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Economic Impact: Tomatoes in Florida Report 1

Executive Summary

This report is the first of a series of reports that will be issued as part of the Tomato Project to assess the purchasing power of the wages and benefits paid by each of the growers supplying tomatoes to McDonald's. In this Tomato Project, CREA is examining all the data relevant to understanding the wages earnable by worker-employees working for each of these growers during 2005 and, as the harvesting season progresses, throughout 2006. Each report will provide the results for specific growers, recognizing that the wages and benefits provided by the growers vary.

In addition, in this report, CREA also provides its assessment of and recommendations for two sets of standards that have been created to address agricultural supply chain issues: S.A.F.E. and the McDonald's Growers Standards.

Any Executive Summary runs the risk of not being able to include the core data that is the basis for the results presented in any report. To really understand the methodology we used as well as the results we present, readers are asked to read the *entire report*, including examining the photos, in order to understand the complexities of the tomato supply chain that brings tomatoes from seed to field and finally to each of us, the consumers. We are all part of the system.

The report includes the following:

1. An explanation of the tomato supply chain
2. An assessment of the wages and benefits provided to worker-employees of Grower #1, including the wages for harvesting, field work, etc. Calculations for the slowest (lowest earning) and fastest (highest earning) workers are provided.
3. In addition, an assessment of the purchasing power provided to workers by the housing (plus electricity and water costs).
4. The results of the independent interviews conducted with workers by our colleague from Central America.
5. An assessment of the S.A.F.E. (Socially Accountable Farm Employers) Standards and recommendations for strengthening these standards.
6. An assessment of the McDonald's Growers Standards and recommendations for strengthening these standards.
7. The results of our assessment of the purchasing power accruing to worker-employees by the wage and benefit policies and practices for Grower #1. This assessment provides the data for concluding that Grower #1 provides wages and benefits equal to or exceeding the financial benefit of the proposed "penny a pound" increase.

Readers are reminded that there will be a separate analysis of the policies and practices of each grower.

If there are any questions, please contact Dr. Ruth Rosenbaum at CREA.

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