

**Eighteen-Month Review of Implementation of  
Recommendations in the U.S. Department of Labor's  
Public Report of Review of Submission 2011-03 (Dominican Republic)  
April 22, 2015**

On September 27, 2013, the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) issued a public report in response to a submission filed under Chapter 16 (the Labor Chapter) of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). USDOL's Public Report of Review of Submission 2011-03 identified labor concerns in the sugar sector in the Dominican Republic and offered recommendations to the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) to address the report's findings and improve enforcement of Dominican labor laws in that sector. In the report, USDOL committed to engage with the GODR to address the identified concerns and to review any progress made to implement the recommendations at six months and again 12 months after publication. This statement continues such regular interval reviews.

Since publication of the report, the U.S. government (USG) has engaged at senior and technical levels with the GODR to address the concerns identified in the report. In addition to e-mail and phone communications, video conferences, and regular discussions with representatives of the three major companies of the Dominican sugar industry (DSI) and civil society, this engagement has included three USDOL delegation trips to the Dominican Republic during which the delegation also met directly with sugar sector workers to discuss labor rights and working conditions and any relevant recent changes. USDOL, the GODR, and the DSI are also engaged in preliminary discussions regarding the possibility of an independent assessment of child labor and forced labor in the sector.

During the March 2015 USDOL delegation trip, the Dominican Ministry of Labor (MOL) described recent efforts that, if fully implemented, would represent positive steps towards implementing some of the report's recommendations (available in full at <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/pdf/20130926DR.pdf>), including: providing a Creole interpreter to accompany labor inspectors on inspections in the sugar sector; training labor inspectors on certain best practices for labor inspections, such as interviewing workers outside the presence of management representatives and speaking with significant numbers of workers chosen by inspectors on each inspection; and conducting outreach campaigns to sugar sector workers to inform them of their labor rights. The MOL has committed to provide follow-up information that would allow for a clearer understanding of these advances.

Additionally, USDOL notes that the DSI has taken positive steps to address a number of the labor issues identified in the report, though the efforts and progress vary widely across companies. These steps by the DSI include: beginning to implement systems that would enable the companies to better record sugarcane cutters' hours of work and compensation due, which could facilitate compliance with Dominican labor laws concerning hours of work and the minimum wage; taking steps to ensure that workers are provided with free and adequate personal safety equipment and sufficient quantities of potable water; and in the case of two of the three major companies, having verifiable systems in place to ensure that workers receive a 36-hour weekly rest period each week and taking steps to provide workers with written work contracts.

Despite these advances, the USDOL delegation noted that a number of labor concerns identified in the report did not yet appear to have been addressed, including: visibly posting the minimum wage in the workplace; ensuring that all workers, including those employed in tasks other than cutting sugarcane, receive at least the minimum wage; and ensuring that workers receive government-declared paid holidays, unless they happen to coincide with the weekly day of rest.

The USG takes note of the efforts by the DSI to improve working conditions and respect for labor rights in the sector and remains committed to continued engagement and cooperation on these issues with the GODR and stakeholders. Over the next six months, USDOL, in cooperation with other USG agencies, will continue to monitor and assess progress towards addressing the labor concerns identified in the report and to consider whether further action is needed, including additional ways to provide support for such efforts.