

Dear _____ Manager,
(Grocery Store Name)

As a frequent shopper at your store, I write to express my serious concern over the human and labor rights violations occurring on Fyffes' melon plantations in Honduras. Fyffes is the largest supplier of melons (sold under the  label) to the U.S. market. I ask that you raise my concern and forward this letter to Fyffes' owners, Sumitomo (contact info below).

Since January of 2016, the Honduran Agricultural Workers Union, or STAS (by its initials in Spanish), has been organizing workers on Fyffes' melon plantations in Choluteca, Honduras. STAS' efforts to better working conditions and collectively bargain have been met with a violent anti-union campaign from Fyffes' local management. Union members have been subject to blacklists, intimidation, threats, bribes and scores of illegal firings. Fyffes has consistently refused to sit down and negotiate with STAS, instead pursuing a legal strategy which wrongfully argues that temporary and subcontracted workers have no right to organize under Honduran law. Most recently, Fyffes' local management created a management-friendly union in order to undermine the trade union rights of STAS.

The rights of workers – including temporary and subcontracted – to organize is a universal right, and is enshrined in the Labor Code established by Honduran legislation and in the Constitution of the Republic of Honduras, in addition to ILO Conventions 87 and 98, which have been ratified by the government of Honduras. As Fyffes' parent company, Sumitomo has a responsibility to adhere to national and international laws.

As a consumer of your grocery store, I urge you to conduct due diligence into your supply chain to address any human or labor rights violations in which you may have a connection. Please see article on the back of this letter for more information.

I, along with Fyffes workers and the **Freedom and Fairness for Fyffes' Workers** campaign, respectfully request that Sumitomo, as Fyffes' owners:

1. End discrimination and the anti-union campaign against STAS' union members by local management.
2. Formally recognize STAS and engage in collective bargaining as required by national and international laws.

Sincerely,

Name

Signature

Date

Grocery Store Name

City, State

Sumitomo email: tetsu.eguchi@sumitomocorp.co.jp; tetsu.eguchi@sumitomocorp.com;

Fyffes' Workers Continue the Fight for Justice on the Honduran Melon Fields

Thousands of miles away from U.S. supermarket shelves, Oglis Mejia gets up at 4 a.m. to prepare the meals of the day for her children. She subsists on a diet of rice and beans, and occasionally chicken, which is all she can afford with her wages working at the melon plantation. Her workday starts at 6 a.m., and consists of planting, cutting and harvesting the melons for 8 to 12 hours a day, a strenuous job that requires her back to be hunched over to the ground to plant the seeds.

Oglis works for Suragroh, a melon plantation owned by [Fyffes](#), one of the largest fruit companies in the world and the largest supplier of melons (sold under the  label) to the U.S. market. Fyffes' melon plantations are located in Choluteca, the southernmost state of Honduras, and employ around 4,500 workers, the vast majority of whom are women. For over ten years, workers have been claiming egregious human and labor rights violations on Fyffes' melon plantations.

Job Insecurity: Despite laboring on the same plantation for decades, most Fyffes workers are hired on short-term contracts each melon season. Local management uses these precarious working conditions to threaten, fire and deny contract renewals for workers who speak out against abuse.

Poverty Wages: While Fyffes claims to pay the daily minimum wage of 228 lempiras (USD \$9.73), workers report they often work more than eight hours a day and receive no overtime pay. A 2015 U.S. Department of Labor [report](#) found that Fyffes subsidiaries consistently failed to give or pay mandatory holidays, vacation or school vouchers.

Inhumane Working Conditions: Workers [describe](#) being ordered to enter fields which are sprayed with toxic chemicals, without protective equipment such as boots and gloves. They say the labels on the pesticide containers are ripped off before use. Last year, The Guardian [reported](#) that Suragroh workers use Gramoxone [also known as Paraquat], a chemical with well-documented health risks, including links to Parkinson's disease. The EU banned Gramoxone in 2007, but its use is not in any way restricted in Honduran law.

Gender-Based Discrimination: In October 2015, Marys Suyapa Gómez was fired for being pregnant after 15 years of working for Suragroh. Women workers say that maternity leave rights are unheard of and the company provides no support for childcare.

Denial of Healthcare and Social Security: Fyffes' plantations have failed to pay into the state-run health care and social security programs as required under Honduran law, leaving workers without vital benefits. Maria Gomez, 65, says, "They never contributed to social insurance and now I will not be able to retire and finally rest after so many years (nearly 30) spent on the plantation. I have to continue working to survive."

Fighting Back with Union Power: In January 2016, Suragroh workers achieved a historic milestone. With the

help of the Honduran Agricultural Workers Union, or STAS, they were the first melon plantation to organize workers in the entire sector. STAS' efforts to collectively bargain for better working conditions have been met with a violent anti-union campaign from Fyffes' local management.

Union members have been subject to blacklists, intimidation, threats, bribes and scores of illegal firings. The violence reached a peak in April of this year, when Moises Sanchez, secretary general of the union was robbed, beaten and held at gunpoint by unknown men. His brother Misael was seriously injured on his face with a machete when he tried to free Moises. The message was clear: stop organizing.

Fyffes has consistently refused to sit down and negotiate with STAS, instead pursuing a legal strategy which wrongfully argues that temporary and subcontracted workers have no right to organize under Honduran law. STAS has appealed against this interpretation of the law with the Ministry of Labor. If the appeal is approved, this would set a historic precedent, giving way, not only for STAS, but for all temporary and subcontracted workers in Honduras to organize local union branches. STAS and its union federation, FESTAGRO, say the appeal has been sitting on the Labor Minister's desk for over a year, refusing to sign it due to pressure from the business community. Fyffes' yields a lot of political and economic power in the region and workers view the government as an accomplice and an unconditional lackey of powerful multinationals like Fyffes.

The fight continues, despite [reports from FESTAGRO](#) that employers have bussed people in company vehicles to [protest against STAS](#) and have created a management-friendly union, which is awaiting registration at the Ministry of Labor. ILRF, along with our European allies have been leading the **Freedom and Fairness for Fyffes' Workers** campaign for the past year, calling upon supermarkets and consumers to hold Fyffes accountable for conditions on its supply chain.

For the majority-female workforce, this union fight is no longer just for their own employment, but for the wellbeing of future generations. Herminia Carranza, 61, told a crowd of supporters in Washington D.C. that she fights so that her children and grandchildren can have dignity at work and a better life. For them, joining STAS has been a way to build collective power against a company where the quarterly bottom line takes precedence over the inherent rights of workers.

In solidarity with Fyffes' workers, the campaign is demanding that:

1. Fyffes' local management end discrimination and the anti-union campaign against STAS union members.
2. Formally recognize STAS and engage in collective bargaining as required by national and international laws.