

April 3, 2008

Office of Senator Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin,

I am writing to express the strong support and gratitude of the International Labor Rights Forum for the inclusion in Section 3104 in the Food and Energy Security Act of 2007 of language promoting Voluntary Certification of Child Labor Status of Agricultural Imports. This provision marks an important and pathbreaking step forward in combating the scourge of child labor worldwide. Seventy percent of the world's child labor is concentrated in the agricultural sector, where vulnerable children toil in blazing heat, exposed to dangerous farm machinery and deadly pesticides and deprived of an adequate education.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) of 2005 directed the US Department of Labor (DOL) to compile a list of goods manufactured with forced or child labor. We would be very interested in further details from your office to strengthen our understanding of the way in which Section 3104 will interact with the DOL list. Our understanding is that in line with TVPRA, Section 3104 initiates communication between the DOL and the United States Department of Agriculture, with the aim of creating guidelines for producers and establishing a voluntary "child labor-free" certification system. We would be most grateful for any additional information on the proposed new process, and look forward to working with the relevant agencies to build toward implementation of this provision.

The International Labor Rights Forum has for the past two decades fought to eradicate child labor worldwide by researching the use of child labor in the production of imported goods, increasing consumer awareness and action, and promoting new legal instruments and legal enforcement of existing protections for the world's working children. We believe this new provision will offer consumers who buy certified products the possibility of assurance that their purchases do not come at a cost to children's lives. More broadly, like some of our nation's most forward-thinking legislation of the past, Section 3104 recognizes that the abuse of children is a barrier to -rather than a precondition for - development.

We would like to offer ILRF's full support to this important process, and look forward to receiving further information from your office. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of the world's children.

Sincerely,
Bama Athreya
Executive Director