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Child Labor in Agriculture: Some New Developments to an Ancient Problem

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ABSTRACT. Advocates for working children worldwide strive to eradicate the employment that minimizes a child's opportunities for education, good health and future potential. In agriculture, some promising developments in corporate social responsibility may generate partial solutions to child labor problems that have persisted for generations across world regions where food, fiber and fuel are produced. The purpose of this paper is to review these promising developments and propose recommendations in the context of a future of continued agricultural globalization and industrialization.

KEYWORDS. Agriculture, child labor, corporate social responsibility, globalization, international child labor, International Labour Organization

INTRODUCTION

As one who has long toiled in the field of child labor, first on a national level and then over the past 20 years internationally, I have noted that the domestic statistics, trends, issues, challenges, and responses are noticeably different from the global ones. Much of these differences are rooted in the culture, politics, economic development, and role of agricultural production from one country to another. It is no surprise that the variation between countries, regions, and even hemispheres is broad and deep.

It can be perceived that there *are* some characteristics of child laborers in agriculture that are common to most areas. Poverty, lack of access to effective education, lack of class/caste mobility, marginalization, emergency or routine internal migration, high levels of injury and death, and documented and undocumented immigration are some of the leading common hallmarks of exploitative child labor in agriculture. From windswept Manitoba to inland China, and the fertile crescent that stretches from Palestine through Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, young children can be found tilling, sowing, or harvesting the fields. Some are poor, uneducated, from relegated castes and ethnic or religious groups; some have had to flee political violence, natural disasters, or adverse climate conditions; others have voluntarily entered nearby nations with their families who chose to migrate to seek a more viable future.[1,2]

Worldwide, the youngest agricultural participants are those who accompany their parents or other relatives during agricultural activities. They may be slung on their mothers' backs while hoeing or sowing or may be toddling through the rows of onion or peanut plants.

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By the time these children are 4 or 5 years old, they can be weeding or harvesting. As young children, their lives in the fields generally do not involve power equipment, nor agrochemical applications. If all these conditions are met, and the child's ability to attend school is not impeded, these types of activities are legally considered a part of transmitting the culture of the elders to the child and are not considered by most people to be labor at all. As a mode by which a community's culture is disseminated to its children, these types of labor, by those of *any age* below 15, are not unlawful.

However, even these tasks certainly affect these children as they reach school age. When done during school hours or for excessive hours on school days, they interfere with the child's ability to do his/her homework or to get enough sleep so s/he can do well in school. As a result, many drop out from simple fatigue. Advocates for children worldwide strive to eradicate conditions that minimize a child's opportunities for education and lifelong well-being. In agriculture, some promising developments may generate some partial solutions to problems that have persisted for generations across world regions where food, fiber, and fuel are produced.

GLOBAL CHILD LABOR AND EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

What *is* the picture of global child labor? In the United States and other wealthy western countries, the use of residential child workers on most family or local subsistence farms does not typically result in truancy at school or create illiterate children who mature to adulthood with no other option than to continue on the family or another small local farm. However, this is certainly not the case in most of the world. Aside from the issue of child agriculture workers using hazardous equipment or machinery and being exposed to farm chemicals, the mere fact of working on the family or village farm places these children in an endless cycle of continued illiteracy and poverty. This is always the case in underdeveloped nations with few, if any, government services available, including adequate schooling, particularly in rural regions.

There are several definitions of child labor (Box 1).

BOX 1 International Labour Organisation

Child Labor is defined definitively by the ILO (Convention 138[5]) as the employment of children less than 18 years of age in hazardous occupations or less than 16 years old for other employments other than light work or less than 13 years old for light work. It is a common phenomenon in the United States and worldwide. Local or national laws and regulations, as well as other international standards, typically set restrictions on specific types of work that children of certain ages may conduct for limited hours under certain conditions and during certain hours of the day, which do not impede schooling. Illegal child labor occurs when an employer does not comply with these regulations. Further details on these restrictions can be found in ILO Recommendation 146.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)[3] defines as exploitative that child labor that involves the following:

- full-time work at too early an age;
- too many hours spent working;
- work that exerts undue physical, social or psychological stress;
- work and life on the streets in bad conditions;
- inadequate pay;
- too much responsibility;
- work that hampers access to education;
- work that undermines children's dignity and self-esteem, such as slavery or bonded labor and sexual exploitation; and
- work that is detrimental to full social and psychological development.

The definition of child labor that has gained the broadest global acceptance, however, and serves as the normative rule of international law is contained in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention 138 on Minimum Ages to Employment and Work. Generally, (unlawful) child labor involves the work of those under 18 years of age doing

hazardous work, or under 15 years of age doing any other work other than light work, or those under 13 years of age doing light work.

This definition was expanded by ILO Convention 182, which outlaws the worst forms of child labor for all those under age 18. These activities include prostitution, pornography, forced or compulsory labor, trafficked labor (particularly pertaining to drug trafficking), and the use of children in armed conflict.

To assess the relationship between child labor that violates the ILO Conventions and educational attainment, this article will take a brief look at some world regions that rely heavily upon child labor in agriculture.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the greatest incidence of children under the age of 15 engaged in economic activity (Table 1). It can be anticipated that, other than in some more developed sub-Saharan areas (e.g., South Africa, Botswana, and perhaps pockets of the Ivory Coast and Ghana), this confluence of the too-frequent use of children in the fields and their too-frequent absence from school enrollment, attendance, and graduation (Table 1) will continue to harshly limit their futures.

The child labor picture in Latin America is quite different (Table 1). The adult population is 91% literate, indicating that the cultural, political, and economic stimulus towards universal education has strong, long-lived roots. Societies that stress and provide for education are much less likely to harness their children to backbreaking or exploitative labor in agriculture or any other sector. The trend here is for the slow reduction of child labor in general, not only in agriculture (Table 1), as some of Latin America's largest economies (notably Brazil) experience rapid economic growth and progressive governance.

The last region we will assess is Asia and the Pacific (Table 1). All statistics here are exclusive of China, which did not participate in the surveys and studies undertaken in other countries. In absolute numbers, this region has the largest population of child laborers under 15 years of age—122.3 million. Not surprisingly, given the strong gender preference in this region, there is an acute differentiation in rates between boys and girls, with far fewer girls sent to either primary or secondary schooling. This brief, nonexhaustive view of the world's most active agricultural child labor areas introduces a closer examination of how the world has responded to reduce this activity through its global legal frameworks.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The ILO[4] is the labor arm of the United Nations (UN) that issues conventions and recommendations on a variety of labor topics, on a tripartite basis only, involving agreement by Employers, Labor, and National governments. Under its Conventions (a term equivalent to treaties in international law), the transmission of a local tribal, village, or familial culture through communal agricultural practices remains unregulated. In fact, non–power-tooled, agrochemical-free, family, or small-scale agricultural operations that produce food for local consumption and that do not regularly employ

TABLE 1. Comparison of Participation in Child Labor and Educational Attainment Across World Regions

	Region		
Factor	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America	Asia and the Pacific (excluding China)
5–14-years-olds who work	33%	10%	13%
Work in agriculture	60%	6%	8.8%
Attend Primary School	64%	92%	82.5%
Complete Primary School	64%	92%	79%
Attend Secondary School	28%	72%	50%
Complete Secondary School	75%	–	–
Percent of 15–24-years-old who are illiterate	25%	3%	11%

Note. –, information not available.

hired workers are not prohibited from employing indigenous child workers. ILO Convention 138,[5] which sets the minimum age for working in various industries or with certain worksite machinery or processes, and Recommendation No. 146, which adds detail to Convention 138, do not include in its regulation these types of worksites. This is a common exemption or exclusion under many national, state, and local labor laws as well. Agricultural work in the family or local context is most frequently permitted and only lightly regulated in the majority of jurisdictions. The only usual limits are those barring the use of hazardous machinery or processes by children (until 18 years old under the Convention) and the requirement that the children's labor not interrupt or deter their education (until the age that local law considers them no longer under their compulsory schooling provisions).

The other major international treaty on child labor is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).[6] Although none of its provisions are actual labor standards, Article 32 mentions children who "help out in a family farm . . ."[6] It states that their activities should be "safe and suited to their level of development and comply with national labour laws."[6] As previously mentioned, as well as in relevant ILO Conventions,[4] there is also the restriction that such work should not "jeopardize . . ." their "right to education."[6] However, none of the provisions of the CRC are actually enforceable in reference to child farmworkers. The CRC is a compact amongst "States Parties" (signatory nations at the governmental level) to progress towards compliance and report on that progress, but in no way grants any individual any rights against their government.[6] In addition, the United States and Somalia are the only nations who have not signed this treaty, so its scope of application and influence is unknown in these last "hold-out" countries.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEMS

Beyond these two esteemed UN-based international treaty organizations, the past 15 years has seen the explosive birth and continuing growth of private, voluntary, international standard setting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), referred to in the United States as nonprofits. Collectively they have reimagined and refueled the concept and application of corporate social responsibility (CSR), adding a significant new layer of labor accountability for every company to consider and, in many self-selecting cases, adopt (Box 2).

BOX 2

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is also termed corporate conscience, corporate citizenship, social performance, social accountability or sustainable responsible business. CSR is a form of voluntary corporate self-regulation which is integrated into its business model and management systems. CSR policy functions as an internalized, self-second party or third party-regulating mechanism whereby business ensures its active compliance with the spirit of the law, ethical standards, and international norms (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_social_responsibility).

The uniformly voluntary character of the NGO's CSR systems makes them no match for a funded, trained, dedicated, and uncorrupted governmental system of labor law inspectors, which is to be much desired but notably absent, worldwide. Consequently, it must be understood that all of these laudable but voluntary systems tend to attract three types of agricultural employers: (1) those who are the best actors in their communities, who have the commitment to create and retain high labor standards, which include an absolute ban on all child labor; (2) those whose desire to sell to a particular retailer (e.g., WalMart) or in a particular state, governmental division, or trade zone (e.g., The Netherlands, the Province of Tuscany, Italy, and the European Union) that requires they meet certain labor standards, most definitely including the elimination of child labor from their own operations; and (3) those agricultural producers, marketers, retailers, and brands who, for purposes of limiting corporate risk and establishing a distinctive image, find it in their self-interest to incorporate

the humane labor standards of these CSR systems, including various and stringent anti-child labor provisions, into their daily practices. To be candid, this leaves the vast majority of producers, marketers, retailers, and brands uninvolved with CSR to use or not use child labor as their location, beneficence, and ever-squeezing labor budgets dictate.

Each of these NGO's CSR initiatives has its own, although usually similar, set of standards based most often on ILO Conventions. Their compliance mechanisms vary widely. Some of the most prominent and successful global standards systems that are applicable to agricultural operations and farm-workers are Social Accountability International (SAI) and its widely utilized SA8000 standard,[7] the Sustainable Agricultural Network (SAN) of Rainforest Alliance,[8] which promotes and ensures the best environmental and sustainable agrarian practices, and Fairtrade International (FLO),[9] which grants the Fairtrade label to small farm producers for use on their products' packaging.

Social Accountability International

Social Accountability International's SA8000[7] is the oldest, most maturely developed, and widely accepted system of labor standards and their compliance (Table 2). The SA8000 Standard was designed and is maintained and operated through its pioneering, multistakeholder process. This method of group decision-making involves representatives of employers, trade associations, unions, workers, NGOs and advocates, government, academics, and other members of civil society reaching consensual agreement. It is globally verified by third-party auditors as engaged by those agricultural operations applying for SA8000 certification. SA8000 is particularly notable for its landmark management systems provisions. Some of its requirements are that an applying entity plan and implement SA8000 and then communicate its plan and implementation as devised by its management and worker representatives. It also requires that the applicant control its suppliers, subsuppliers, and subcontractors through multiple methods.

Although its standards apply to worker health and safety, discrimination, working hours, pay, forced or compulsory labor, freedom of association, and the right to collectively bargain, its first standard concerns child labor. This standard outlaws the use of child labor (defined generally as those less than 15 years of age), but it also mandates that a violating workplace implement a required child labor remediation plan. This plan must include that the employer provide those children who have lost their jobs with financial and other support to enable the child to stay in school until s/he ages out of any particular nation's compulsory school laws. If there is no school, or if teachers are lacking in any given community, the violating employer must pay for that as well. More innovative is the requirement that a nonconforming company that has removed a child laborer from its worksite must replace the removed child laborer with a member of his/her immediate family, if at all possible. If that proves impossible, the employer is encouraged to give the child's family a stipend until the child reaches the relevant lawful working age when s/he can be rehired. The policy is designed to address the family's desperate need for even the low wages paid to their children (and also to discourage them from letting their children out to work again) and also to institutionalize an employer's use of only adult labor.

