

MILK WITH DIGNITY **PROGRAM**

The Milk with Dignity Program brings together farmworkers, farmers, buyers and consumers to secure dignified working conditions in dairy supply chains. The Program enlists the resources of food industry leaders to provide a premium for milk to participating farmers who agree to work towards compliance with the labor standards in the Milk with Dignity (MD) Code of Conduct. The premium helps offset farms' costs of compliance with the Code and rewards farms that comply.

History of the Milk with Dignity Program

Consolidation and globalization in the food industry allow powerful retail brands to leverage their volume purchasing power and benefit from low prices. This creates downward pressure on farmers' incomes and, ultimately, on farmworkers' wages and working conditions.

After years of working to improve labor and housing conditions on a farm-by-farm basis, Vermont dairy workers' search for an effective systemic change led them to Florida. Thankfully, they found a solution there. A series of farmworker-to-farmworker exchanges with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) opened Vermont workers' eyes to the transformative power of the Worker Driven Social Responsibility (WSR) model that fuels the CIW's highly acclaimed Fair Food Program (FFP).

Migrant Justice's in-depth collaborative process with the CIW and FFP helped create the Milk with Dignity (MD) Program. Migrant Justice is now inviting corporate buyers of milk to take the lead in the dairy industry by sourcing their dairy through the MD Program, which ensures workers' rights are secured in supply chains!

In the MD Program, compliance on the farm is achieved through a unique partnership and problem-solving approach among farmers, farmworkers, and



Photo by Caleb Kenna

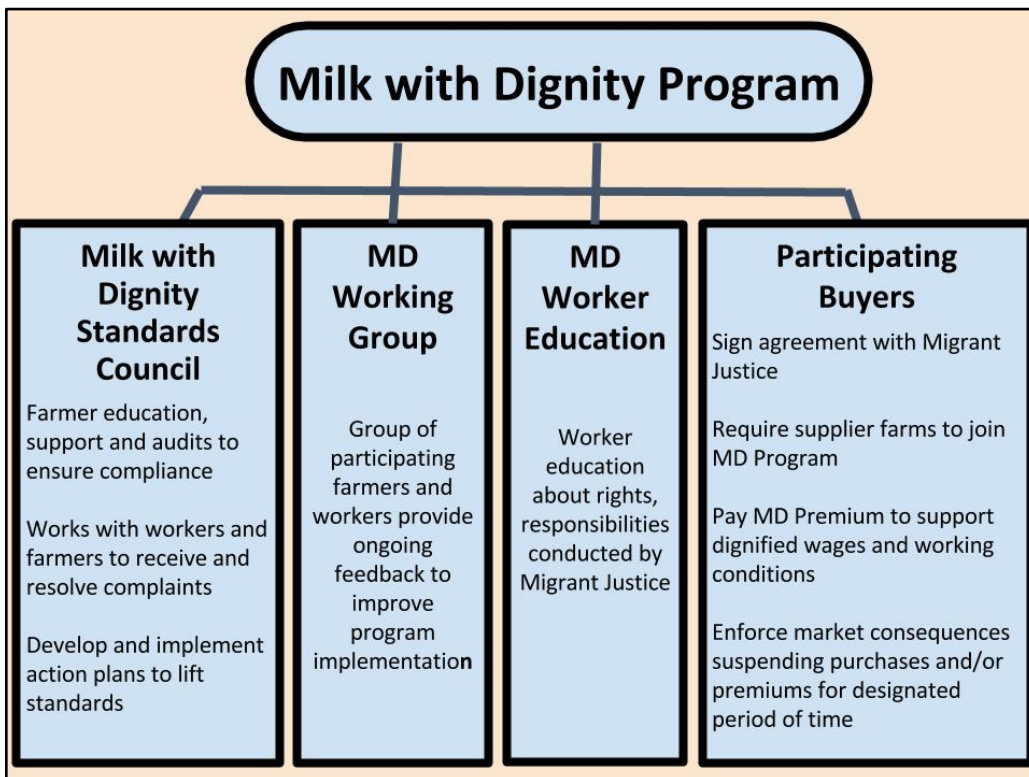
the Milk with Dignity Standards Council (MDSC). The MDSC is an independent non-profit whose sole function is to work with farmers and farmworkers to understand, participate in, and achieve compliance with labor standards in the Code.

Participating Farmers are paid a premium for agreeing to:

- ☑ Work with MDSC and workers to comply with the MD Code of Conduct's labor standards;
- ☑ Support program education to ensure workers understand their rights and responsibilities;
- ☑ Allow workers to access MDSC support line and work with MDSC to resolve complaints;
- ☑ Collaborate with MDSC's annual Code compliance audit, complaint investigations, and implementation of corrective action plans (CAPs) to make steady progress to come into compliance.

In addition, the Program creates a new mechanism to facilitate and improve communication and creative problem solving between workers and farmers that serves to improve the overall farm operations and proactively identify and mitigate risks such as injuries and accidents.

Operationally, the MD Program is rooted in the MD Code of Conduct. The Code is created by the very workers whose rights it is intended to protect and is further improved on through an intensive feedback loop from participating farmworkers and farmers in the MD Working Group. The Code sets standards for working conditions relating to wages, health and safety, housing, schedule and rest, non-retaliation, non-discrimination, and other labor conditions.



The MD Program is designed to encourage and support farmer compliance seeking to build participatory, fair, and dignified workplaces characterized by mutual respect, improved communication and collaborative problem solving.

For more information on the MDSC:

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For more information on the MD Program:

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