FAIR LABOR ASSOCIATION
INDEPENDENT EXTERNAL MONITORING
AGRICULTURAL REPORT

COMPANY: Syngenta
COUNTRY: India
PROVINCE: Karnataka
MONITOR: Fair Labor Association
AUDIT DATE: 22 – 26 July 2013
PRODUCTS: Hybrid Corn Seed
NUMBER OF WORKERS: 24
NUMBER OF WORKERS INTERVIEWED: 24
NUMBER OF FARMS VISITED: 15
TOTAL AREA COVERED IN AUDIT: 22 Acre
PROCESSES: Detasseling

To view more about the FLA’s work with Syngenta, please visit the FLA website here.
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**Code Awareness:**
GEN 2 Ensure that all Company growers as well as Seed Organizers inform their workers about the workplace standards orally and through the posting of standards in a prominent place (in the local languages spoken by workers) and undertake other efforts to educate workers about the standards on a regular basis.

**Noncompliance**

**Explanation:**
Workers do not have awareness about all the code elements. They have awareness about the child labor and health & safety aspects.

*Source:* Grower interviews, worker interviews, farm visits, records review and management interviews.

**Plan Of Action:**
- Syngenta will organize worker meetings in each village at the beginning of the season to create awareness about the Code of conduct.
- Generally workers hired on contract basis are engaged in detasseling activity. Hence workers awareness sessions could be done for each contracted group during detasseling period, at their convenient locations, on all the elements of the Code of conduct (COC).
- Information Education Communication (IEC) materials like posters, Syngenta me and mine logo printed as wall hangings (Torans), fans, pamphlets, notices on different aspects of COC will be distributed by the Company during these worker meetings and sessions.
- The Company will plan to make 50 wall paintings, or display posters at key places in all production villages. This wall painting describes the different code elements of Syngenta COC in short sentences.

**Deadline Date:** May 2014

**Action Taken:**

**Plan Complete:**

**Plan Complete Date:**
Code Awareness
Other (Company Internal Grievance Policy and Procedures)

Noncompliance

Explanation:  The growers and workers do not have awareness of the company grievance policy and procedure.

Source: Interviews with the workers and growers, records review

Plan Of Action:

- Syngenta will explain the grievance policy during pre-season meetings with the growers.
- Syngenta will convey the message during workers awareness sessions, especially during detasseling period. Refer to GEN 2 for additional actions.

Deadline Date: May 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Child Labor: Proof of Age Documentation

CL.3 Company will assist the grower in maintaining proof of age documentation for all young workers in the farm and is recommended to maintain proof of age documentation for all workers in the farm, including long term and casual workers.

Noncompliance

Explanation: None of the farms visited maintained any proof of age verification documents for young workers.

Source: Workers interviews and growers interviews, records review

Plan Of Action:

- Corn is a medium labor-intensive crop; hence, labor requirements are high during the detasseling period. The company has delegated the detasseling task to its vendors (seed organizers).

- The seed organizers engage male workers in batches of 10 to 30, and maintain all the attendance records, wage records, and age verification records for these workers by filing a photocopy of the proof of age documents, like voter ID’s, public distribution system cards issued by Government of INDIA (GOI), and school leaving certificates.

- Syngenta will distribute the documentation kits to the vendors to maintain all types of records. The potential young workers will be identified with proof of age documents.

Deadline Date: May 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Child Labor: Other Means of Age Verification

CL.4 In those cases where proof of age documentation is not readily available or unreliable, grower will take precautions to ensure that all workers are at least the minimum working age, including medical or religious records, school records or other means considered reliable in the local context.

Noncompliance

Explanation: For age verification, school and medical records are considered reliable, but none of the farms maintained any of these records.

Source: Worker interviews and grower interviews, records review

Plan Of Action:

• Syngenta will distribute the documentation kits to the detasseling team leader/seed organizer and growers. The documentation kits will be utilized to maintain all types of records.

• If potential young workers are identified, Syngenta will verify the age of those workers with documents like voter ID’s, Public distribution system cards provided by government of India, and school leaving certificates.

Deadline Date: May 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Child Labor: Education of Young Workers

CL.8 The grower shall ensure that when young workers are employed, their education is not jeopardized.

Noncompliance

Explanation: None of the interviewed young workers in the 16-18 age group are presently attending school.

Source: Worker interviews

Plan Of Action: Syngenta will raise awareness of young workers on the importance of education during workers awareness sessions, and will consult with local CSOs to explore ways to improve their education level.

Deadline Date: April - June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Harassment or Abuse: Grievance Procedure

H&A.12 Company shall have in place grievance procedures that allow first an attempt to settle grievances directly between the worker and the grower but, where this is inappropriate or has failed, it is possible for the worker to have the grievance considered at one or more steps, depending on the nature of the grievance and the structure and size of the enterprise. Company shall ensure that workers know the grievance procedures and applicable rules.

Noncompliance

Explanation: Workers do not have awareness about the company grievance policies and procedures.

Source: Worker interviews and grower interviews

Plan Of Action:

• Syngenta will explain the grievance policy during pre-season meetings with the growers
• