

## **Response to The New York Times' Story Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the US**

On February 25, 2023, The New York Times published a story titled Alone and Exploited, Migrant Children Work Brutal Jobs Across the US. This story examines, through first-hand accounts, the harsh reality many unaccompanied migrants, some as young as 13, face coming across the US border in search of economic opportunity. Ben & Jerry's is mentioned in this article, which includes discussion of the dairy supply chain in our home state of Vermont.

We are deeply concerned by the claims made in this story, and do not tolerate any suppliers who are not adhering to the law. Let us be extremely clear: Ben & Jerry's stands in strong opposition to child labor. We have a long history of standing for justice and equity, and using our business to improve the lives and livelihoods of those we serve and work with. These beliefs do not stop at our company's supply chain.

It is an established fact that the dairy industry comes with profound social and environmental challenges. It is with this understanding that we, over the lifetime of the company, have sought to implement innovative solutions on dairy farms that promote thriving livelihoods for farmers and farmworkers, support animal welfare, and mitigate the negative environmental impacts of dairy farming.

It is for these reasons that in 2017 Ben & Jerry's was the first business to sign on to [Milk with Dignity](#), an independent farmworker-led human rights program for advancing dignified working conditions on dairy farms. While we were the first to adopt this worker-driven, third-party audited, first-of-its-kind program, we are regrettably still the only participating company. The Milk with Dignity Standards Council vigorously enforces all labor laws to ensure that there is no unlawful child labor on Milk with Dignity farms. If violations are found, the Milk with Dignity Standards Council swiftly works with farms to address the issue, and if violations are not corrected, the farm is suspended from the program. The Milk with Dignity Standards Council ensures that farmworkers are fairly compensated for their labor and have adequate breaks and time off, paid sick days, safe working conditions, fair housing, a wage increase supported by dairy premiums, and the ability to safely report complaints if needed. The progressive impacts of the Milk with Dignity program are detailed in [their annual report](#).

Migrant Justice, a grassroots non-profit organization founded and led by dairy workers, and the creators of the Milk with Dignity Program, has shared the following statement about their mission and our participation in their program:

As dairy workers, we know better than anyone the bad conditions and abuses of our rights that can happen on farms. We created the Milk with Dignity Program to define for ourselves what dignified treatment looks like and to make that dream a reality. Through Milk with Dignity, we have won protections that no other dairy workers have – education on our rights, a 24 hour hotline, and audits of farms – making sure that workers have the power to denounce violations of our rights and get support to stop those abuses.

Ben & Jerry's is the first company to join the Milk with Dignity Program. We are proud to work with them to improve the lives of farmworkers. We want all dairy companies to follow their leadership and join Milk with Dignity to bring a new day for human rights in the dairy industry.

We take the claims made by The New York Times seriously. If ongoing monitoring programs or farmworker hotlines identify incidents of child labor on the farms that flow into the dairy suppliers we purchase from, we will take decisive action in conjunction with our suppliers and the Milk with Dignity Standards Council.

While Milk with Dignity currently covers a majority of our dairy supply, we recognize that there is more work to be done across our supply chain, and the dairy industry at large. To improve outcomes for farmworkers across the country and build a stronger food system for all, we, along with Migrant Justice, urge other companies and suppliers to adopt the Milk with Dignity program. For more information on Migrant Justice and their Milk with Dignity program, visit [migrantjustice.net](https://migrantjustice.net). To learn more about Ben & Jerry's values and our sourcing practices, follow [this link](#).

<https://www.benjerry.com/whats-new/2023/03/nyt-story-response>