



Landelijke India Werkgroep

India Committee of the Netherlands

Mariaplaats 4, 3511 LH Utrecht; tel. 31-30-2322246; g.oonk@indianet.nl; www.indianet.nl

6 February 2006

Refers to: child labour at cotton seed suppliers for Mahyco-Monsanto in India

Monsanto Europe
Attn. Of the CEO/Director
Avenue de Tervuren 270-272
Brussels
Belgium

Dear Director,

We would like to draw your attention to the issue of the large number of children working for farmers that supply cottonseed to Mahyco-Monsanto in India. We assume you have been informed before about this issue by the media or otherwise. Already some years ago the issue has been brought to the attention of Monsanto USA by the International Labor Rights Fund in Washington. Likewise German organizations have approached Bayer while we - the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN) - have in the past drawn the attention of Unilever, Advanta and Syngenta to their responsibility regarding this issue.

Elaborate background information can be found on: http://www.indianet.nl/katoenz_e.html

We are addressing this letter to you as Monsanto Europe as we feel that you, being part of Monsanto, are accountable to your consumers and the public in Europe with regard to this serious human rights issue. However as your colleagues in India are more directly dealing with this issue and your colleagues in the USA do have an overall responsibility, we request you to forward this letter to both of them as well.

We have been informed that at present Monsanto, Bayer and Syngenta are taking up a number of activities to reduce the number of children involved in the production of cottonseed by farmers supplying seeds to Monsanto. We appreciate these efforts but are at the same time not yet convinced that the present approach of Monsanto will lead to success. There are two important reasons for this:

- Also in the last few years Monsanto has promised to eliminate the problem of child labour with great urgency. In September 2003 Mrs. Ranjana Smetacek, director of public affairs at Monsanto India, told AFX Global Ethics Monitor that it was a 'pretty realistic target' to stop children from working in cotton seed production by March 2004. Almost two years after this 'deadline' not much has happened. The recently published study 'The Price of Childhood' (included and also on the internet) shows that part of the child labour problem has shifted to a somewhat older group of teenagers, which are however exploited in the same way as the large number of young children that are still working on the farms.
- The same study has demonstrated that companies like Monsanto are paying farmers around 37% too little in order to enable them to hire adults for the official local minimum

wage of around one Euro per day. While this is no way an excuse for farmers to exploit children, it does add extra weight to the responsibility Monsanto already has to solve this problem.

In relation to Monsanto's activities as part of the Child Labour Eradication Group (CLEG) of the Association of the Seed Industries (ASI), we do have a number of specific questions related to the efforts undertaken by Mahyco-Monsanto including Emergent Genetics:

1. What is the number of cottonseed farmers with whom you had entered into 'buy-back arrangements' in 2005 via seed organizers in Andhra Pradesh and other states? In which states are you sourcing your cottonseed besides Andhra Pradesh?
2. How many Monsanto-related farms have been inspected in 2005? How many working children did your inspection team find in the season 2005 on the farms producing for Mahyco-Monsanto (including Emergent Genetics)?
3. What is the number of farmers that, according to you, are not working with children under 14 years of age in the year 2005 at all?
4. How many children that used to work for farmers producing for Mahyco-Monsanto, have been re-integrated into the school system in 2005?
5. How many adults, how many teenagers (14 to 18 years of age) and how many children are working on an average farm supplying seeds to Mahyco-Monsanto?
6. How many farmers have been issued one or two warning notices for employing children and how many contracts have been cancelled for continuing to employ children?
7. What are your plans to make sure that no child will work for any farmer supplying cottonseed to Mahyco-Monsanto in India in 2006? What are your plans to make sure that adults will be doing this work under decent conditions and against at least the official minimum wage?

We would like to inform you that the issue of child labour in cottonseed production, including Monsanto's role, has also raised concerns among the Members of the Dutch Parliament. Recently questions were raised by the members Tjon-A-Ten and Douma (Social Democrats, PvdA). Also questions were raised on this issue in the European Parliament and, most recently, in the Lok Sabha (Indian Parliament). Important Indian newspapers like the Business Standard, the Financial Express and the Times of India have recently reported on the issue.

We expect you agree with us that it is high time to address with great urgency the situation of thousands of children and youngsters working long hours, often bonded and under hazardous conditions, that are producing cottonseed for Monsanto. We therefore request you again to bring this to the notice of all those in your company that can help to address this issue fast and effectively.

We are eagerly looking forward to your response, including your answer to the questions raised above.

Yours sincerely,



Gerard Oonk
Director India Committee of the Netherlands