

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

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EEOC AND DECOSTER FARMS SETTLE COMPLAINT FOR \$1,525,000

MILWAUKEE - The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) today announced a \$1,525,000 settlement of an employment discrimination lawsuit under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 against DeCoster Farms on behalf of women who alleged they were subjected to sexual harassment (including rape), abuse, and retaliation by certain supervisory workers at DeCoster's Wright County, Iowa, plants.

A Consent Decree was filed with the U.S. District Court today for its approval of this settlement. In addition to monetary relief for the employees represented in the complaint, DeCoster Farms, which did not admit liability, has also agreed to make institutional changes that include annual training for managers and employees as well as the continued enforcement of anti-harassment and anti-retaliation policies. In addition, the company has committed to maintaining a liaison with the EEOC during the next three years to ensure compliance with the settlement. Finally, a portion of the financial settlement will support the work of the Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV).

"Protecting immigrant workers from illegal discrimination has been, and will continue to be, a priority for the EEOC," said Commission Chair Cari M. Dominguez. "We commend the DeCosters for beginning to implement changes in the egg processing facilities, even before this agreement was reached, to ensure that such harassment can never occur again."

The Consent Decree ends an investigation that began in August 2001, when ICADV filed a charge of discrimination with the EEOC against DeCoster Farms alleging a hostile workplace environment towards female employees.

In January 2002, the EEOC issued a Determination that certain supervisors employed by DeCoster Farms sexually assaulted and harassed female employees, especially those of Mexican and other Hispanic national origin - some of whom were undocumented workers at the time - and threatened retaliation if they complained of such conduct. Those supervisors had previously been fired by the company for unrelated reasons.

Following an investigation into the alleged incidents, a number of remedial policies were implemented by DeCoster Farms and both parties entered into negotiations on the Consent Decree to reach a resolution of the dispute.

In addition to enforcing Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based upon race, color, religion, sex, and national origin, the EEOC enforces the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Equal Pay Act, and portions of the Civil Rights Act of 1991. Further information about the Commission is available on its web site, www.eeoc.gov.

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