There has been *no* child labor found at any audited facility in the 14 years of SA8000's application. It has been suggested that there is a compelling and replicable reason for this astonishing result. The standards' rigorous requirements tend to engage its applicants in a series of self-examinations and prescriptive workplace improvements *prior to* its initial third-party audit. If there was ever any child labor in an applicant's fields or on their ranch, it is likely that they have installed SA8000's management system to discover and eliminate their continued use before applying for SA8000 certification. This has proven to be a very effective tool in creating child labor-free worksites.

Sustainable Agricultural Network

The Sustainable Agricultural Network (SAN) of Rainforest Alliance[8] seeks to transform the

TABLE 2. Comparison of Key Elements of Nongovernmental Organizations Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives

	Social Accountability International SA 8000[7]	Sustainable Agriculture Network of Rainforest Alliance[8]	Fairtrade Labelling Organization International[9]
Organizational structure	Offices on 4 continents; voluntary multistakeholder standard	Consortium of hundreds of groups from myriad of countries	24 separate, largely independent organizations
Purpose	Promoting human rights at work, through social accountability	Seeks to transform environmental and social conditions through sustainable farming practices	Strives to empower small impoverished producers from the poorest countries to compete in world markets
Number of countries	57 countries	26 countries (mainly Central and South America)	24 member organizations
Child labor provisions	• Prohibits employment of those age <15 years • 8-hour work day • Combined not >10 hour day (school, work, and transportation)	• Prohibits employment of those age <15 years • Parental consent required for employment of those aged 15–17 years • Not >8 hours/day and 42 hours/week • Cannot interfere with educational opportunities • Cannot be assigned work that poses a health risk (e.g., strong physical exertion or handling/applying agrochemicals)	• Incorporates ILO convention requirements[4] • Requires producers to tackle root causes of child labor (help build schools, provide safe transport to school, etc.) • Family members' children <15 years old can work as long as: • work is not during school hours • children are supervised by parent(s) • limit to age-appropriate work • do not work long hours • do not work under dangerous or exploitive conditions
Remediation requirements	Yes	No	No

Note. ILO = International Labour Organization.

environmental and social conditions of agriculture through the implementation of sustainable farming practices (Table 2). The networked groups locally manage SAN's certifications, training their own auditors pursuant to international guidelines. Each crop, as well as cattle, has its own standard, which currently includes coffee, tea, cocoa, spices, flowers, oranges, banana, pineapple, sugarcane, and most recently, cattle production. These standards are essentially best practices, with local multiple stakeholders and larger consultative groups involved in their development. Food products that earn certification are entitled to bear Rainforest Alliance's distinctive frog label that lends a pronounced economic benefit for select products in some Western nations.

As to their child labor provisions, their *Critical Criterion* prohibit dairies, farms, or ranches to directly or indirectly employ those under age 15 years, either full or part time. What "critical criterion" means is that no farm can be certified as long as it violates any of its requirements. The criterion has no remediation requirements for dismissed child laborers or a delineated process by which to cure an audited finding of child labor (Table 2).

The SAN standards also address those 12 and 13 years of age working part time on family farms or on neighbor's farms in communities when such work is permitted by local law, and where these children have traditionally "helped" with agricultural work. The standard sets limits on their daily work hours, number of days per week worked, rest breaks, and night work prohibitions. Is also sets enumerated health and safety requirements, including training and supervisory requirements. This standard though is *not*

a critical criterion, and a farm, dairy, or ranch can pass an audit and have its crops or cattle certified while found in violation of no more than 50% of its elements.

SAN's experience with child labor includes finding children involved on the farms or ranches of a number of certification applicants, which resulted in the worksite not being certified. However, the thrust of SAN's approach is to work with farm employers towards their acceptance and use of SAN standards, rather than finding wholesale disqualifying nonconformances. Since SAN's auditors are internally hired, trained, and deployed, they most frequently work with nonconforming entities to bring them up to the acceptable level of SAN certification. Since SAN is a consumer label-granting agency, their applicants often have a strong commercial impetus to work with SAN's auditors and advisors.

