

100 MILLION

FREE. SAFE. EDUCATED. UNITED STATES

CHILD LABOR IN TOBACCO

WHAT WE BELIEVE

All children should be **free, safe, and educated!** Our **100 Million campaign youth activists** stand in solidarity with young people toiling on these tobacco farms. **Join us** in calling on Congress to put an end to child labor in the US!

[Click here for our agriculture social media toolkit](#)

[Learn more about child labor in agriculture](#)

JOIN US.

"I PLEDGE TO DO ALL I CAN TO END CHILD LABOR, ENSURE EDUCATION FOR ALL AND ERADICATE VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN SO THAT EVERY YOUNG PERSON IS SAFE, FREE AND EDUCATED."

TAKE THE PLEDGE.

DID YOU KNOW?

In the U.S., you have to be **21 years old to buy cigarettes**, but only **12 years old to work on a tobacco farm** with parental consent.

Two-thirds of children in tobacco fields experienced nicotine poisoning. The lower limits of this exposure is the equivalent of smoking **more than one full pack of cigarettes in one day**. Children working in tobacco face a higher risk of cancer, reproductive health issues, mood disorders, and permanent neurological damage.

Globally, 1.3 million children under **14** were estimated to be working in tobacco fields. In 2014 the United States Government Accountability Office estimated **524,000 children under 17 are working in US farms** according to the most recent numbers.

The top five states producing the most tobacco are North Carolina, Kentucky, Georgia, Tennessee, and Virginia. **Agricultural employment is either exempted from or is not listed among child labor laws in 17 states.**

GET INVOLVED!

Send a **letter** to your elected officials, or send us your info **here** and we'll take care of it for you.

Sign up for our newsletter to receive social media toolkits, campaign updates, and more ways to take action!

Show the film, **The Price of Free**, a look at Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi's efforts to free every child from slavery, at your school or community.

Message your friends and family to take the pledge to ensure every child is free, safe, and educated at **100million.org**.



FREE. SAFE. EDUCATED.
UNITED STATES

KEY FACTS ABOUT CHILD LABOR IN THE U.S. TOBACCO INDUSTRY

100 MILLION CAMPAIGN

UNITED STATES FACTS

In 2019, the United States produced more than 468 million pounds of tobacco.

Currently, there are no provisions in U.S. labor laws that ban children from working in agricultural fields and agricultural employment is either exempted from or is not listed among the covered sectors in the child labor laws of 17 states including North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia. In agriculture, children as young as the age of 12 can legally work on a tobacco farm with parental permission.

In 2014, the United States Government Accountability Office estimated 524,000 children under 17 are working in US farms according to the most recent numbers.

As many child workers in the industry come from vulnerable financial and legal positions and are overwhelmingly from migrant families, their labor is ripe for exploitation and abuse. As agricultural workers are not entitled to overtime pay protections under the Fair Labor Standards Act, this results in young people working far more hours with little pay.

GLOBAL FACTS

Tobacco production is a multi-billion-dollar global industry including multinational companies Phillip Morris International, British American Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Altria (formerly known as Phillip Morris USA), the China National Tobacco Corporation, and the Imperial Tobacco Group. The global tobacco industry is estimated to be worth USD \$888 billion as of 2018.

Globally, there are approximately 160 million child laborers of which 79 million are involved in hazardous work and 112 million work in agriculture. Across the world, more children work in agriculture than in any other sector of the economy, and the majority of full-time working children are in the commercial agriculture sector.

In 2011, The WHO Framework Convention On Tobacco Control stated that 1.3 million children under the age of 14 from top tobacco producing countries, not including the U.S., were estimated to be working in tobacco fields.

EDUCATION

Federal child labor provisions do not require minors to obtain work permits and do not limit the number of hours or times of day (other than outside of school hours) that young farmworkers may legally work. Children as young as 12 can work unlimited hours on a tobacco farm as long as it does not interfere with school and they have parental permission.

In Virginia, children 16 years of age and older are able to work within school hours. Although most other fields of work are regulated for children, with federal law assuring an 18 hr/week limit, agricultural jobs have no such legal protection or regulations, leaving its child workers especially vulnerable.

