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**Nominated for the Public Eye Global Award 2008**

**by the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research (EILER):**

## **Dole Philippines Inc.**

Headquarters:	Polomolok, Philippines
Sector:	Production of fresh and canned pineapple
Turnover / Loss:	\$293 million / \$32.5 million (2005)
CEO:	Danko Stambuk
Owned by:	Dole Foods Inc. (California, USA)
Employees:	5,200 permanent / 12,000 temporary (2006)

### **In Brief**

*Who isn't familiar with the sun-ripened pineapples flaunting the auspicious Dole logo? While the pineapples are sweet and healthy, the work on the plantations and in the packing plants is bitter and dangerous. Dole Philippines is one of the most important multinationals active on the Pacific archipelago. The subsidiary of market-leader Dole Foods operates lucrative pineapple plantations on more than 12,000 hectares of some of the country's most fertile soil. In Polomolok, it also runs a large canning and packing plant. The workers see nothing of the firm's millions in profits. Many workers, particularly women, are only temporarily hired, earn starvation wages, and receive no company benefits. With its systematic outsourcing of jobs, Dole is sneaking away from its social responsibilities. Furthermore, the firm with the sunny logo is taking drastic measures against the unionists who recently exposed unsafe waste disposal in the canning plant.*

### **A corporation behaves badly**

Dole Philippines is a subsidiary of Dole Foods, the world's best-selling producer of fruit and vegetable products. A large part of Dole's pineapple products come from the Philippines. In its current CSR report, Dole writes that it treats its employees with respect, pays them living wages, and does not permit child labor. The reality on the plantations looks less cheerful; the workers are not directly employed by Dole, but rather by so-called "labor cooperatives." Since the early 1990s, Dole systematically reduced the number of permanent employees from 8,000 to 5,000, and correspondingly increased temporary employees from zero to over 12,000. Especially women find themselves with precarious terms of employment. For their work they receive starvation wages – on average US \$4 per day, which is half of what the Philippine government defines as the poverty level. In comparison, a Dole plantation worker in Hawaii earns US \$5 an hour.

Dole Philippines currently grows pineapples on over 12,000 hectares of land. Many small farmers have leased their land to Dole and now work for Dole as temporary employees. They don't retain even a small piece of land to grow their own vegetables. At the same time, they must farm such large areas that they often cannot manage without help from their children. Many children don't go to school. Not only are children denied their right to education, but they also suffer from health problems due to the strenuous work and toxic chemicals such as Endosulfan that are used on the plantations. Dole recently announced that it would stop using the particularly toxic Paraquat, but it still uses other chemicals that have long been forbidden in western countries. The workers and residents of the Polomolok facility also suffer from health problems due to contact with chemicals and the inhalation of toxic fumes. Lung ailments, dizziness and breathing difficulties are the most common consequences. Furthermore, Dole routes waste water into nearby rivers.

The workers have no legal means to redress these abuses. Dole Philippines takes drastic action against local unions and fires employees who are active in the union. The local union secretary was temporarily suspended from his work at Dole after he uncovered, in March 2007, that the Polomolok facility violates health and safety standards.

### **Consequences**

The global market demands lower prices and higher returns. The increased profits at Dole are achieved on the backs of the weakest: the plantation workers in the Philippines. Although their employment contracts are pitiful, Dole boasts its SA8000 certification for social working conditions. The outsourcing of jobs makes this schizophrenic strategy possible. SA8000 is Dole's sweet disguise: The workers in the South pay bitterly for the exotic pineapples in the supermarket.

### **Current Situation and Demands**

Dole has put the union under enormous pressure. The above-mentioned union secretary is still suspended. EILER and the union continue to fight for living wages, company benefits and safety standards for all workers of the plantations and facilities of Dole Philippines, and against the contamination of local rivers.

#### **Further Information:**

- [www.eilerinc.org/features/2007/07/harvest-broken-promises](http://www.eilerinc.org/features/2007/07/harvest-broken-promises)
- [dole.message101.com/press/media/csp.pdf](http://dole.message101.com/press/media/csp.pdf) (23MB)

PS: According to Philippine legend, the pineapple is a beautiful princess who was transformed into a sweet fruit through a spell. A thousand eyes on its rind and thorny tips on its crown protected it. No one could pick the fruit, until Dole tried to harvest it. Now blood flows from Dole's hands, pricked by countless thorns and observed by a thousand eyes.