Fairtrade International

Fairtrade International[9] (formerly known as the Fairtrade Labelling Organization) (FLO) resembles SAN's structure and purpose in many aspects (Table 2). Their standards are crop based, with 16 different food commodities able to apply for their Fairtrade label. These standards are aimed at enabling the world's small, impoverished producers from the least developed countries to compete in world markets. It does so through its labeling, with FLO programs providing training, guidance, and certification to facilitate producers' relationships with buyers. It helps secure buyers and sets purchase price levels that ensure that the smallholding producer receives a fair and sustainable price. These prices are a bit above competitive prices per weight and are paid to the producers by purchasers willing to pay that slightly above-market price. That extra payment is meant for the producers to use to strengthen their economic development and social compliance efforts. Purchasers are often willing to pay that extra amount to feature products with the Fairtrade mark on their store shelves, as this mark is desired by many customers in Europe and a fewer number in the United States. FLO has an independent but allied agency, known as FLO-CERT, that operates their certification system.

FLO's child labor provisions follow the modern format, incorporating the ILO Conventions' requirements that no one be allowed to work until they have aged out of their country's compulsory education laws, but in no event under the age of 15 (Table 2). However, FLO permits another measurement—that of "the best interests of the child"—to be used when the child is the head of the household. FLO's child labor standards also require that when there is a high likelihood of child labor on a farm, the employer include actions in their Fairtrade development plan that tackle[s] its root causes. It requires that in areas without schools, the producer should make an "effort to work with national authorities or other relevant partners to build schools or provide safe transportation for children to attend nearby schools." In cases of children accompanying their temporarily migrating farmworker families, if no school is available, "temporary school alternatives could be sought and provided."[9]

FLO has a remediation provision that states that if the producer has in the past hired those under age 15 (or those under age 18 in the prohibited types of dangerous or exploitative work), then it is her/his responsibility to "ensure that those children do not enter or are at risk of entering even worse forms of labour."[9] The details require that the producer develop a remediation policy and program "with expert partner organizations to ensure the immediate and continued protection of children."[9]

Like the other systems, each FLO-CERT applicant will be refused certification if they are found to employ child laborers. It is less clear how producers are meant to reapply, whether upon the submission of proof of conformance or just the submission of a remediation plan. The language on remediation is also less prescriptive than the other systems, permitting plans and efforts and partnerships to suffice, instead of hard requirements for producers to lend their financial support to ensuring these remediation alternatives. This is not surprising, since FLO, its constituent members, and standards are primarily aimed at "empowering" disadvantaged producers, not at ensuring the fair and humane

treatment of workers. One of their strongest core beliefs is that the[ir] empowerment of these producers, if successful, will result in their greater wealth, thereby robbing child labor from one of its most universal incubators—poverty.

There are no available data on the frequency with which child labor is found on FLO-CERT–inspected farms, as their system consists of 24 separate and largely independent FLO organizations, with FLO International merely playing a liaison and coordinating role. One cannot, therefore, acquire access to their auditors' child labor field experiences throughout their global areas. It can be hypothesized, however, that it is found frequently, as its farm members are, by design, small and underfinanced cultivators who would use family members, including their children and, in many cases, neighboring children, as laborers in order to survive. Therefore, it seems probable that those under age 18, and perhaps those under age 15, are engaged in dangerous or hazardous activities, processes, or machinery. If the producer relies solely on family labor, that would be an expected result. For the same reason, it could be anticipated that these producer-family children would miss school or not be enrolled at all. As mentioned above, since FLO is dedicated to establishing greater benefits to the underfinanced smallholder producer, it seems unlikely that they would be endlessly denied certification, even if found repeatedly in violation of FLO's child labor standards. These are, however, just hypotheses. They are not meant to state or imply that they are based upon facts or can be verified by FLO or any other group.

CORPORATE CODES OF CONDUCT

In tandem with the response from public policy, human rights, sustainability, and fair trade sectors has been an equal boom in the issuance and implementation of "Corporate Codes of Conduct" and "Suppliers' Social Responsibility Standards" by multinational companies and their trade associations, which include (and in some cases solely focus on) farmworkers' labor conditions.

Walmart, for example, has an extensive set of standards for suppliers of their agricultural produce, which they implement in part through their internally employed and trained inspectors.[10] GlobalG.A.P.[11] is an international alliance of supermarket chains and other food retailers that has created country-specific, voluntary self-regulating labor standards for compliance by its supplying farms.

Single-crop developments, such as the long-standing (2002) International Cocoa Initiative (ICI),[12] provides a different type of example. ICI includes the interests of many stakeholders in the cocoa supply chain, such as chocolate manufacturers, retailers and brands, unions, NGOs, and other members of civil society, in crafting responsive sustainable solutions to the significant and continued use of child labor in cocoa production in Ivory Coast and Ghana.

