



Labor and Human Rights

The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights reflect the expectation that businesses, including business associations such as growers' groups, should respect human rights, avoid complicity in abuses, and adequately remedy them if they occur. The guiding principles specify that businesses should exercise due diligence by creating a system to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for the impact of their activities on human rights.

US Labor Laws for Child Farmworkers

- Children as young as 12 can be hired for unlimited hours outside of school hours to work on a farm of any size with parental permission, and there is no minimum age for children to work on small farms.
- At 16, child farmworkers can do jobs deemed hazardous by the US Department of Labor. There are no additional restrictions on children's work in tobacco farming, despite the hazardous nature of the work.

Tobacco's Hidden Children

- Children working on tobacco farms in the United States are exposed to nicotine, toxic pesticides, and other dangers.
- Children interviewed by HRW reported the sudden onset of serious symptoms—including nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, headaches, dizziness, skin rashes, difficulty breathing, and irritation to their eyes and mouths—while working in fields of tobacco plants and in barns with dried tobacco leaves and tobacco dust. Many of these symptoms are consistent with acute nicotine poisoning.
- Child tobacco workers often labor 50 or 60 hours a week in extreme heat, use dangerous tools and machinery, lift heavy loads, and climb into the rafters of barns several stories tall, risking serious injuries and falls.
- Most children interviewed by HRW work typically between 10 and 12 hours per day, and sometimes up to 16 hours. Most employers allowed children two or three breaks per day, while some do not allow regular breaks even when children feel sick or working in high heat.