human rights of farmworkers in your tomato supply chain.

Sincerely,

United Workers of Baltimore, MD
Student/Farmworker Alliance

Just Harvest USA
National MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan) Organization
United Students for Fair Trade
Student Trade Justice Campaign
Fair Food Across Borders

Philadelphia-area organizations:

Students for Workers' Rights, Saint Joseph's University
Student Labor Action Project, Swarthmore College
Philadelphia Student Union
Asian Americans United
Media Mobilizing Project
Unified Taxi Workers Alliance of Pennsylvania
Radio Tlacuache, WPEB

Fair Food Austin (Texas)
Fair Food Twin Cities (Minnesota)
Denver Fair Food
Lawrence (Kansas) Fair Food
Duquesne Spiritan Campus Ministry, Duquesne University
South Florida Interfaith Worker Justice
Student/Farmworker Alliance - Gainesville (FL)
Student/Farmworker Alliance - St. Thomas University (Miami)
Student/Farmworker Alliance - Texas Woman's University
Student/Farmworker Alliance - Boise State
Washington University (Saint Louis) Students for Fair Trade
Coalition of Hispanics Integrating Spanish sPeakers through Advocacy and Service (CHISPAS) at University of Florida
Center for Participant Education, Florida State University
Students for Social Justice, University of South Florida
Georgetown Solidarity Committee, Georgetown University
University of Houston Students for Fair Trade
Students for a Democratic Society - Gainesville (FL)
Student Labor Action Project, Wichita State University
Movimiento Estudiantil Xicano/a de Aztlan (MEXA), Michigan State University
Undergraduate Alliance, Michigan State University
Students for Economic Justice, Michigan State University
Real Chicano and Latino Studies, East Lansing, Michigan
United Mexican-American Students/MEChA, Auraria Campus, Denver
MEChA de ColorAztlan
MEChA de Calpulli Montañas del Norte
MEChA at University of Missouri Kansas City
MEChA at the University of Wisconsin-Madison
Popular Education Collective (LaPEC) (Madison)
Son Mudanza (Madison)
Dignidad Sin Fronteras (Madison)
Peace Project, Northwestern University (Chicago)
University of New Mexico Fair Trade Initiative
Prax(us) (Denver, CO)