



FNLI
Attn. Mr P. den Ouden
P.O. Box 161
2280 AD Rijswijk

The Hague, 2 December 2011

Subject:

Request to companies to provide information on and to fight child labour in the Turkish hazelnut sector

Dear Mr Den Ouden,

Since the issue of child labour in the Turkish hazelnut sector was publicised in the current affairs programme EénVandaag there has been regular contact between your organisation, Federatie Nederlandse Levensmiddelen Industrie (FNLI, the Federation of Dutch Food Industries), and the campaign 'Stop Child Labour – School, the best place to work' and FNV Bondgenoten (Dutch Federation of trade unions). Soon after the violations were reported the FNLI took the lead and promised, on behalf of the member organisations of FNLI, that action would be taken. This resulted in regular contact with Stop Child Labour and the round table meeting of 30 May this year in which Nestlé, Ferrero and Unilever participated in addition to FNLI and the undersigned.

On 19 October and 14 November this year, the programme EénVandaag again highlighted the issues regarding hazelnut harvesting in Turkey. The item featured on 19 October showed that children are still being used in hazelnut harvesting in Turkey. This also appeared from a fact finding mission conducted by FNV Bondgenoten in collaboration with Stop Child Labour. A report of that trip and the conclusions and recommendations, as well as an overview of events in the past year, can be found in the appendices.

In the item featured on 14 November, the MP for the ChristenUnie (ChristianUnion) Joel Voordewind called for legislation to ensure that products made with child labour no longer find their way to shop shelves. In light of the Stop Child Labour campaign we endorse this and refer to the proposals regarding the cocoa industry recently put forward by the 10 Campaign. Voordewind also argues that companies should not only assume responsibility for their direct suppliers, but also for the entire supply chain.

As director of the FNLI you indicated in this programme that addressing this issue through legislation in the Netherlands would not be a good step. You also said that whilst you believe that child labour in the hazelnut sector is a serious problem, the solution lies mainly with the Turkish government.

'**Stop Child Labour – School, the best place to work**' is an international Alliance2015 campaign coordinated by Hivos. The campaign is run in association with Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB, Dutch General Education Federation), FNV Mondiaal, ICCO & Kerk in Actie, de Landelijke India Werkgroep (LIW, National India Working Group), Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (charity foundation for children) and local organisations in developing countries.

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We agree that the Turkish government plays a crucial role in fighting child labour in the hazelnut sector. However, we feel that FNLI's approach – as expressed in EénVandaag – lacks clarity on the responsibility of the companies involved. Earlier this year you informed Stop Child Labour that the FNLI has a zero tolerance policy on child labour. The FNLI has actively disseminated the subject of child labour amongst its members and urged member companies to acquire a better understanding of the supply chain and to take appropriate action. We hear little about this approach now. Yet the new Guiding Principles on Human Rights and Business in the OECD Guidelines, which are endorsed by the Dutch government and the social partners, make it clear that a considerable effort may also be expected from companies, both individually and, where possible, jointly.

We note that companies – members of the FNLI – have, regrettably, taken little or no action to eliminate child labour and poor working conditions on the hazelnut farms. This is true, as far as we know, for all companies approached last year by FNV Bondgenoten and Stop Child Labour, namely: United Biscuits (Verkade), Unilever, Mars, Kraft Foods, Nestle, Ferrero, Koninklijke Wessanen (Zonnatura), Peeters Producten (Duo Penotti), Intersnack and Ahold. Only Nestlé and Kraft Foods have informed us that they have investigated the situation and will publish an action plan shortly.

Stop Child Labour and FNV Bondgenoten therefore urgently call on the members of the FNLI to urgently start working on this issue with haste and are asking the FNLI to insist emphatically that its members do so. The sector inquiry into the hazelnut supply chain promised by the FNLI and possibly the research that some members have already carried out may be useful for this purpose.

We are aware that it may cost some effort to get a good understanding of the entire supply chain. Buyers purchase hazelnuts from different farms, making it difficult to trace whether hazelnuts were sourced from a farm where child labour occurs. However, this does not absolve companies from the obligation to work towards eliminating child labour from the entire chain; on the contrary. The hazelnuts picked by children end up in many different factories and in the products of many different companies. This is why companies should preferably combine forces, enter into discussion with other parties involved and take joint action. The responses companies gave last year to our first letter revealed a widespread willingness to cooperate. Most companies indicated that they cannot tackle this problem on their own but would like to enter into discussions with other stakeholders. So far, we have not seen any concrete action in this area.

We therefore urge the FNLI to take the initiative in the short term to organise a meeting for companies involved and other relevant parties. Stop Child Labour and FNV Bondgenoten are willing to help organise this meeting. Such a round table meeting could focus on sharing relevant information leading to a joint analysis and approach to the problems. This analysis and approach would then have to be publicised to consumers, civil society organisations and politicians. Businesses, politicians and other stakeholders each have their own roles and responsibilities to fulfil actively in order to produce concrete results. ***Like you, we believe that it is possible to solve the problem within a few years, but this will require the FNLI and its affiliated companies to produce a concrete roadmap in the short term and to enter into dialogue and cooperate with other stakeholders.***

We believe that an initiative for a meeting with all relevant stakeholders would be a good starting point for lasting cooperation between the FNLI companies and other stakeholders to eliminate child labour

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and improve working conditions for adults in the hazelnut sector. Obviously Stop Child Labour and FNV Bondgenoten would like to play an active role in this and will continue to actively monitor developments in Turkey.

We await your response in anticipation and would request that you reply to this open letter within two weeks.

Yours sincerely,



Manuela Monteiro (General Director Hivos)



Henk van der Kolk (Chairman of FNV Bondgenoten)

on behalf of the campaign 'Stop Child Labour – School, the best place to work'

Participants of this campaign in the Netherlands:

Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB)
FNV Mondiaal
Hivos
ICCO & Kerk in Actie
Algemene Onderwijsbond
Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland

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