



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Labor Rights and Farmworker Groups Denounce Fair Trade USA and Chobani's Launch of "Fair Trade Dairy"

New Label is Not Backed by a Publicly Available Standard and Lacks Transparency, Mechanisms for Enforcement

PORTLAND, OR – The leading fair trade advocacy organization Fair World Project along with labor rights and farmworker groups, including Migrant Justice, Workers Center of Central New York, and Worker-driven Social Responsibility Network are denouncing the launch of Fair Trade USA and Chobani's new "fair trade" standard for the dairy industry. Fair Trade USA's pilot of the standard was opposed by a coalition of 35 labor rights, farmworker and food justice groups, calling it a "sham process" that did not present adequate solutions. Their critique continues as yogurt is stocked on shelves with a "fair trade dairy" label although no published results from the standard pilot or finalized dairy standard are publicly available.

Fair Trade USA has previously been criticized for ineffective enforcement and corporate-friendly standards. In the letter opposing the standard pilot last fall, the coalition pointed out that the proposed dairy program was designed to be unenforceable as it lacked any meaningful mechanisms for enforcement. [In a statement](#), watchdog group Fair World Project notes that last week's launch of Chobani's "Fair Trade Certified" yogurt underscores the fact that the program prioritizes marketing before protecting workers' rights and ensuring safe working conditions - the product launch precedes the release of final standards.

This new “fair trade dairy standard” is being criticized by the very workers it claims to benefit. “In 2017 we published our report, *Milked*, based on detailed interviews with dairy workers in New York to bring to light the conditions in which they were living and working,” said Crispin Hernandez, organizer with the Workers Center of Central New York and former dairy worker. “We sat at the table with Chobani multiple times and delivered a memo asking that they recognize and support the right of all workers in their chain to unionize. But Chobani hasn’t listened to the workers, instead they created their “Milk Matters” campaign without the voices of workers.”

“We’ve long criticized Fair Trade USA for putting marketing first - and that is precisely what this ‘fair trade dairy’ label does,” says Anna Canning, Campaign Manager of Fair World Project. “They’ve completely put the cart before the horse with a label on yogurt tubs but no final standard available for analysis. That undermines any claim that this label is supposed to increase transparency. Unfortunately, everything we’ve seen about their model is that it’s only sticker deep and lacks strong standards or meaningful enforcement.”

“As workers, we have fought hard to change the terrible conditions we face on farms,” says Vermont dairy worker and Migrant Justice leader Rossy Alfaro. “We have created a program that is actually making a difference and enforcing our rights. Now Fair Trade USA is coming along, dressed up like a program that helps workers, but it’s really only propaganda for the companies that are getting rich while we suffer.”

The statement calls attention to the use of marketing language that borrows from small-scale farmer movements but does not address the underlying unfair power dynamics within the dairy industry. The statement goes on to say, “If workers are neither involved nor aware of the program, it is clear that any claims to “empower” them are no more than feel-good marketing copy.”

“Fair Trade USA has described themselves as giving a ‘voice to the voiceless,’” said Rafaela Rodriguez, Director of Strategic Partnerships at the Worker-driven Social Responsibility Network. “But dairy workers very much have their own voice, and in fact have been using it to demand Chobani and other brands to join the Milk With Dignity Program.”

To read the full statement of opposition to Fair Trade USA and Chobani's "Fair Trade Certified" dairy, please visit:

<https://fairworldproject.org/fair-trade-usa-and-chobanis-launch-of-fair-trade-dairy-is-opposed-by-labor-human-rights-groups/>

To read the full version of the coalition letter and its signatories online, please visit:

<https://fairworldproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/letter-to-FTUSA-9-17-2020.pdf>

To read Fair World Project's piece, "There's Nothing Fair About Fair Trade USA's 'Fair Trade Dairy'", which further outlines the inadequacies of FTUSA's approach to the development of its dairy standard, please visit:

<https://fairworldproject.org/theres-nothing-fair-about-fair-trade-usas-fair-trade-dairy/>

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Fair World Project (FWP) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect the use of the term "fair trade" in the marketplace, expand markets for authentic fair trade, educate consumers about key issues in trade and agriculture, advocate for policies leading to a just economy, and facilitate collaborative relationships to create true system change. For further information, visit: <https://www.fairworldproject.org>.

Migrant Justice is a Vermont-based human rights organization founded and led by immigrant dairy workers. The organization is the founder of Milk with Dignity, a supply chain program currently operating on dozens of farms in Vermont and New York. Milk with Dignity monitors and enforces human rights standards in labor and housing conditions for hundreds of dairy workers. For further information, visit: <https://www.migrantjustice.net> and <https://www.milkwithdignity.org>.

The Workers' Center of Central New York is a grassroots organization focused upon workplace and economic justice. Through community organizing, leadership development, popular education and policy advocacy, the Workers' Center of Central New York empowers low-wage workers to combat workplace abuses and improve wages and working conditions throughout the community. For further information, visit <https://www.workerscny.org>.

Worker-driven Social Responsibility Network is a network of worker organizations, allies, and technical advisors created to develop and implement a strategy to expand the Worker-driven Social Responsibility (WSR) model into other sectors and regions. The Network's goal is to provide support and resources for worker-led efforts to replicate the model, and shift the paradigm to establish the WSR model as the baseline for workers' rights programs within global supply chains. For further information, visit <https://wsr-network.org>.