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Hershey Dominates US Market, but Lags Behind Competitors in Avoiding Forced Labor, Trafficking and Child Labor

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Source: ILRF, Global Exchange, Green America and Oasis USA

» [Read the report online here](#) ^[1]

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Groups Say That Hershey's All-American Image Masks "Bitter Truth" of Abysmal Track Record; The Hershey Company's first ever Corporate Social Responsibility fails to address the elephant in the room: forced and child labor

WASHINGTON, D.C. – September 13, 2010 – As fall returns in North America, the lunch boxes and Halloween candy bags of America's children will be filled with Hershey Bars, Hershey's Kisses, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and other confections of the Hershey Company. But what most American parents don't realize is that "halfway across the globe, there is a dark side to Hershey. In West Africa, where Hershey sources much of its cocoa, the scene is one of child labor, trafficking and forced labor," according to a major new report from Global Exchange, Green America, the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) and Oasis USA.

Titled "[Time to Raise the Bar: The Real Corporate Social Responsibility for the Hershey Company](#) ^[1]," the report notes that Hershey dominates 42.5 percent of the U.S. chocolate market, even though it lags every major competitor in terms of programs instituted to ensure sustainability in their cocoa purchasing. Chocolate companies that do better include, Cadbury/Kraft, Mars and Nestle, according to the report. Hershey's own CSR report, issued today, fails to provide any evidence that Hershey is making progress in addressing these issues.

As the Time to Raise the Bar report notes: "The largest global chocolate companies are increasingly purchasing cocoa that is certified to meet certain labor, social and environmental standards. Hershey stands out as a laggard in terms of its supply chain responsibility practices."

"Hershey has been hiding too long behind its image as America's chocolate company and a responsible corporate citizen," says Green America Fair Trade Coordinator Elizabeth O'Connell. "It's time for Hershey to raise the bar and ensure that abusive child labor and forced labor are not in their cocoa."

"It is time for Hershey to ensure that worker rights are protected - from bean to bar - in the production of its chocolate," says Tim Newman, Campaigns Director of the International Labor Rights Forum. "Our sweet treats should not come at the expense of children in West Africa or workers around the world."

"Children continue to suffer in slavery as Hersheys' profits soar," says Oasis USA Executive Director Paul Hong-Lange. "Hershey CAN and must do its part to end human trafficking on cocoa farms in West Africa,"

"Hershey demonstrates a commitment to children in the US by funding the Milton Hershey School," says Global Exchange Fair Trade Director Adrienne Fitch-Frankel. "They can demonstrate the same concern for children and families in African communities that farm their cocoa by using Fair Trade Certified cocoa for their chocolates,"

PROBLEMS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE REPORT

- **Sourcing of chocolate.** Much of Hershey's cocoa is sourced from West Africa, a region plagued by forced labor, human trafficking and abusive child labor. Hershey does not have a system in place to ensure that its cocoa purchases from this region are not tainted by labor rights abuses.
- **Lack of transparency.** Hershey continuously refuses to identify its cocoa suppliers; therefore it is impossible to verify that its chocolate was not made under conditions involving the worst forms of child labor.
- **Greenwashing instead of needed reforms.** Hershey points to various charitable donations to children in the US and programs in West Africa as examples of its social responsibility, yet has no policies in place to ensure that the cocoa used in its products is not produced with forced, trafficked, or child labor.
- **No third-party certification.** A reputable, independent, third-party certification can ensure that a process is in place to identify and remediate labor rights abuses. For cocoa, the strongest certification system currently available is Fair Trade. Unlike competitors like Cadbury and Green & Blacks, Hershey's has not embraced Fair Trade certification. Only one of Hershey's chocolate bars, from the Dagoba line it acquired in 2006, has Fair Trade Certified cocoa. Hershey lags behind its competitors when it comes to purchasing cocoa that has been certified to meet certain labor, social, and environmental standards. Several major chocolate companies offer Fair Trade options now, and many smaller companies have been 100% Fair Trade for years.

WHAT HERSHEY NEEDS TO DO

Agreement to take immediate action to eliminate forced and child labor in violation of international human

rights standards on forced, child and trafficked labor from Hershey's cocoa supply chain through

- 1) tracing its supply chain to the farm level
- 2) sourcing from farmers who can show through independent verification that they do not use forced labor or child labor
- 3) asking suppliers to end such practices throughout their supply chain

Commitment to sourcing 100% Fair Trade Certified cocoa beans by 2012 for at least one of its top five selling chocolate bars that prominently displays the Hershey name.

Additionally, a commitment to making at least one additional top five selling bar 100% Fair Trade Certified every two years thereafter, so that Hershey's top five selling cocoa bars will all be 100% Fair Trade Certified within 10 years.

Finally, a commitment that the majority of Hershey's cocoa across all products will be Fair Trade Certified by 2022.

As the report points out: "Achieving these outcomes will mean that Hershey's and its stockholders are no longer profiting from forced labor and child labor. Hershey's will be meeting contemporary 21st century corporate standards for transparency. Today, Hershey's is a laggard when it comes to corporate social responsibility concerning its core products. Committing to and accomplishing these outcomes would elevate Hershey's to the ranks of exemplary leadership within the community of American corporations."

The report is available at the following websites:

Global Exchange: <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/raisethebarhersh...> [2]

Green America: <http://www.greenamerica.org/pdf/HersheyReport.pdf> [3]

International Labor Rights Forum: <http://laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/...> [4]

Oasis USA: http://www.oasisusa.org/index.php/projects/the_chocolate_campaign/ [5]

ABOUT THE GROUPS

GLOBAL EXCHANGE is a membership-based international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice around the world.

www.GlobalExchange.org [6]

GREEN AMERICA is a non-profit organization whose mission is to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society.

www.GreenAmericaToday.org [7]

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR RIGHTS FORUM is an advocacy organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers worldwide.

www.LaborRights.org [8]

OASIS USA is a non-profit organization committed to developing communities where everyone is included, making a contribution, and reaching their God-given potential.

www.OasisUSA.org [9]

Source URL: <http://laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/news/12397>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/12395>
- [2] <http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/raisethebarhershey.html>
- [3] <http://www.greenamerica.org/pdf/HersheyReport.pdf>
- [4] <http://laborrights.org/stop-child-forced-labor/cocoa-campaign/resources/12395>
- [5] http://www.oasisusa.org/index.php/projects/the_chocolate_campaign/
- [6] <http://www.GlobalExchange.org>
- [7] <http://www.GreenAmericaToday.org>
- [8] <http://www.LaborRights.org>
- [9] <http://www.OasisUSA.org>