

Stop squeezing out the orange juice workers

Brussels, 13 October 2016 – In the name of the 24 507 people who asked to “stop the squeeze out and make orange juice fair”, members of the international SUPPLY CHA!NGE campaign [1] today carried out a stunt in front of the Hilton Hotel in Antwerp, Belgium. Caged in a massive trolley they attracted the attention of 100s of passers-by to the annual Juice Summit, where all the main players in the worlds’ juice industry meet.

Alice Bordaçarre, decent work officer at ActionAid France-Peuples Solidaires said: *“Workers and unions have not been invited to the Juice Summit so we brought their voice here. Some people gathered in this hotel today lead companies that spray highly lethal pesticides in the plantations where unprotected workers are harvesting oranges that will be sold as juice in Europe. These pesticides are banned in the EU, but the EU imports them through these oranges.”*

After rolling out a red carpet covered with pictures of Brazilian workers in front of the entrance, the activists from Belgium, France and Germany put up a stop sign, with the order “Don’t step on worker’s rights!”

Sandra Dusch Silva, SUPPLY CHA!NGE coordinator and researcher for the Christian Initiative Romero said: *“Workers are harvesting approximately 1.5 tons of oranges for an income of 10 Euro per day. The fruits are collected by leaning simple ladders against the orange trees. The workers climb up and down these unstable ladders carrying up to 30 kg of oranges under great time pressure.”*

Two thirds of all orange juice is sold as a supermarket own-brand product. Supermarkets in Europe are directly or indirectly influencing the conditions of millions of workers worldwide and contributing to environmental devastation. The campaigners are putting pressure on European supermarkets to take responsibility and stop this destruction.

Eva Izquierdo, project office from the European Environmental Bureau in Brussels added: *“Brazil is home to over 3,000 bee species but the massive use of pesticides in Brazilian orange plantations has a tremendous negative effect on these insects. In the municipality of Rio Claro-SP alone, the loss of ten thousand hives of bees because of insecticide use has been reported between 2008 and 2010. This is worrying as bees are essential for most food production.”*

One of the organisers of the Juice Summit came out to listen to the demands of the campaigners and to take the petition to bring it in the conference. In the SUPPLY CHA!NGE project, civil society organisations from across Europe and the Global South try to make supermarket store brands fairer and more sustainable. Campaigners highlight that while supermarkets gain influence in the global supply chain, they are failing to use their power to prevent human rights violations and to reduce environmental damage along the supply chains.

Notes to editors:

- (1) The SUPPLY CHA!NGE project brings together 29 civil society organisations for three years and receives financial support from the European Commission. This action is one small part of a larger campaign in which most major supermarkets in Europe are targeted. More info: <http://supplychainge.org/the-project-eu/?L=eu>
- (2) The report that forms the basis of the orange juice campaign is called “Stop the squeeze out!” and was launched this spring. Find it here: <http://supplychainge.org/orange-juice/?L=eu>

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