



The Hague, 20 October 2010

Bitter Hazelnuts

Stop Child Labour urges companies to transparency and action

The campaign 'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work' expresses its serious concern about child and underpaid labour in Turkish hazelnut harvesting. Dutch TV news magazine 'EenVandaag' on the 19th of October broadcasted a feature story showing that children – from around 8 years of age – are working around 11 hours a day in hazelnut harvesting. Turkey is producing around 75% of all hazelnuts in the world.

In open letters to Ferrero, Verkade and Royal Wessanen - companies using Turkish hazelnuts in their products - 'Stop Child Labour' is urging them to eliminate child labour from their supply chain and ensure that adults are paid a decent wage. Companies who are likely to import hazelnuts from Turkey but thus far refused to say where they are grown, are asked to be transparent about their origin and take similar action on child labour and decent work. Among these companies are Unilever, Mars, Nestlé, Kraft and Ahold.

Most hazelnuts consumed in European countries are imported from Turkey. The nuts are not only consumed directly but also used in a large number of products, including chocolate, cookies and ice-cream.

Hundreds of thousands of families are involved every year in harvesting hazelnuts. These migrant workers travel around the country from harvest to harvest, be it hazelnuts, cotton or other crops. Research by the Turkish education union Egitim Sen (a member of Education International) shows that many children are missing three to six months of education every year, even though Turkey has a law for eight years of compulsory education. Children work along with their parents in harvesting hazelnuts. The families are living in poverty. During the harvesting season the parents and their children are living in tents in make-shift camping sites, often without sanitation or running water.

In the report of the Dutch TV magazine 'EenVandaag' we are seeing 8 years old Zara Yamuktu, who lives with her parents and five brothers and sisters during the winter months in the town of Urfa in southeastern Turkey. From March onwards the family starts travelling, 1000 kilometers away, to harvest hazelnuts in the northern Black Sea region. Harvesting is done from seven in the morning till seven at night, with only one hour break, also by children. The earnings of one euro an hour are meagre.

The campaign 'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work' is organizing an event on the 19th of November in Amsterdam with a focus on child labour in the hazelnut sector. Starting with the presentation of a new report by the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions on Child Labour and Decent Work, the event will feature the new documentary 'Children of the Season' by Mehmet Ülger about seasonal migrant and child labour in Turkey's agriculture. Stop Child Labour will start activities against child labour in hazelnut production and actively

pursue a dialogue with the companies involved in order to ban child labour from their supply chain.

For the last eight years 'Stop Child Labour' and its partners have combating child labour in the supply chain of companies. 'Stop Child Labour' is of the opinion that all forms of child labour that form a barrier to the right to education should be banned.

'Stop Child Labour' is an international campaign of which the partners in The Netherlands are the Dutch Education Union, FNV Mondiaal (Federation of Dutch Trade Unions), Hivos, ICCO & Church in Action, The India Committee of The Netherlands (ICN) and the Foundation for Children's Stamps in co-operation with partner organizations in developing countries.

Contact details

Sofie Ovaa

Coordinator 'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work'

sovaa@hivos.nl

Gerard Oonk

Coordinator CSR 'Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work'

g.oonk@indianet.nl