

## Dear Kroger Manager:

As a customer of a Kroger-owned supermarket, I am writing to urge The Kroger Company to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), an internationally recognized farmworker organization, to address the sub-poverty wages and abuses faced by the farmworkers who pick your tomatoes.



The human rights crisis in Florida's fields is urgent. Tomato harvesters are still paid by the piece. The average piece rate today is 50 cents for every 32 lbs. of tomatoes they pick, a rate that has remained virtually unchanged since 1980. As a result of that stagnation, a worker today must pick more than 2.25 TONS of tomatoes to earn minimum wage in a typical 10-hour workday - nearly twice the amount a worker had to pick to earn minimum wage thirty years ago, when the rate was 40 cents per bucket. Farmworkers' grinding poverty leaves them vulnerable to the most exploitative employers, often resulting in appalling labor rights abuses, up to and including modern-day slavery. Indeed, there have been nine federal slavery prosecutions in Florida's fields in the past dozen years alone.

Last December, two farm employers from Immokalee, Florida, were sentenced to 12 years each in federal prison for what US Attorney Doug Malloy called "slavery, plain and simple." As stated in the U.S. Department of Justice press release on the conviction, the farm bosses "*pled guilty to beating, threatening, restraining, and locking workers in trucks to force them to work as agricultural laborers. They were accused of paying the workers minimal wages and driving the workers into debt, while simultaneously threatening physical harm if the workers left their employment before their debts had been repaid.*" As a major purchaser of Florida tomatoes, it is imperative that Kroger work with the CIW to ensure that farmworkers are never again held against their will, beaten, and deprived of their pay.

Fortunately, there is a clear path toward ensuring fair wages and conditions for those who pick Kroger's tomatoes. Yum Brands, McDonald's, Burger King, Whole Foods, Subway, Bon Appétit Management Co., Compass Group, Aramark and Sodexo are all working with the CIW to directly improve tomato pickers' wages and enforce a code of conduct against abuses in their tomato supply chains.

I urge The Kroger Co., one of the largest retail food companies in the country, to ensure fair wages and dignity for the farmworkers who pick its tomatoes by working with the CIW to:

- Pay an additional penny per pound for tomatoes purchased to directly increase the wages of tomato pickers;
- Implement an enforceable code of conduct to ensure safe and fair working conditions for farmworkers, including zero tolerance for modern-day slavery;
- Ensure a voice for farmworkers in monitoring improvements and reporting abuses.

I look forward to Kroger living up to its reputation as a good neighbor by working with the CIW to ensure humane wages and working conditions for the people who harvest its tomatoes. Your company's leadership is necessary if we are to end this human rights crisis once and for all.

Thank you,