



Publix Campaign Background

For decades, Florida's farmworkers faced sub-poverty wages and daily violations of their basic human rights in order to harvest the food on our plates. Today, however, a new day of dignity has dawned in Florida's fields, thanks to the Fair Food Program. The product of an historic partnership among Florida tomato growers, farmworkers, and ten leading food corporations (among them Subway, Burger King, Whole Foods and Trader Joe's), the Fair Food Program is forging a new agricultural model that advances the human rights of farmworkers and the sustainability of the tomato industry as a whole.

But Publix -- Florida's hometown grocer -- has for several years stubbornly refused to join this promising new partnership and to do its part to help improve the lives of the farmworkers who pick its tomatoes. What's worse, Publix's refusal threatens to undermine the fragile gains won after years of struggle in the fields.

When asked to defend its refusal to participate in the historic changes taking place in Florida's tomato fields, Publix responds with public relations platitudes predicated on three false claims:

1) Publix calls the growing Fair Food collaboration among buyers, tomato growers and farmworkers "a labor dispute" and says the company will not get involved in the labor disputes of its suppliers. The Fair Food Program is in fact the first large-scale *partnership* of its kind for real, lasting social accountability in the U.S. produce industry. For example, the Fair Food Code of Conduct and the manual prepared to assist growers in implementing the Code on their farms were developed in close collaboration among workers, growers, and buyers. Further, growers across the state of Florida welcome education teams from the CIW on their farms to help workers learn, on the clock, about their new rights under the Code. In this way, workers are empowered to help identify and address abusive bosses, dangerous practices, and other threats to the industry as a whole. Far from a labor dispute, the Fair Food Program is a vital and growing partnership - unless Publix would label any process in which workers have a voice a "labor dispute."

2) Publix says that the penny should be "put in the price" the industry charges for tomatoes. The penny-per-pound premium is, in fact, built into the final price, on the invoices, for retailers who participate in the Fair Food Program and prefer to be billed that way. Those retailers simply pay for their tomatoes, as they always have, only now with a small premium built in, similar to any fair trade product. The accounting and distribution of the penny-per-pound funds are handled down stream in the supply chain, through the growers' regular payroll, and audited by a third-party monitor. Ten multi-billion dollar corporations -- Subway, McDonald's, Burger King, etc. -- have decided to participate in the Fair Food Program, most of them, in fact, by putting the penny in the price. Publix is free to do the same.

3) Publix says it won't "pay employees of other companies directly for their labor." In fact, participating buyers in the Fair Food Program do *not* pay farmworkers directly, not even close. As the Honorable Judge Laura Safer Espinoza, a former New York Supreme Court Justice who now serves as the director of the Fair Food Standards Council (the independent third party monitoring organization of the Fair Food Program), told the Orlando Sentinel, "No corporate buyer pays a farmworker directly in the Fair Food Program. They pay a premium that gets passed down the supply chain to the workers, who are paid by the growers who employ them."

Will Publix continue to spread falsehoods and turn a blind eye to abuses in its supply chain, or will it seize the opportunity to be part of the solution to Florida's longstanding history of farmworker exploitation? *The decision has never been easier.*

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