

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

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October 9, 2015

André Calantzopoulos
Chief Executive Officer
Philip Morris International, Inc.
120 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Cc: Jennifer P. Goodale
Vice President, Contributions
Philip Morris International
Avenue de Rhodanie 50
1007 Lausanne, Switzerland

Re: Child labor in US tobacco farming

Dear Mr. Calantzopoulos,

We are writing today to share key findings from recent research we conducted on child labor in tobacco farming in North Carolina in July 2015. We are encouraged by the steps taken to date to address hazardous child labor in US tobacco farming, and we hope to continue a constructive dialogue with Philip Morris International on this issue.

In July 2015, Human Rights Watch traveled to eastern North Carolina to investigate the health effects of tobacco farming on 16 and 17-year-old children, a population excluded from certain protections under some tobacco companies' policies as well as under US law. Human Rights Watch interviewed 33 children, ages 13 to 17, who worked on tobacco farms in eastern North Carolina in 2015, including 26 children, ages 16 or 17.

Human Rights Watch did not seek to monitor implementation of new industry policies or conduct a comprehensive evaluation of how conditions may have changed for child tobacco workers since Human Rights Watch conducted research on hazardous child labor in the US in 2013. We are unable to assess the implementation of any specific tobacco company's child labor policy. However, Human Rights Watch found children under age 16, as well as 16 and 17-year-old children, working on tobacco farms in North Carolina in 2015.

The children we interviewed reported working on tobacco farms in 12 counties in North Carolina. Most children worked for farm labor contractors or subcontractors, and a few children worked directly for tobacco growers. Some children worked for one employer, while others worked for more than one employer. In total, the children we interviewed worked for at least 18 different growers or farm labor contractors in eastern North Carolina.

Many of the children could not identify the owner of the farm on which they worked, and Human Rights Watch could not determine the companies that purchased tobacco from the farms where children reported working.

The hazards and conditions Human Rights Watch documented in 2015 are consistent with those documented in our 2013 research. We believe that these hazards and conditions are present on many US tobacco farms.

Working Conditions

All of the children interviewed worked as hired laborers on tobacco farms in North Carolina; none worked on farms owned or operated by their own families. They reported doing a range of tasks on tobacco farms in 2015, including planting seedlings, weeding, uprooting and repositioning tobacco plants, topping, and removing suckers.

The children interviewed for this report described working in similar conditions as the child workers interviewed by Human Rights Watch in 2013. Most children worked 11 or 12 hours a day on tobacco farms. Some children worked six days a week, while others worked fewer days. Almost all children described fatigue and exhaustion after working long days in tobacco fields.

All children reported having opportunities to take breaks while working, usually three times a day, including an hour break for lunch. Almost all children said they were paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour, usually in cash. Very few children reported problems with their wages.

Some children said they were asked their ages when they were hired. Other children said they were not questioned about their age.

Health and Safety of 16 and 17-Year-Old Child Workers

Almost all of the 16 and 17-year-old children interviewed—25 out of 26—reported feeling sick while working in tobacco farming in 2015, or after returning home from working in tobacco fields, with nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, skin irritation, or respiratory symptoms.

Most of the children interviewed—23 out of 26—reported experiencing the sudden onset of at least one specific symptom consistent with acute nicotine poisoning while working in tobacco farming in 2015, or after returning home from working in tobacco fields, including nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, and lightheadedness. Some children also experienced a loss of appetite or recurrent sleeplessness, also symptoms associated with nicotine exposure. In some cases, the symptoms they reported could be linked to or exacerbated by pesticide exposure or working in conditions of high heat and high humidity without sufficient rest, shade, and hydration.

Many of the children interviewed—20 out of 26—described exposure to pesticides while working in tobacco farming in 2015. Children reported either working in or near fields that were being sprayed with pesticides, or re-entering fields that had been sprayed very recently. These children often said they could smell, feel, or taste the chemical spray, and 9 children reported immediate illness after coming into contact with pesticides.

All 16 and 17-year-old children said they suffered while working in extreme heat on tobacco farms in 2015 with little access to shade. Children did report consistent access to water. Many children reported pain from engaging in repetitive motions. Children said they had inconsistent access to toilets, and many experienced discomfort while waiting long periods of time before relieving themselves.

Most children said they had never received any health education or safety training regarding the dangers of work in tobacco farming. Very few children were provided with personal protective equipment by their employers, and almost no children had access to a suitable handwashing facility with soap at their workplace.

Under international law, a child is anyone under the age of 18, and international labor standards state that children under 18 should be prohibited from hazardous work, defined as “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.” Based on our field research, interviews with health professionals, and analysis of the public health literature, Human Rights Watch believes that no child under age 18 should be permitted to work in direct contact with tobacco, due to the health risks posed by the work.

We plan to publish a report with detailed findings and recommendations this year. The report will describe our methodology, findings, analysis of international law, analysis of the US legal and regulatory framework regarding child labor, steps taken by tobacco product manufacturers, tobacco leaf supply companies, and tobacco grower associations to address child labor, gaps in protection, and recommendations to US government, Congress, and the tobacco industry.

Human Rights Watch is committed to accurately representing the steps PMI has taken to address child labor in tobacco farming. While we recognize that in past correspondence or meetings, PMI has provided information regarding PMI's policies on child labor, we want to ensure that we have the most up-to-date and complete information on PMI's current policy.

In particular, we are interested in the following information:

1. What is PMI's policy regarding work by children under 18 on tobacco farms supplying PMI in the US, and globally?
2. Under PMI's policy, what specific tasks are permissible for children under 18 to do on tobacco farms supplying PMI, and under what circumstances?
3. Does PMI prohibit "hazardous work" for children under 18, as defined by International Labour Organization standards? If the company prohibits hazardous work for children under 18, what specific tasks does PMI define as hazardous?
 - a. Does PMI allow for any circumstances under which children under 18 can perform these types of tasks? If so, under what specific circumstances?
4. How does PMI monitor child labor and the treatment of child workers on farms supplying tobacco to PMI and to PMI subsidiaries and suppliers?

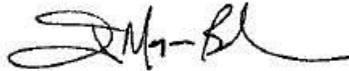
We would welcome a response to this letter by October 30, 2015. PMI's response will be reflected in our report. We will share a copy of the report with you a few days in advance of its publication.

Thank you for your attention to these issues.

Sincerely,



Jo Becker
Advocacy Director
Children's Rights Division



Jane Buchanan
Associate Director
Children's Rights Division



Margaret Wurth
Researcher
Children's Rights Division