

What's This About A CHOCOLATE Petition?

Loving the neighbour who makes the products on your supermarket shelves is difficult. We hear of sweatshops and other poor labour practices, but to follow this principle when you go shopping is complex.

With cocoa and chocolate products, however, the story is not complex. There is an **agreed problem** of child labour and at least **one recognised solution**. What is needed now is a **deadline** for stopping child labour in the cocoa industry.

1. There is an **agreed problem**.

The cocoa world changed in 2001 when the 'Harkin-Engel protocol' was signed which acknowledged that inappropriate child labour exists in the cocoa industry. This protocol was witnessed by the presidents of M&M/Mars, Hershey and Nestle and since then no one has tried to retract or say that the problem has been solved.

The problem that led to the use of children in cocoa production was a lowering of farm incomes in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire in the late 1990s. These West African farmers provide approximately 70% of the world's cocoa and many of them still live below the poverty line of \$2 a day and still use cheap child labour on their farms.

It is estimated that there are over 200,000 children involved in hard and difficult labour in cocoa farms in West Africa. Children perform tasks such as applying pesticides, using machetes to harvest cocoa pods and carry heavy sacks of pods. There are also estimated to be over 10,000 children in slavery on the cocoa farms. They receive no medical care and no education.

Tulane University in Louisiana is the monitor of the progress of the Harkin- Engel protocol. In their 2009 report they noted that an agreed way to measure a 'worst form of child labour' has not been agreed on. Poor progress indeed in eight years.

World Vision's "Don't Trade Lives" campaign asked Australian Chocolate manufacturers to commit to a date to end child exploitation in West African cocoa production by December 2008. Their open reply letter was 'light on detail and heavy in rhetoric' according to Tim Costello.

2. There is at least one recognised **solution**. 'Fairtrade' certification.

Cadbury has chosen to use the Fairtrade certification for their Australian Dairy Milk chocolate from Easter 2010. The Fairtrade certification means that farmers will receive a guaranteed fair minimum price for cocoa and that 'no child or forced labour can occur.' Cadbury says that over 40,000 Ghanian farmers and their families will immediately benefit from this. Nestle also has announced on its UK website that Kit Kat will be Fairtrade certified in the UK from January 2010.

3. So why ask the Australian Government to legislate for a **deadline** to end the 'worst forms of child labour' in the cocoa/ chocolate industry?

The voluntary commitment in the Harkin-Engel protocol was that by July 1, 2005 the cocoa industry would have implemented "industry-wide standards of public certification ... that cocoa beans and their derivative products would be grown and/or processed without any of the worst forms of child labor." In 2010 the cocoa industry is still discussing how to measure child labour while a method to eradicate the worst forms of it already exists.

Let our Government say "enough!" Set a date by which all cocoa/chocolate products in Australia are certified free from the worst forms of child labour.

For more information and to download the petition go to cocoapetition.org.au

mail your completed petition pages to St Paul's Anglican Church PO Box 1226 Castle Hill 1765 Australia

and YES, they have to be hardcopies!!!