

INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM

****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

October 20, 2008

Contact:

Bama Athreya, ILRF, (202) 701-3051

Eva Seidelman, ILRF (202) 347-4100, ext. 105

Victor Quesada or Omar Salazar,

ASEPROLA, Costa Rica, 011 (506) 285 1344, direccion@aseprola.org

Analea Escresa, EILER, The Philippines, alescresa@yahoo.com

New Report Shows the Cost of the Global Pineapple Industry to Workers and Communities

A new report by the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) shows how **global food corporations fail to respect human rights, public health and the environment in their supply chains**. The report demonstrates how pineapple workers and their communities in two of the largest pineapple producing nations, Costa Rica and the Philippines, have faced erosion of wages and benefits even as pineapple companies increase their profits. **Trade benefits awarded to these countries have not improved labor or environmental conditions**, though Dole is currently petitioning the U.S. Trade Representative for further trade benefits for its pineapple imports.

U.S.-based corporations, **Dole and Fresh Del Monte/Del Monte Foods**, compete as the world's largest exporters of fresh and processed pineapple, while labor and environmental abuses run rampant in their supply chains. Leading labor advocacy NGOs, ASEPROLA of Costa Rica and EILER of the Philippines, provided the majority of the research for the new report.

“Dole and Del Monte are exploiting workers to bring cheap pineapples to US consumers, and asking the US government to assist this exploitation. We need to hold these companies accountable to basic labor rights if they want to keep enjoying the benefits of trade deals,” said Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF).

Workers and communities in pineapple growing regions are frequently exposed to toxic agrochemicals while their communities have suffered from contaminated water, according to the report. Workers have said that working in the pineapple fields takes a toll on their health and wellbeing. They toil for long hours in the hot sun for low pay and suffer from the side effects of pesticide exposure, among other health and safety problems. Increased land use for pineapple cultivation has left more communities dependant on expensive food imports and has led to environmental degradation.

Few pineapple workers have been able to engage in collective bargaining to improve their wages, benefits and working conditions. Union membership in the pineapple

sector has declined drastically in the last decade both in the Philippines and Costa Rica due to successful company intimidation. The report shows how Dole has cut its regular workforce by over 59% percent in the Philippines. Contract labor or workers from “labor cooperatives” provide the majority of the labor for Dole’s pineapple production. Through this system, Dole has been able to weaken the union and evade its responsibilities to its workers. These workers are exempt from basic labor rights, do not receive social benefits and are paid less than regular workers through piece-rate or quota based pay systems.

Omar Salazar, the Executive Director of ASEPROLA stated, “When it comes to pineapples, we have two important goals: the workers who grow the pineapples in Costa Rica must be able to live a decent life and consumers should rest assured knowing that the pineapples they eat were produced under humane working conditions, without damaging people or nature.”

Dole is currently seeking to increase its investment in the Philippines by expanding production, and is requesting special trade benefits from the U.S. government to help fund the expansion. ILRF will be testifying at the hearing scheduled today (October 20, 2008), to request that before any additional special benefits are granted to fuel Dole’s expansion, U.S. government officials must require that Dole take measures to ensure that pineapple workers enjoy their internationally recognized rights and decent working conditions.

Click here to read the full report:

http://www.laborrights.org/files/ILRF_pineapplereport.pdf

Click here to read ILRF’s testimony at the USTR hearing:

<http://www.laborrights.org/creating-a-sweatfree-world/resources/1763>

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

###