

## Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ) & the Boycott of Sakuma Bros. Farms berries

A resource of the National Farm Worker Ministry 7/2015



*Familias Unidas por La Justicia (FUJ) called a boycott of Sakuma Bros. Farm berries in 2013; in 2014 adding boycotts of Driscoll's and Häagen-Dazs strawberry ice cream, purchasers of the majority of Sakuma berries. In July 2015, the Board of National Farm Worker Ministry met in Washington with the farm workers of FUJ and then passed a resolution endorsing the boycott. NFWM requested a meeting with Sakuma Bros. management, but Sakuma declined a meeting.*



### The Farm Workers

Familias Unidas por la Justicia, an independent farm worker union (recognized by the WA State Labor Council AFL-CIO) based in Burlington, Washington, formed in the summer of 2013 in response to racial harassment, wage theft, and other unjust labor practices faced by farm workers at the Sakuma Bros. Farms in the Skagit valley. The union has more than 300 members, many of whom have worked for Sakuma Bros. for years. They are predominately from indigenous towns in Oaxaca and southern Mexico.



### Sakuma Bros. Farm & Driscoll's

Sakuma Bros. is a family-owned business including Sakuma Bros. Farms, Inc., Sakuma Bros. Processing and Norcal Nursery, (in CA). Sakuma has the ability to control their product from seed to market, making the firm more profitable than its local competitors who sell their berries to Sakuma processing. It is one of the largest berry growers in WA with annual sales of \$6.1 million. Driscoll's, the largest supplier of fresh berries in the world, confirmed Sakuma Bros. is a source of their berries and admitted to providing "dedicated resources" to support Sakuma Bros., Inc.

## What You Can Do to Support Familias Unidas por la Justicia (FUJ)!

- **Honor the Boycott** of Sakuma berries, Driscoll's, & Häagen-Dazs strawberry ice cream until Sakuma Bros. recognizes FUJ and negotiates a fair & legally binding contract.
- **Use the Store Manager letter** to tell your local grocery store that you support farm workers and will not buy the boycotted products. Ask the store manager to inform their corporate office that a customer wants those products off their shelves.
- **Sign & send to NFWM, by mail** (PO Box 10645, Raleigh, NC 27605) or email ([nfwm@nfwm.org](mailto:nfwm@nfwm.org)), **the attached postcards** to Sakuma Bros., Driscoll's, & Häagen-Dazs telling them you support Familias Unidas; and to FUJ so the farm workers know that they have your support. NFWM will mail your postcards on.
- **Spread the word** of FUJ's labor dispute with Sakuma Bros. and the boycott!
- Visit [www.boycottsakumaberries.com/](http://www.boycottsakumaberries.com/) to **sign the on-line petition to Driscoll's & find out how you can start a boycott committee in your community.**

*If the store manager letter or postcards page are not attached to this message, visit [www.nfwm.org/familiasunidasporlajusticia](http://www.nfwm.org/familiasunidasporlajusticia) to download and print them.*

• • • **AND PLEASE EMAIL [nfwm@nfwm](mailto:nfwm@nfwm) AND LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION** • • •

## Why Boycott?

Farm workers at Sakuma Bros Farm are fighting for an end to systemic wage theft, hostile working conditions and unattainable production standards (workers are paid piece rate by the pound picked). On July 11th 2013 they went out on strike when a worker, Frederico Lopez, was fired for asking for a higher wage when production standards were so high that even the fastest workers were making less than minimum wage.

The strike led to the formation of a union - Familias Unidas por la Justicia - and formal negotiations with the company management to resolve the workers' grievances. However, after all agreements reached in those negotiations were broken by Sakuma management and security guards were sent into the labor camps to intimidate the families living there, the workers voted to endorse a public boycott of Sakuma Bros berries until the company signs a union contract that ensures that agreements reached are legally binding.

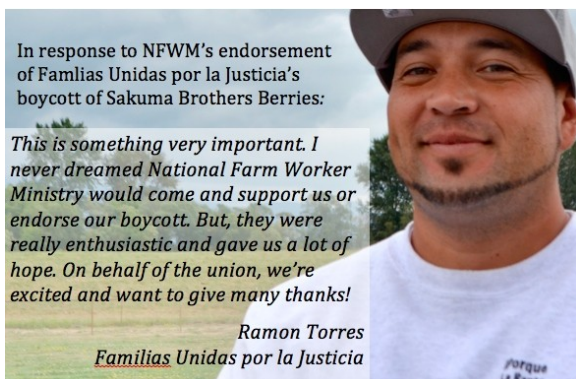
- Sakuma Bros. had an injunction placed on them by Skagit Valley courts to rehire union members the company attempted to not rehire and settled a class action lawsuit by paying workers \$500,000 in back wages.
- The sub-standard housing which Sakuma Bros. provided to workers for years was only improved in 2013 when the company applied to bring in H2A guestworkers and H2A regulations required improvements.
- In 2014, Sakuma Bros. applied for 438 H2A guestworker visas in an attempt to deny employment to the workers who had gone on strike, even though 460 workers were ready and willing to return to work. Under H2A regulations, employers must demonstrate that there are not adequate numbers of US workers. The U.S. Dept. of Labor did not approve Sakuma's H2A application.
- Familias Unidas won another victory when in July 2015 the Washington Supreme Court unanimously ruled that piece-rate farm workers must be paid separately for rest breaks.
- Sakuma Bros. is publically stating that they are paying some workers as much as \$27/hr and that every worker is earning at least \$10/hr. However, the farm workers who are currently employed have walked out of the fields in protest several days July 2015 because production standards are so high that hardly anyone can make any bonus pay and those workers struggling to keep up are often earning less than \$10 dollars/ hr and being threatened with being fired.

**It appears to us that Sakuma Bros. has only addressed poor conditions when it is required to by the courts or by the government.**

**Now it is time for consumers to have our say!**

**PLEASE SUPPORT THE FARM WORKERS OF FAMILIAS UNIDAS POR LA JUSTICIA!**

**BOYCOTT SAKUMA! BOYCOTT DRISCOLL'S BERRIES!**



**National Farm Worker Ministry (NFWM)** is a faith based organization committed to justice for and empowerment of farm workers. NFWM educates, equips and mobilizes member organizations and other faith communities, groups and individuals to support farm worker led efforts to improve their living and working conditions.

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