WWW.100MILLION.ORG

HEALTH IMPACTS

Every year, approximately 115 children die in an agricultural-related incident, and nearly 12,000 experience a non-fatal injury. Children are more likely to be vulnerable to occupational injuries due to lack of developmental maturity and experience.

In tobacco fields, children are often expected to work 50-60 hours a week, in the heat, with few breaks and are given little to no protective gear. According to the Human Rights Watch, some children worked in the fields with bare feet or with socks when the mud was high. Many employers do not provide children with drinking water, toilets, hand-washing facilities or shade.

Prolonged exposure to the tobacco plants and silos has led these children to face debilitating symptoms from difficulty breathing to nausea and migraines. Nearly 75% of children interviewed by the Human Rights Watch reported feeling sick and facing some form of acute health issues due to their exposure to tobacco fields and chemical products on the farm. Moreover, a majority of children stated that they received no training on safety, protective equipment, or how to minimize exposure to harmful chemicals.

The lower limit of possible exposure for nicotine poisoning is the equivalent of smoking more than one full pack of cigarettes in one day. Symptoms include shortness of breath, dizziness, nausea, and vomiting, the prime symptoms of nicotine poisoning. Nicotine is water soluble and thus absorbed through the skin, negatively impacting children who come in contact.

REFERENCES

“Child Labor in Global Tobacco Production: A Human Rights Approach to an Enduring Dilemma.” Health and Human Rights Journal, August 7, 2018. <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2018/08/child-labor-in-global-tobacco-production-a-human-rights-approach-to-an-enduring-dilemma/>.

“Economic Trends in Tobacco.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 23, 2019. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/economics/econ_facts/index.htm.

“State Child Labor Laws Applicable to Agricultural Employment.” U.S. Department of Labor. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/child-labor/agriculture>.

Child Labor Bulletin 102: Child Labor Requirements in Agricultural Occupations Under the Fair Labor Standards Act. U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division. 2016.

Davis, Shelley; Leonard, James B. The Ones the Law Forgot: Children Working in Agriculture. National Agricultural Safety Database. 2000

ILO, Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_797515.pdf

Otañez, Marty, and Stanton A Glantz. “Social Responsibility in Tobacco Production? Tobacco Companies' Use of Green Supply Chains to Obscure the Real Costs of Tobacco Farming.” U.S. National Library of Medicine, November 2011. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3155738/>.

Ramchandani, Story by Ariel. “The Overlooked Children Working America’s Tobacco Fields.” The Atlantic, Atlantic Media Company, 22 June 2018, www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/06/child-labor-tobacco/562964/.

Teens of the Tobacco Fields Child Labor in United States Tobacco Farming. Human Rights Watch. 2015.

United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Requester <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-26.pdf>

Date:

Dear, [name of representative]

Tobacco is widely considered a dangerous and hazardous product, so much so that on December 20, 2019, federal law was changed to make it illegal for those under the age of 21 to purchase tobacco. I am grateful that the laws were changed to protect young people from smoking, yet there is another issue that must be addressed. Children as young as 12 years old are legally allowed to work on tobacco fields in the US and face greater exposure to nicotine than most smokers. When I learned this, I could not believe the irony of it!

I am a member of the 100 Million campaign, which was founded by Nobel Peace Laureate and child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi, to end child labor and stand up for children's rights around the globe. The US 100 Million campaign, led by passionate, intelligent and motivated young people, has chosen to focus on child labor in the tobacco industry in our country.

In 2014, the United States Government Accountability Office estimated 524,000 children under 17 are working in US farms according to the most recent numbers. The Child Labor Coalition estimates that two out of three children who work in the fields drop out of school. Children working in these conditions face serious health issues, with two-thirds of children in tobacco fields experiencing nicotine poisoning – exposure that is equivalent to smoking more than one pack of cigarettes in one day.

I am asking you to join me in this fight. We have the ability to put an end to children, as young as 10 or 12 years old, working in the US tobacco industry. These violations of basic human rights can be stopped with your support of legislation in the US Congress that addresses this issue. It is our collective responsibility to protect all children, regardless of who they are and where they live.

By standing up against child labor in the US, you will join other Members of Congress in standing up for the rights of children who deserve to be free, safe and educated.

We look forward to your leadership on this issue.

Yours sincerely,

Name:

School:

City, State, Zip:

For more information on the 100 Million campaign, please visit: www.100million.org.