



Office for
Human Life
Catholic Diocese
of Cleveland

Everyday Products, Hidden Stories

An invitation to see the human person behind the product

“Every economic decision has a moral consequence”

~Pope Benedict XVI (*Caritas in Veritate*, no.37)

Every person has inviolable dignity because each is created in the image of God. That dignity must shape not only what we believe, but also how we participate in the economic life.

Where Risks May Appear:

Clothing & Textiles

- Cotton, garments and textiles
- Footwear and leather goods

Food & Agriculture

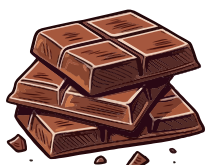
- Cocoa, coffee, tea and sugarcane
- Rice, palm oil and tobacco
- Fish and seafood

Technology & Energy

- Electronics
- Lithium-ion batteries
- Solar products and upstream mineral inputs

Jewelry & Raw Materials

- Gold, diamonds and gems
- Colbalt and tin



Chocolate

Cocoa

Child labor remains a significant concern in cocoa production, especially in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire



Palm Oil

Palm Fruit

Used in many foods, cosmetics, soaps and detergents; some source countries are linked to child or forced labor



Batteries

Colbalt

Rechargeable batteries may depend on colbalt connected to child labor in artisinal mining in the DRC.

Three Goods to Notice:



The Church *condemns disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than free and responsible persons.*

~*Gaudium et Spes*, no.27

What this List Means (and does not mean):

The U.S. Department of Labor identifies goods and source countries where there is reason to believe child labor or forced labor is used. The current list includes more than 200 goods from 80+ countries and areas. It does not mean every item in a category--or company selling it--is connected to exploitation.

Source & Important Note

Product examples are drawn from the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor (current list dated Sept. 5, 2024): dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods. The list identified goods and source countries and not individual companies, and does not establish that every product in a category was made with exploitative labor.

A Practical Catholic Response

“Respect, Protect, Love and Serve Life, Every Human Life!”

PRAY

Pray for children, workers and families affected by exploitation, and for the conversion of those who profit from it.

- Include exploited workers in family or parish prayer
- Offer one purchase or sacrifice for their protection.

LEARN

Look beyond a label. Learn where goods and their key ingredients or minerals come from.

- Consult the Department of Labor’s goods list.
- Learn what Fair Trade and other independent certifications do (*and do not*) mean.

SERVE

Support organizations that strengthen families, expand education and protect vulnerable children and workers.

- Choose 1 household staple to source more carefully.
- Invite a parish group or school to study one supply chain together.
- Volunteer and support anti-trafficking efforts in your community.

ADVOCATE

Encourage companies and public officials to protect workers, improve transparency and remedy abuses.

- Ask a retailer about sourcing and traceability.
- Support policies that confront forced labor and dangerous child labor.

Before You Buy, Ask

1

WHERE?

Where was this made, and where did its main ingredients or materials come from

2

HOW?

Does the company disclose suppliers, labor standards or independent audits?

3

WHAT NEXT?

Is there a credible, certified, traceable or longer-lasting alternative within reach?

Key Message:

Behind every product is a person. Responsible purchasing is not about achieving moral perfection; it is about growing in attention, solidarity and love, and then taking the next faithful step available to us.



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