



Coalition of Immokalee Workers

P.O. Box 603, Immokalee, FL 34142

239-657-8311 (p) | 239-657-5055 (f)

www.ciw-online.org

MEDIA CONTACT

Gerardo Reyes (CIW), 239-503-0950

Marc Rodrigues (Student/Farmworker Alliance), 239-292-3431

Farmworkers, Consumers to March on Downtown Tampa Publix Demanding Fair Labor Standards for Farmworkers

Pressure mounts for Florida-based supermarket chain to sign Fair Food agreement with Coalition of Immokalee Workers in light of [historic breakthrough](#) with Florida tomato growers

Immokalee, FL (Feb. 9, 2011) – On Saturday, March 5th, farmworkers from Immokalee, Florida – the men and women who harvest the state's \$620 million tomato crop – will be joined by consumers from across the Southeast in three simultaneous marches through downtown Tampa converging at the 1313 S. Dale Mabry Highway store, where they will hold a rally to demand that the supermarket chain join a growing partnership among farmworkers, Florida tomato growers, and retail food giants aimed at ending decades of farm labor abuse in Florida.

What: Farmworkers and consumers march through downtown Tampa to call on Publix to [do the right thing](#).

When: Saturday, March 5th

- **Major rally** at Publix store at 1313 S. Dale Mabry Highway at **2pm**.
- Feeder marches depart from three Tampa Publix store locations at 10am and noon. [Click here for details](#).

Who: Farmworkers from the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#), religious leaders, students, and concerned consumers from across the Southeast.

“For years we have picked tomatoes in Florida’s fields under unimaginably harsh conditions,” said Leonel Perez of the CIW. “Today, however, we are finally beginning to see the first glimmers of more humane treatment at work, thanks to the [Campaign for Fair Food](#). But Publix is standing in the way of progress, and their refusal to help improve farm labor wages and working conditions threatens to undermine the unprecedented – and still fragile – human rights advances that are just now starting to take root in the fields.”

“George Jenkins, founder of Publix, once said, [‘Don’t let making a profit stand in the way of doing the right thing’](#),” added Gerardo Reyes, also of the CIW. “We’re asking that the men and women who run Publix today take this counsel to heart and finally do the right thing by signing a Fair Food agreement to improve the lives of the thousands of men and women who pick the tomatoes sold in Publix supermarkets.”

Background: Florida farmworkers have long faced [brutal conditions](#) in the fields, including sub-poverty wages, widespread labor rights violations, and even modern-day slavery. Today, however, there is [hope on the horizon](#), thanks to the efforts of farmworkers, Fair Food activists, Florida tomato growers, and nine food industry leaders (including Publix competitor Whole Foods) who have joined in support of the CIW's Fair Food principles, including a penny-per-pound piece rate wage increase, a strict code of conduct, a cooperative complaint resolution system, a participatory health and safety program, and a worker-to-worker education process.

Last November, the CIW and the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange (FTGE) [signed an agreement](#) to extend these principles to over 90% of Florida's tomato fields. And though the implementation of that agreement is being phased in gradually over the course of this season and the next, many real, concrete changes have already taken root on some of the state's largest farms.

Publix, however, is [refusing to do its part](#), and if they have their way, the unprecedented farm labor transformation promised by the CIW's landmark agreement with the FTGE would be significantly diminished. That's because the solution to farm labor exploitation and abuse contained in the Fair Food principles depends on the participation of all the major purchasers of Florida tomatoes. Each buyer must contribute its fair share – its penny-per-pound – for the pay raise to reach its full potential. Each buyer must commit to direct its purchases to those growers complying with the code of conduct – and away from those who don't – for working conditions to get better and stay better. In the [words of the FTGE's Reggie Brown](#), “Everybody in the system has to be invested for it to work.”

In December, Publix’s Media and Community Relations Manager Dwaine Stevens stated to the The Bulletin, a Baldwin County, AL newspaper, “We don’t have any plans to sit down with the CIW.” He continued, “[If there are some atrocities going on, it’s not our business](#). Maybe it’s something the government should get involved with.”

About the Coalition of Immokalee Workers: The CIW (www.ciw-online.org) is a community-based farmworker organization headquartered in Immokalee, Florida, with over 4,000 members. The CIW seeks modern working conditions for farmworkers and promotes their fair treatment in accordance with national and international human rights standards. The CIW’s Campaign for Fair Food has won unprecedented support for fundamental farm labor reforms from retail food industry leaders. The Campaign for Fair Food taps the unique powers of all the elements of our country's food industry:

- **of consumers**, to demand the highest ethical standards for food production;
- **of food retailers**, to use their tremendous buying power both to demand higher labor standards of their suppliers and help raise farmworkers out of poverty through a price that supports sustainable production;
- **of growers**, to continuously improve their operations and meet consumer demand, keeping pace with an evolving marketplace, and,
- **of farmworkers**, to help expose and fix the worst abuses and apply their unique knowledge toward modernizing, and humanizing, our farm labor system.

END