

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

Bama Athreya, Executive Director

(202) 347-4100 ext. 106, (202) 701-3051, bama.athreya@ilrf.org

Brian Campbell, Director of Policy and Legal Programs

(202) 701-3021, brian.campbell@ilrf.org

Socially Responsible Investors, Faith and Human Rights Groups Raise Labor Concerns on the Eve of Dole IPO

Over twenty organizations from the U.S. and abroad, including socially responsible investors (SRI), faith-based groups, unions and human rights organizations sent a letter to Dole Foods, Inc. expressing concerns with ongoing human and labor rights violations in Dole's global supply chains. The company is releasing an Initial Public Offering (IPO) on Friday, October 23, 2009. Since 2003, Dole has been privately held by chairman and CEO, David Murdock and the organizations endorsing the letter see the new offering as an opportunity to engage the public and socially responsible investment community in improving Dole's labor practices.

The labor rights concerns are based on a number of reports alleging that workers producing bananas, pineapples and flowers (before Dole sold its' cut-flowers division) in the Philippines, Costa Rica and Colombia earn poverty-level wages, are exposed to hazardous chemicals and are obligated to work overtime hours without proper compensation, among other labor rights violations. The reports describing such working conditions include the "The Sour Taste of Pineapples" by the International Rights Forum.

The letter also raises concerns about Dole's enforcement of freedom of association policies in its banana and pineapple sectors. A new report, "Dole: Behind the Smokescreen," by a coalition of European NGOs including Peoples Solidaires (in association with ActionAid) demonstrates that though Dole took some important steps to improve trade union rights in Costa Rica, Dole's policies have not been adequately enforced on the ground. Additionally, in the Philippines, the Armed Forces of the Philippines, with Dole's acquiescence, continue to intimidate and threaten Dole's democratically-elected union leaders on the world's largest pineapple processing facility, according to the letter in reference to the International Labor Rights Forum's testimony as Dole Philippines petitioned the USTR for expanding trade benefits on pineapple products.

"Responsible companies often work with members of the investment, NGO and labor communities to develop policies, programs and practices to address the types of

situations we have described in the letter to Dole. We hope we can contribute positively to the social and labor policies of Dole and partake in a constructive dialogue,” said **Dr. Ruth Rosenbaum, Executive Director of CREA: Center for Reflection, Education and Action** a corporate responsibility group.

The letter also points out the potential financial liability posed by a recently filed a civil wrongful death suit against Dole Food Company due to the company’s alleged links to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), a right-wing paramilitary group that was designated a terrorist organization by the U.S. government in 2001. Dole has yet to come forward to claim responsibility for such actions.

The letter welcomes Dole to public engagement. “We hope that the letter will motivate Dole to resolve ongoing global labor rights abuses in its supply chains by demonstrating that a large investor community is interested in engaging on these issues,” said **Dr. Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum**.

*Organizations endorsing the letter to Dole include:

Domini Social Investments LLC
Green America
Communication Workers of America
CREA: Center for Reflection, Education and Action
United Methodist Church
International Labor Rights Forum

The letter can be read online here: <http://www.laborrights.org/freedom-at-work/resources/12165>

The International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide. For more information, please visit www.LaborRights.org.

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