

FAQ

Milk with Dignity Campaign

Hannaford Supermarket

What is Milk with Dignity?

The Milk with Dignity Program was created by Migrant Justice, a human rights organization founded and led by immigrant farmworkers in Vermont. Milk with Dignity enlists the resources and market power of companies to improve labor and housing conditions on dairy farms. Companies pay a premium for milk from participating farms that agree to comply with standards in the Program's Code of Conduct.

Why is Milk with Dignity needed?

Low milk prices and industry consolidation create downward economic pressure on dairy farms, leading to low wages and systemic rights abuses. Though conditions vary from farm to farm, the dairy industry relies on a primarily immigrant labor force working extremely long hours for low pay, in dangerous conditions, with few labor protections, and living in substandard housing. Milk with Dignity advances a systemic solution to a systemic problem by enlisting companies to require dignified labor and housing conditions from suppliers and to pay a premium to help raise wages and improve conditions. For more information, see migrantjustice.net/milk-with-dignity-campaign

How does Milk with Dignity work?

Companies commit to prioritize sourcing milk from farms that enroll in the Program. Those farms, in turn, receive a premium from the company to reward and facilitate compliance. Migrant Justice provides comprehensive education to farmers and farmworkers on their rights and responsibilities under the Program. Compliance is monitored by an independent third party organization -- the Milk with Dignity Standards Council (MDSC) -- that staffs a 24-hour hotline and conducts annual audits. The MDSC works with farmers and workers to resolve complaints and achieve compliance with the Code of Conduct. For more information, see migrantjustice.net/MDProgram

What has been the impact of the Program?

Ben & Jerry's became the first company to join the Milk with Dignity Program by signing an agreement with Migrant Justice on October 3rd, 2017. The Program launched in 2018 and currently covers nearly 70 farms in Vermont and New York, totaling 100% of Ben & Jerry's northeast dairy volume purchases. Over 250 farmworkers -- both immigrant and U.S.-born -- are protected by the Code of Conduct and have seen improvements in wages, safety protections, and housing. For more information, see: migrantjustice.net/testimonials

What is “Worker-Driven Social Responsibility”?

Milk with Dignity is a “worker-driven social responsibility” (WSR) program. WSR starts with the premise that corporations must take responsibility for the labor conditions in their supply chains. And the only way to authentically and effectively ensure human rights is by following the lead of workers themselves, implementing worker-defined standards backed by strong enforcement mechanisms. Milk with Dignity is adapted from the globally-renowned Fair Food Program, a pioneering WSR initiative created by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. For more information, see: wsr-network.org

What about the impact on farmers?

The Milk with Dignity Program provides a unique and essential resource to farmers to improve labor and housing conditions and to raise industry standards. Premiums from participating companies cover worker bonuses, wage raises, new protective equipment, housing improvements, and other costs associated with compliance. The MDSC supports communication between employers and workers, creating a transparent and collaborative process. For more information, see milkwithdignity.org/farmers

Why are you inviting Hannaford to join the Program?

With nearly 200 stores, Hannaford is one of the largest supermarket chains in the Northeast and an important buyer of dairy products in the region. Hannaford’s brand milk is processed and bottled at plants around the northeast at plants operated by H.P. Hood, including at a facility in Barre, VT. These plants source from farms where workers are suffering severe human rights abuses, working in dangerous conditions for below minimum wage.

Hannaford is owned by Ahold Delhaize, a Dutch multinational corporation with \$75 billion in global sales, mostly from U.S. supermarket chains like Hannaford. Through its Responsible Retailing Program, Ahold has committed to sourcing practices that respect human rights, and several supermarket brands owned by Ahold Delhaize have joined the Fair Food Program, committing to source their tomatoes in accordance with workers’ human rights. We invite Hannaford to join Ben & Jerry’s in taking responsibility for the human rights of the workers behind their dairy products.