

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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NATIONAL FARMWORKER AWARENESS WEEK:
GOT FOOD? THANK A FARMWORKER.
MARCH 30-APRIL 5, 2008

NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION HIGHLIGHTS FARMWORKER STRUGGLE

Nationwide movement calls for improved living standards, stronger voice in industry and increased workplace protections for farmworkers

Durham, NC – March 7, 2008- Organizations across the country are hosting a week of action to bring attention to the plight of farmworkers in the United States. Advocates, religious leaders, students, labor activists, consumers and environmental health professionals will unite during the week to recognize the contribution of agricultural workers.

"We support Farmworker Awareness Week, because we not only recognize the contributions of farm workers, but we also know of the critical need to change the conditions under which they work and live," said Arturo Rodriguez, president of the United Farm Workers of America. "We must bring justice to the fields."

Seventeen sponsoring organizations are planning rallies, marches, petition drives, film screenings and other events throughout the week. Many of the actions are scheduled to coincide with the March 31st birthday of the late Cesar Chavez, co-founder of the United Farm Workers of America and historic figure in the farmworker movement. People in 28 states are calling for the federal government to create a national holiday in honor of Chavez and farmworkers.

Farm work is one of the most strenuous and dangerous occupations, and yet farmworkers are excluded from many of the labor protections that other workers enjoy. They lack the right to collectively bargain, are vulnerable to employer retaliation, often live in substandard housing and suffer the highest risk of work-related exposure to pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.

Each year, Farmworker Awareness Week is called by Student Action with Farmworkers (SAF) in collaboration with Student Labor Action Project's Student Labor Week of Action. The purpose of the week is to inform the public and highlight ongoing campaigns for the improvement of farmworkers' living and working conditions. Please join us in raising awareness about the struggles of America's most hardworking people.

For more information about events in your area, visit www.saf-unite.org.

MAJOR CAMPAIGNS

Cesar E. Chavez National Holiday- The National Holiday Coalition is organizing actions across the US for a national holiday to be established for March 31. Events will take place in 53 cities in 28 states, connecting the legacy of Cesar Chavez to current issues related to farmworkers, economic and social justice. Carlos Santana, Martin Sheen and Edward James Olmos are the national Co-Chairs of this effort.

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Workers Campaign- The Farm Labor Organizing Committee is calling upon R.J. Reynolds to take responsibility for the oppressive conditions in which tobacco workers labor in North Carolina. Together with FLOC, R.J. Reynolds can use its tremendous power to initiate changes that will improve the lives of growers and farm workers alike.

Burger King Campaign- the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Student/Farmworker Alliance are demanding that fast-food giant Burger King take responsibility for the grinding poverty and degradation faced by farmworkers in its tomato supply chain.

UFW Campaign- The UFW is calling for support of AgJobs immigration reform bill and their campaign to unionize the Beef Northwest workers. The UFW has also launched a new web page at www.ufw.org which offers a vast array of information of Cesar Chavez and events commemorating his legacy.

Pesticide Action and Awareness- Pesticide Action Network of North America and the Farmworker Association of Florida are calling for the ban of dangerous fumigant Methyl Iodide. Toxic Free NC is also working in North Carolina to strengthen state regulations protecting farmworkers from pesticide exposure.

Natl. Student Labor Week of Action- Encompassing both Cesar Chavez Day and the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr, the National Student Labor Week of Action is a time for students across the US to demonstrate our strength as we demand respect and dignity for working people and affordable, accessible education for everyone.

Information regarding these and other campaigns can be found at www.saf-unite.org.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

National Cesar Chavez Day of Action- March 31: many events are taking place around the US! Also on March 31, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers will kick-off their petition drive to end slavery and sweatshops in the fields!

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS

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