

UK rights group reveals child labor behind chocolate giant Ferrero Rocher



London, December 24 (RHC)-- The hazelnuts used by the chocolate company Ferrero in its products, including the famous Ferrero Rocher, and sold across the world for Christmas, may have been harvested by children working in the agricultural sector in Turkey, human rights campaigners denounced in London.

The Guardian reported that interviews with child workers filmed by United Kingdom campaigning group WeMove Europe and the Centre for Child Rights, show children allegedly as young as 11, saying they are forced to work for up to 12 hours a day in the Black Sea region.

The child workers in the video claim they work without contracts or adequate health and safety equipment. An 11-year-old girl said: "We walk to the field at 6:30 am and start working at seven or 7:30 am. We work- until 6:00 pm. This is the second time I have come to work here."

Another 12-year-old girl said she has been picking hazelnuts for two years. "If I don't allow the children to work, [their families] leave because other farmers will hire them. When we let them work, we have guilty consciences. At the end of the day, it is a child," one farmer interviewed said.

Farmers who testified claim they sell their hazelnuts to Ferrero through intermediary companies. Many children working as seasonal agricultural workers do not attend the beginning of the school year and, in 2018 for instance, some 67 children and teens died while working, according to the campaign group the Centre for Child Rights in Turkey.

Child labor is widespread in Turkey, where the most recent public records show that in 2012 there were approximately 900,000 children working in different industries, including farming. Of these, 11,300 were aged between six and 14.

In a statement to The Guardian, Ferrero acknowledged the problem of child labor in Turkey's agricultural sector, and said that they are "determined to prevent and eliminate child labor all along our supply chains."

The company has said it is seeking to make its hazelnuts 100 percent traceable by 2020, claiming it currently traces about the 49 percent of it. Yet, an investigation held in September by the BBC found that Ferrero is unable to verify and confirm that all the hazelnuts are child-labor-free.

"The root of the problem is the price Ferrero pays for its hazelnuts," said Giulio Carini, senior campaigner at WeMove Europe. "Our campaign asks Ferrero to support a fair price for hazelnuts in Turkey to ensure workers get a living wage income and eliminate child labor throughout its supply chain."

Founded in 1946, Ferrero is the third-largest company in the global chocolate confectionery market. It employs more than 30,000 people and its sales have doubled over the past decade.

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