



**Farm
Labor
Organizing
Committee, AFL-CIO**

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**U.S. TOBACCO FARM WORKERS RETURN TO BAT AGM FOR FOURTH YEAR
NO PROGRESS MADE ENDING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN TOBACCO FIELDS**

LONDON, UK- Baldemar Velasquez, the President of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, a union that represents tobacco farm workers in North Carolina and the American South, told stockholders at the BAT AGM, held today at the Milton Court Concert Hall, Guild Hall School of Music and Drama, to stop human rights abuses in U.S. tobacco fields.

“I’m back again, and this will be my fourth year,” Velasquez said. “I’ll keep coming back until BAT decides to really do something about the conditions farm workers endure in North Carolina tobacco fields.”

BAT is the major shareholder (42.02%) and an important customer of Reynolds American Inc., the largest tobacco company in North Carolina. Farms in North Carolina produce tobacco that is sold by Reynolds American Tobacco to BAT. According to Velasquez, BAT plays an important role in setting acceptable standards for tobacco farm workers in its global supply chain.

Speaking to BAT Chairman Richard Burrows and the gathered stockholders, Velasquez said, “Each year I attend the BAT AGM , and each year I come to report that we have seen absolutely no progress in resolving human rights abuses in three areas of your supply chain which I have year after year brought to your attention. First, Reynolds American continues to rely on human trafficking for their labor supply on contract farms. Second, there has been no end to the squalid conditions found in the labor camps on these contract farms. And third, there has been no end to the state of fear of retaliation for workers who complain about these abuses.”

A Report to British American Shareholders on the condition of North Carolina Tobacco Farmworkers was issued by FLOC, Unite the Union, TUC and the IUF and distributed by Unite the Union delegates to BAT shareholders as they entered Guild Hall. The Report, based on the July 2014 Fact Finding Visit made by Parliamentarians Ian Lavery and Jim Sheridan to the tobacco fields of North Carolina, details the dire circumstances of tobacco farm workers in North Carolina.

Velasquez believes that only when migrant farm workers have a recognized worker organization can their complaints about their working and living conditions be effectively addressed. He wants BAT to tell Reynolds that it should take their Company’s commitments to human rights seriously and sign an agreement guaranteeing freedom of association on their contract farms.

Velasquez has made a proposal to Reynolds American to codify these guarantees in a written understanding with FLOC. Velasquez wants BAT, as an important customer and major owner of Reynolds American, to publicly support FLOC's efforts to ensure the right of tobacco farm workers to Freedom of Association. After nearly three years of discussions Reynolds American has yet to sign an agreement with FLOC.

FLOC President Velasquez asked BAT Chairman Burrows: "How many more years will it take for BAT's Human Rights Commitments to be realized in American tobacco fields where BAT sources tobacco?"

At the British American Tobacco annual meeting in London, President Baldemar Velasquez was accompanied by speakers from the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility, and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

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