There is one major stimulus for these novel developments—globalization. The flow of agricultural goods from nation to nation has vastly increased. Unprocessed cocoa beans are as valuable to the economies of developing countries as computers or oil exports are to others. Newly utilized herbs, flowers, and plants from every corner of the globe are essential for our pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and food supplements. In most cases, it is agricultural supplies from the developing world in the Southern Hemisphere that are being imported for processing and sale in an endless array of products in the wealthier Northern Hemisphere. It is exactly those manufacturers and retailers in the North, who need to present to their customers the face of fair labor practices without the use of children, who are, in many cases, driving increased CSR efforts. Additionally, customers in the Western Hemisphere have come to demand and expect that their purchases not be tainted with the stench of young exploited coffee plantation workers or child cocoa bean harvesters.

Many huge multinational marketers (such as Nestlé or Godiva) and retailers (such as Whole Foods and Monoprix) have actively responded to this scrutiny of the labor conditions under which their products are made. Some have gone from passive codes of conduct efforts to the creation of internal monitoring mechanisms. Others have engaged external consultants to continually review their commodity purchasing criteria

and practices. Those wanting to create sector or brand distinction by offering products with verifiable public assurances of the decent labor practices that were used, join one or another of the corporate social responsibility systems previously discussed. Generally, they subject their facilities and those of their supplies and subsuppliers to regular and rigorous audits. Many of them offer distinctive labels, tags, or logos meant to communicate the products' social benefits to customers.

US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE GUIDELINES

A landmark effort is currently being undertaken by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create guidelines aimed at assisting US importers and retailers, as well as multinational food brands marketed in the United States, to ensure that their imported agricultural commodities, from allspice to zinnias, have been produced without the use of child labor. The Consultative Group to Eliminate the Use of Child Labor and Forced Labor in Agricultural Products' report dated December 15, 2010,[13] contains the recommendation of a broad and detailed system of capturing and using the information required for commercial users of imported agricultural goods to institutionalize their anti-child labor efforts. These are meant to provide the necessary tools for the voluntary adoption by food importers, retailers, and brands of the entire guideline system. It is anticipated, however, that it will be adopted widely and will soon become the industry standard for all food importers, retailers, and brands.

PRO-LABOR ADVOCACY

The past 15 years has seen the proliferation of international pro-labor advocacy NGOs and enhanced union focus on this area of child labor. They are active in every country, in every industry, are seeking and finding intolerable labor conditions, and are using their credibility to inform the media. On their own, or through their network of agents on the ground, using modern data-collecting techniques, such as open sourcing and anonymous Tweets, there are fewer and fewer outrageous labor sites that can go unreported for long. Unfortunately, there are still enough that operate under the radar, using children for long hours of agricultural work, thus minimizing their options for education, safety, and good health.

The role of international media-reported child labor scandals in stimulating all these new responses cannot be overstated. In the public's consciousness, and therefore in the CSR arena and governmental and NGO councils, child labor has been the "10 foot tail wagging the voluntary CSR Chihuahua" for both child and adult workers. There would likely be no world of voluntary corporate labor standards, no internally implemented corporate codes of conduct, and vastly fewer governmental or trade association agreements to remediate horrendous labor practices, were it not for the universally high visibility and loud denunciation of the use of child labor worldwide.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A review of worldwide child labor conditions generates facts and perspectives for a blueprint on how agricultural child labor reduction/elimination can proceed in the United States. Five recommendations for action are proposed.

1. Multistakeholder Groups Should Guide New Initiatives

Whether it is the 13 members of the USDA's Consultative Group,[13] FLO's Board of Directors,[9] the Board of the International Cocoa Initiative's Foundation (ICI),[12] or the Advisory Board of Social Accountability International,[7] these groups are all comprised of multiple stakeholders. These panels most frequently include some combination of employers, producers, trade association representatives, unions, nonunionized labor representatives, labor or human rights activists, academics, economists, trade experts, consultant practitioners, and national/international governmental personnel. It is best to aim for consensual decisions, or possibly postpone certain decisions, until a consensus emerges.

