



Paul Rice
Fair Trade USA
1900 Harrison St.
Suite 1700
Oakland, CA 94612

Dear Mr. Rice,

We are writing to you concerning Fair Trade USA's (FTUSA) pilot and launch of a fair trade dairy certification. We strongly encourage you to halt the pilot and revisit your commitment to partnering in Chobani's Milk Matters program.

Fair World Project has previously expressed our concerns regarding Fair Trade USA's inability to protect workers' rights on certified farms and plantations. The series of events on Fyffes' Suragroh plantation showed that FTUSA's systems are weak enough to certify a plantation where ongoing human and labor rights abuses have been documented in the international press. Further, the subsequent inspection (in December 2018) brought to light the ways in which your standards and processes are ill-equipped to engage with a workers' union and labor allies, especially in times of tension. In your correspondence at the time with the Food Chain Workers Alliance and the International Labor Rights Forum, you noted that this pointed to the need to improve your relations with organized labor.

Instead, by proceeding to develop certification standards with a company who is refusing to come to the table with workers who intend to organize, Fair Trade USA is once again siding with corporate interests over those of the farmworkers whose rights they purport to protect.

As you well know, Fair World Project has a long history of critiquing Fair Trade USA for weak standards, failure to formally include intended beneficiaries (farmers and workers) in governance and standard-setting, and for an overall approach that has favored corporate volume over systemic change. Often the response has been that it is better to have some incremental improvements that may improve some conditions and that, by engaging in dialogue with companies, FTUSA is positioning themselves to make gradual incremental change.

We have yet to see evidence that this model is making a difference for workers. The farmworkers on Fyffes' Suragroh plantation continue to labor in exploitative conditions—if they still have jobs. Many have been terminated and/or are not being rehired for the coming season because of their union affiliation. Fair Trade USA has shown that they have no leverage with the



company to improve those conditions, and instead continue to certify Fyffes' SOL melon operations in Guatemala. With this unresolved labor crisis ongoing, we have no confidence that Fair Trade USA's presence will make a difference for the workers in Chobani's supply chains.

Unresolved workers' rights disputes are just one of the issues here. It is clear that the dairy industry in the United States is in crisis. Last year, over 2,700 dairy farms went out of business. Dairy farmers continue to be paid below the cost of production. Farmworkers face unsafe working conditions, poverty wages, and precarious employment. These are severe structural issues. To lend your label to just one piece of the problem would be to gloss over the vast scope of the challenges facing dairy farmers, misleading buyers and further undermining trust in certification labels.

We echo the words of the workers with Workers Center of Central New York who supply Chobani: ["There can be no fair trade without workers' rights."](#) The time is now: Fair Trade USA needs to halt their pilot with Chobani. Further, we call on you to make independent worker representation a prerequisite for certification for all standards, both large-scale agricultural and factory production.

Sincerely,

Dana Geffner
Executive Director
Fair World Project