



## The Convention on the Rights of the Child says...

**CRC Article 32** – The right of children to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development."

*\*Also see UDHR Article 23*

## Key Questions

- What are the kinds of hazards that child farmworkers face?
- How are these children being denied some of their basic rights?
- How is the law being interpreted to allow children to work long hours in the fields?
- What needs to be changed in the legal code?
- What are some arguments against changing the laws that permit child farmworkers to keep their jobs?

## Facts and Figures

- Hundreds of thousands of children under age 18 are working in agriculture in the US, many of who are in California. Agricultural work is the most hazardous and grueling area of employment open to children in this country (HRW 2010).
- Some child farmworkers start working part-time at age 6 or 7 (HRW 2010).
- Children often work 10 or more hours a day. At the peak of the harvest they may work daylight to dusk, with few breaks, five to seven days a week (HRW 2010).
- Farmworker youth face persistent wage exploitation and fraud: one-third of those interviewed reported earnings that were significantly less than minimum wage. Some earned only two or three dollars an hour (HRW 2000).
- 50 percent of youth who regularly perform farm work drop out of school (HRW 2000).
- They are often exposed to dangerous pesticides, experience high rates of injury, and suffer fatal accidents 5 times the rate of other working youths (HRW 2000).

## Legislation & Conventions

**CARE Act: "The Children's Act for Responsible Employment"** (HR 3564, proposed in September 2007)

- Would require teenagers to be 16 to work in agriculture and at least 18 to perform hazardous work.
- **Latest Major Action: 11/16/2009** Referred to House subcommittee. Status: Referred to the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections. (U.S. Congressional Records)
- Increases maximum civil monetary penalties for child labor violations from \$11,000 to \$15,000 and imposes penalty of up to 5 years imprisonment for violations that lead to the death or injury of a child.
- CARE raises the labor standards for pesticide exposure to the levels currently enforced by the EPA.
- The CARE Act includes exceptions for children working on family farms, so small farmers won't lose the help of their limited workforce.
- The CARE Act would primarily affect children working on large commercial farms, who are often exposed to the longest hours, lowest wages, and most dangerous conditions.

## Tent Activities and Outfitting Ideas

- Display tools, gloves, and other equipment child farmworkers might have
- Have a bucket full of onions, oranges, or other produce with a sign asking “Could you lift this for 10 hours a day?”
- Mist people with water spray bottle to shock them and tell them they have been exposed to pesticides
- Put up a poster with the chemical breakdown of pesticides and warning label
- Simulate picking by having people gather small plastic tabs/pellets on the ground
- Create a timeline that wraps around the tent outlining a day in the life of a child farmworker

## Experience of Child Farmworkers

- They are routinely exposed to dangerous pesticides, sometimes working in fields still wet with poison, often given no opportunity to wash their hands before eating lunch.
- They risk heat exhaustion and dehydration, as their employers often fail to provide enough water.
- They suffer injuries from sharp knives, accidents with heavy equipment, and falls from ladders.
- Some work without even the most basic protective gear, including shoes or gloves.
- Lack of sleep because they are working too many hours interferes with their schooling and increases their chances of injury.
- Depression affects them more often than other minors, a reflection of the cumulative stresses and burdens in their young lives.

## Further Resources

[STF Child Farmworkers Advocacy Toolkit](#)

[Fields of Peril](#): Testimonials from youth on Child Labor in US Agriculture (HRW 2010)

[Fingers to the Bone](#): US Failure to Protect Children in Agriculture

[United States: Adopt Stronger Laws for Child Farmworkers \(2009\)](#)