

HONOREE: THE JUSTICE AT TAYLOR FARMS CAMPAIGN

The workers at the Taylor Farms facility in Tracy are strong—stronger than they ever thought they'd need to be when they first sought union representation back in March 2014.

These 900 food processing workers cut, wash and package salads and other products for the largest supplier of fresh-cut produce in the country. They knew, back then, that all too many of them were working for temp agencies—many for as long as 10 years. Their pay was far less than what the unionized workers at Taylor Farms' sister facility in Salinas earned.

In the course of seeking union representation with Teamsters Local 601, the workers in Tracy learned how truly dangerous their working conditions were, and worked with the Teamsters and Worksafe to make the fight for safety and health an integral part of their union organizing drive.

Worksafe was proud to partner with Working Partnerships USA, the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley, the law firm of Beeson Tayer & Bodine, and the Teamsters to train the Taylor Farms workers about their rights to a safe and healthy workplace, and to guide and support the process of preparing and filing Cal/OSHA complaints. Ultimately, Cal/OSHA issued numerous citations against the company and the temp agencies. The violations included failing to provide adequate training, not installing controls on equipment, neither implementing a safety program nor providing adequate record-keeping, and blocking emergency exits.

Then, in October 2015, a toxic stew of chemicals spilled at the plant, sending 20 workers to the hospital with symptoms ranging from nosebleeds to vomiting and fainting. This was the second such incident in three years. While the previous incident resulted in a \$1,685 fine, in April Cal/OSHA levied dozens more citations and more than \$95,000 in fines against Taylor Farms and its temp agencies.



The union election held in May 2014 had been so fraught with irregularities that the National Labor Relations Board impounded the ballots. The workers allege that the company fired, harassed, and punished workers for supporting the union. Twenty months later, in December 2015, the Board determined that the company had committed so many unfair labor practices that a fair election was unlikely to be possible and they issued a bargaining order, meaning that Taylor Farms had to bargain with Teamsters Local 601.

The company is continuing to stall and not bargain in good faith. The workers continue to stand strong. In April 2016, they held a demonstration at Chipotle Mexican Grill in San Francisco to hold Taylor Farms, that restaurant's largest supplier, accountable for its health and safety violations. The Taylor Farms workers fear for their health, and they fear retaliation if they speak up about worker safety. But they continue to advocate for safe and healthy working conditions and for their right to union representation.

Worksafe stands proudly with the Taylor Farms workers. Their struggle for dignity on the job is leading the way for food processing and temp workers in the Central Valley, and throughout California and the nation.