

Dear Sodexo Manager,

There is, today, a human rights crisis in Florida's tomato fields.

Tomato pickers in Florida face sweatshop conditions every day, including:

- **Sub-poverty wages** - Tomato pickers make, on average, \$10,000/year;
- **No raise in nearly 30 years** - Pickers are paid virtually the same per bucket piece rate (roughly 45 cents per 32 lb. bucket) today as they were in 1980. At today's rate, workers have to pick nearly 2 ½ TONS of tomatoes just to earn minimum wage for a typical 10-hr day;
- **Denial of fundamental labor rights** - Farmworkers in Florida have no right to overtime pay, even when working 60-70 hour weeks, and no right to organize or bargain collectively.

Even worse, numerous modern-day slavery rings, in which workers are held against their will and forced to work through violence or threats of violence, have been discovered in the fields. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) has assisted the Department of Justice in uncovering, investigating, and successfully prosecuting 5 such cases – involving more than 1,000 workers -- since 1997.

Burger King is a major purchaser of Florida tomatoes. Burger King is able to pool the buying power of thousands of restaurants across the country to extract the lowest possible tomato prices from its suppliers. But while cheap tomatoes may be good for Burger King's bottom line, they come at a high cost for farmworkers in the form of ever-lower wages and increasing exploitation.

Sodexo holds a substantial business relationship with Burger King, allowing the company to practice business on the Emory campus.

In recent years, a new hope for real labor reform in Florida's fields has emerged. In 2005, after a 4-year national boycott, Taco Bell reached an historic agreement with the CIW to directly improve wages and working conditions in its tomato suppliers' operations by paying a penny more per pound for its tomatoes and working with the CIW to enforce a code of conduct to protect farmworkers' rights. In April 2007, McDonald's and the CIW reached a similar agreement that expanded upon the standards set in the Taco Bell agreement.

Burger King, however, has publicly rejected the CIW's offer to work together to ensure fair wages and conditions for the workers who pick its tomatoes, and is aggressively working to undermine the Taco Bell and McDonald's agreements. Burger King continues to assert that farmworkers earn substantially higher than poverty wages and claims that it is impossible to replicate the penny-per-pound payment in its supply chain, despite earlier statements to the contrary by Burger King executives. Burger King has partnered with a conservative Florida agribusiness lobby which is threatening huge fines against any of its member growers who choose to sell tomatoes to Taco Bell or McDonald's under the terms of these agreements.

During the CIW-led boycott of Taco Bell, students at over 300 high schools, colleges and universities across the US ran active campaigns against Taco Bell; at more than 20 of these institutions, Taco Bell restaurants were closed or other contractual relationships between Taco Bell and these schools were severed due to student pressure.

By continuing their relationship with Burger King, Sodexo and Emory are helping to perpetuate farmworker exploitation.

As concerned students and members of the Emory University community, we call on Sodexo and Emory to:

1. Remove and replace the Burger King in the Cox Hall Food Court;
2. Ensure that those currently working in Cox Hall in general and Burger King in particular not lose any work or pay when Burger King is replaced;

3. Write a letter to Burger King corporate headquarters in Miami explaining why the Burger King was removed from campus.

Sodexo's mission, in your own words, is to “improve the quality of daily life” by “embracing sustainability ideals” taking into consideration the “environmental, social and economic implications” of your actions. Emory Dining, as well, has a commendable sustainability program in place. The human rights of workers in corporate food supply chains, however, must be a central part of any effort for viable and robust sustainability and social responsibility.

Your current relationship with Burger King stands in stark contrast to these ideals.

Until we see concrete evidence of progress in this matter, we will speak with others in the Emory and broader communities to raise awareness about Sodexo's and Emory's role in maintaining farmworker poverty.