



Response to the report **“Soiled Seeds: Child Labor and Underpayment of Women in Vegetable Seed Production in India”**

November 2015

East-West Seed recognizes the issue of child labor in seed production in India and has taken steps to combat this serious social and economic problem. We fully support the mission of the India Committee of the Netherlands as we strive for the same goal: total elimination of child labor in India.

Since we started seed operations in India in 2008 we have insisted on zero child labor in any activity related to seed growing, as clearly stated in our contract with farmers and suppliers. Preventing child labor from seed production is now a core activity of the company and well integrated into the management process. A strict policy on child labor prevention, which includes awareness building, internal audit, reporting and monitoring, has now been established. This covers 100% of all hybrid seed production fields. We launched a “Child Care Program” (CCP), under a specially created committee composed of management in East-West Seed India. They are tasked to lead the company’s actions preventing child labor and to sustain the auditing and monitoring system. They prepare an annual performance report to communicate within the East-West Seed Group the results of their efforts.

We have been proactive in engaging seed growers in India in recent months. Awareness building sessions on child labor and field safety have been done in major seed production areas involving 1,266 farmers in 84 villages. No less than the author of the report Dr. Davuluri himself visited our field and trained our production staff on field safety and preventing child labor. We are discussing a possible joint audit/inspection with his team in the next season.

With the aid of technology, our management receives real time reports on observations by our own field inspectors. As of 6 Nov 2015, our internal monitoring reported 0.6% incidence of child labor in all 1,011 fields surveyed during the pollination period. Further, an external audit by SGS showed 0% incidence in the child labor and field safety audit it made in 32 randomly selected fields. These results are very encouraging and show a better picture compared to the report’s findings in November 2014.

We have also started collaborating with other seed companies including Syngenta, Monsanto and Bayer to learn from their experience and share current practices that have been successful in curbing child labor. Finally, East-West Seed has been successful in calling the attention of the Asia Pacific Seed Association (APSA), the world’s largest association of seed companies, to discuss this sensitive issue among its member-companies in one of its pre-meetings during the recent APSA Congress in Goa, India.

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