



June 15, 2009

Mr. Steve Ells, CEO
Chipotle Mexican Grill
1404 Wynkoop St., Ste. 500
Denver, CO 80202-1729

Dear Mr. Ells,

We write with admiration for your efforts to create a socially just and environmentally responsible restaurant chain. We applaud your goal of sourcing "food with integrity," food that's "unprocessed, seasonal, family-farmed, sustainable, nutritious, naturally raised, added hormone free, organic, and artisanal." Chipotle points the way to a new business model for national-scale restaurant chains: rather than scouring the globe for the cheapest commodities, restaurants should source in a region-appropriate way – bolstering and not undercutting regional food production networks.

Yet for us, naturally raised meat – important as it is – does not trump decently treated human beings. We are outraged by the working and living conditions we have seen in the Immokalee area of Florida, source of some 90 percent of the winter tomatoes consumed in the United States. Many of us have visited Immokalee, and see it as a stark example of the vast power discrepancies in our food system. In the winter-tomato market, a small number of very large buyers dictate terms to the seven or eight entities that control land in tomato country; those growers, in turn, squeeze the workers in brutal fashion. Real wages have fallen dramatically in Immokalee over the decades and now hover well below poverty level; housing conditions would not be out of place in apartheid-era South Africa. These are the normal conditions, experienced by thousands of workers in south Florida. No one can be surprised that in some extreme cases, right now, some of the people who pick our tomatoes are living in what can only be called modern-day slavery: held against their will and forced to harvest tomatoes without pay. In this context, Chipotle cannot claim the same integrity for the tomatoes it serves as it does for its meat, much less guarantee its customers that the tomatoes in its burritos were not picked by slaves.

We realize that Chipotle has announced that it's paying an extra penny per pound for tomatoes, but we have to ask: What has Chipotle done since that announcement to identify and cultivate growers who are willing to raise their labor standards and pass the penny along to their workers? Your company has shown admirable leadership in working with – and incubating – meat suppliers willing to meet your higher standards. But your failure to do that same hard work in the Florida tomato industry – together with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) – threatens to render your announcement an empty gesture aimed more at public relations damage control than an effort to make real change.

We view the CIW's struggle for dignity as a non-negotiable part of the struggle for a sustainable food system. Therefore, we strongly urge you to enter into an agreement with this worker-led organization that has been fighting tirelessly to improve conditions in tomato country since 1993. As you know, the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange has acted to block the penny-per-pound raise agreed to by McDonald's, Yum Brands, Burger King and others, by threatening to fine any grower who cooperates with the buyers and the CIW. The extra penny paid out by these companies now sits in an escrow account, and workers in the fields continue making the same dismal wage. The growers clearly fear the power tomato pickers have galvanized through the efforts of the CIW, and Chipotle's refusal to sign an agreement with the CIW only

bolsters the growers' intransigence.

Last month, another national-scale food company with a social mission, Bon Appetit, signed a far-reaching deal with CIW that goes well beyond the penny per pound raise. We urge you to study the CIW-Banco agreement and step up your efforts to identify growers – big or small – who will work with you to make “food with integrity” truly “fair food.”

If Chipotle is sincere in its wishes to reform its supply chain, the time has come to work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers as a true partner in the protection of farmworkers rights.

Respectfully,

- * **Eric Schlosser**, Author, *Fast Food Nation*
- * **Robert Kenner**, Director, “Food, Inc.”
- * **Raj Patel**, Author, *Stuffed and Starved*
- * **Frances Moore Lappé**, Author, *Diet for a Small Planet*
- * **Curt Ellis**, Co-Producer, “King Corn”
- * **Josh Viertel**, President, Slow Food USA
- * **Ben Burkett**, President, National Family Farm Coalition
- * **Jim Cochran**, Founder and President, Swanton Berry Farm
- * **John Peck**, Executive Director, Family Farm Defenders
- * **Rob Everts**, Co-Executive Director, Equal Exchange
- * **Clayton Brascoupe**, Program Director, Traditional Native American Farmers Association
- * **Ronnie Cummins**, National Director, Organic Consumers Association
- * **Kenny Ausubel**, CEO and Founder, Bioneers
- * **Bill Ayres**, Executive Director, WHY (World Hunger Year)
- * **Winona LaDuke**, Executive Director, Honor the Earth
- * **Andy Fisher**, Executive Director, Community Food Security Coalition
- * **Kathryn Gilje**, Executive Director, Pesticide Action Network North America
- * **Eric Holt Gimenez**, Executive Director, Food First/Institute for Development Policy
- * **Tom Philpott**, Food Editor, Grist.org; Co-Founder, Maverick Farms
- * **Anna Lappé**, Co-Founder, Small Planet Fund and Small Planet Institute
- * **LaDonna Redmond**, President, Institute for Community Resource Development
- * **Brahm Amahdi**, Co-Founder and Executive Director, People’s Grocery
- * **Margaret Williams**, Executive Director, The Food Project
- * **Jacque Berger**, Executive Director, Just Food
- * **Jim Goodman**, Kellogg/IATP Food & Society Policy Fellow; Organic Dairy Farmer
- * **Sean Sellers**, IATP Food & Society Policy Fellow
- * **Michael O’Gorman**, Director, Just Farms Consulting
- * **The Real Food Challenge**
- * **South Central Farmers (LA)**
- * **Just Harvest USA**