



Hagens Berman: Consumers File Suit Against Nestle, Hershey's and Mars for Alleged Child Labor Used in Chocolate Production

Lawsuit states millions of consumers are duped into supporting slave labor

SAN FRANCISCO – Purchasers of chocolate from [Nestle](#), [The Hershey Co.](#) and [Mars Inc.](#) have filed three class-action lawsuits against the food companies for allegedly using child labor in the production of their best-selling chocolate candy, including Reese's Peanut Butter Cups®, Kit Kat®, Twix®, MilkyWay®, Butterfinger®, BabyRuth®, M&Ms® and many others, according to Hagens Berman.

The national class-action law firm filed its California class actions, stating that the three corporations regularly import cocoa beans from suppliers who use child labor, including trafficked and forced child labor. Specifically, Hershey's, Mars and Nestle import cocoa beans from plantations in the Ivory Coast, according to the complaints.

The lawsuits state that in violation of California law, Hershey's, Mars and Nestle do not disclose that their suppliers in the Ivory Coast rely on child laborers and instead continue to profit from the child labor that supplies the chocolate sold to American consumers.

From 2013 to 2014 more than 1.1 million children in the Ivory Coast were engaged in the most common Worst Forms of Child Labor as recognized by the United Nations, according to the suit, up from 791,181 children from 2008 to 2009. The children subjected to the forced labor allegedly used to make Mars, Hershey's and Nestle chocolate are victims of hazardous work such as that involving dangerous tools, transport of heavy loads and exposure to toxic substances and the compulsory labor of trafficked children.

The suits state that such children are trafficked from countries neighboring the Ivory Coast, sold to plantation owners by brokers and smugglers, and forced to work under conditions of physical violence without pay. According to the World Cocoa Foundation, 47 percent of the total U.S. imports of cocoa beans come from the Ivory Coast.

"The consumers reaching out to our firm have been outraged to learn that the candy they enjoy has a dark, bitter production cost – that child and slave labor have been a part of Nestle, Mars and Hershey's chocolate processing," said Steve Berman, managing partner of Hagens Berman. "These companies fail to disclose their use of child and forced labor, tricking consumers into indirectly supporting the use of such labor."

"The lives of the people who harvest cocoa are nothing short of terrible," the complaint reads. "Some of these children are abducted, and there are countless missing children claims. To make matters worse, sometimes extremely poor people sell their own children into slavery for as little as \$30. Children that are sometimes not even 10 years old carry huge sacks that are so big that they cause them serious physical harm. Much of the world's chocolate is quite literally brought to us by the back-breaking labor of child slaves."

The suits state that most chocolate candy produced by Nestle, Mars or Hershey's is affected, including Reese's Peanut Butter Cups®, Kit Kat®, Mounds®, York Peppermint Patties®, Hershey's® milk

chocolate bars, Almond Joy®, Cadbury® chocolates, M&Ms®, Snickers®, Twix®, 3Musketters®, MilkyWay®, Nestle Crunch®, BabyRuth®, Butterfinger® and 100 Grand®, among others.

If you live in California and would not have purchased these candies, contact our legal team to find out your rights against [Nestle](#), [Hershey's](#) and [Mars](#).

Hagens Berman has filed other lawsuits against major food manufacturers and food marketers to support local communities, human rights and the environment, including a [California case filed against Chiquita](#) for misleading consumers and manufacturing bananas in ways that poison local residents, destroy ecosystems and contaminate drinking water. The firm also filed a [lawsuit against several large players in the dairy industry](#), including Land O'Lakes Inc., alleging that the companies conspired to fix the price of milk by prematurely slaughtering more than 500,000 cows.

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[About Hagens Berman](#)

Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro LLP is a consumer-rights class-action law firm with offices in 10 cities. The firm has been named to the National Law Journal's Plaintiffs' Hot List eight times. More about the law firm and its successes can be found at www.hbsslaw.com. Follow the firm for updates and news at [@ClassActionLaw](#).

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