2. Industry Funding Should Support Long-Term Structures and Solutions

Another frequently found aspect of these international efforts is that they are long-term and in many cases meant to be permanent. Their goals cannot be attained by anything less than a fully sustained mechanism. Although the Consultative Group's mandate ends in 2012,[13] its guidelines are intended to be adopted and utilized by private industry in the foreseeable future. SAN,[8] FLO,[9] and SAI[7] are all NGOs that are organized and intended to last in and for the foreseeable future. The same is true for the ICI[12] and GlobalG.A.P.[11] In almost all situations industry funding is initially necessary to get the system and its governance structures up and running. In many cases, significant industry support must be maintained over the longer term, and added to many other sources of revenue, such as membership fees, training fees, label royalties, consultative services, contracts, and governmental/quasi-governmental, or foundation grants and loans.

3. Management Systems Must Be Comprehensive, Monitored, Evaluated, and Supported By Highest Level of Corporate Management

Elements of a full and effective management system must be included to ensure that once having met the goal (i.e., child labor reduction/eradication), an entity can sustain it. Organizations that have never addressed their child labor problems will need as much continuing guidance as possible on how to integrate this concern into their prime activities. That is one of the chief purposes of a well-crafted management system design. It is also necessary to have top management "buy-in" on both the goal and chosen system in order for either to be successfully implemented.

All of those active on this issue internationally have subjected the creation and implementation of their systems and guidelines to an enormous amount of expert and collegial input, feedback, and amendment. This is a painstaking process.

Child labor eradication/reduction must be thoroughly planned, and the plan reviewed again and again as unforeseen needs occur. It is equally true that when an entity decides to join an existing anti-child labor system, it must plan its implementation and conformance with the system in every detail.

There must be some form of impartial and credible verification to every system's requirements, whether through third-party audits, peer review, or some other mechanism. If the system is not credible, it will not be useful to any of the stakeholders, and its goals will not be successfully reached. Credibility relies not just on impartial verification methods but also on the transparency and integrity of the entity seeking to meet the goal of child labor reduction/elimination. A complaint management system within each entity must also be designed to allow the public's views, information, and criticisms to be heard and addressed.

4. Commercial Incentives Should Be Part of a Child Labor Elimination/Reduction Plan to Encourage Employers' Acceptance

It is most helpful if there is either some commercial benefit offered by a system's imprimatur or commercial benefit denied if that imprimatur is not given or withdrawn. For example, after FLO certification, the agency helps small producers find buyers and pays producers an extra "fairtrade bonus" amount for her/his crops to help the farmers' growth and to defray her/his developmental and labor costs in meeting the required elements of certification. As another example, cocoa that is not produced pursuant to ICI's requirements would not be bought by the major US manufacturers. Participating retailer members of GlobalG.A.P.[13] would not buy produce whose farm of origin has not been found to be compliant with GlobalG.A.P.'s Labor Standards, which are customized by the labor laws of each of a growing selection of countries that supply these retailers. Several grocery chains in the UK already offer nothing but SAN-certified bananas. All of these developments reflect consumers' more proactive stance on solely buying products made under ethical conditions.

5. Public Awareness of CSR Approaches Should Be Enhanced Among US Consumers

This last observation/recommendation is truly specific to the United States. The low level of consumer understanding about, and information on, ethical purchasing in general, and at their food markets in particular, has been a deterrent to greater industry-wide efforts to reduce or eradicate child labor in the United States. Most Americans could not tell you what "fairtrade" (as in "fairtrade oranges") means, let alone seek them out in the produce department. This conclusion can also be posed from the opposite perspective. Amongst Western economies, the United States has the lowest corporate-employer participation in *any* "clean labor" or CSR system. Sunkist oranges do not promote themselves as "fairtrade" because Sunkist has not purchased large amounts from FLO suppliers. W.K. Kellogg executives sit on no CSR board, have not monitored food product purchases for any social compliance, and have not educated its consumers to look for any CSR-certified seal on its packaging. In order for anti-child labor efforts to be effective, both the American consumer and the American manufacturer, retailer, and brand must wade deeply into the waters of ethical social sourcing and purchasing of agricultural products.

CONCLUSIONS

These recommendations are proposed in the light of global trends in agricultural production and marketing. Promising developments based upon CSR principles and shared values are influencing practices amongst many employers, though most are not in the United States. Fortunately, in worldwide production, positive changes are not only removing children from hazardous agricultural worksites, but in some cases are supporting options for their attainment of an education and a better future.

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