A few weeks ago I finally heard a vital truth announced on national headlines: “It’s inexcusable that those people that pick our fruits and vegetables … don’t get the right working conditions.” Unfortunately, the occasion for Gov. Schwarzenegger’s statement was yet another needless farm worker death due to heat exhaustion -- this time a 17 year old young woman pruning grapes in California.

As Teresa Niedda, Director of the Farm Worker Health and Safety Institute wrote recently, “Farm workers are treated like second-class citizens living in third world conditions within one of the richest countries in the world. They have fewer rights and legal protections than workers in any other industry.”

Health, environmental and animal rights activists urge us to know more about how and where our food is grown. At National Farm Worker Ministry we urge you to know more about the people who labor to produce our food. We hope you will hear their words deeply, reflect on all they give us, and commit yourself to joining them as they seek justice.

Get in touch with us - we have lots of ways for you to be involved!
the workers who feed us are....

young
Damaris started working in the broccoli and lettuce fields when she was 13 years old... During the five months of the peak season, she usually worked 14 hours a day... She was exposed to pesticide drift and fell ill, yet was required to keep working. — Human Rights Watch report

Merciful God, there is poison in the fields. Child workers in the fields. Parents in the fields. Death in the fields. As Woody Guthrie prayed so many years ago, "Is this the best way we can grow our big orchards? Is this the best way we can grow our good fruit?" O God, we pray give us courage, determination, rage, in seeking an end to poisons in the fields, for all our sakes. Amen.

dignified
"Your dusty face and your sad brown eyes give beauty, life, and grace to the crops in the fields that you water with your tears in your battle to survive...."
— Maria Elena Lucas, farmworker & poet

God of wisdom, it is so easy to believe that the rich and powerful have the solutions to all our problems, and that the poor and powerless have nothing to contribute. Open our blind eyes, deaf ears and ignorant hearts to seek and announce the truth of farm workers' lives so they may be treated with the dignity they deserve. Amen.

generous
"Farm workers work very hard. They pick tons of fruits & vegetables every day to feed the nation. ... The people who feed us should earn enough so that they can nourish their own bodies. — Dolores Huerta, co-founder, UFW

Gracious God, the farm worker fills our hunger for fresh and beautiful food and we are nourished and blessed. Help us in turn to nourish and bless the farm worker by joining with their struggle for just treatment in the fields. Amen.

calling on us
"Farm workers give us much more than they ask for. [Yet because] they have been excluded from basic legal protections... they can be abused and exploited." — Dr. Ed Zuroweste, Chambersburg, PA

Gentle God, give us humility to hear the truth of farm workers' lives and courage to speak that truth to the power of governments & corporations that don't want to hear. Keep us mindful of those who pay the price when we fall silent. Give us faith to keep speaking and creativity in joining our voice with others -- for "power concedes nothing without a demand." (Frederick Douglass) Amen.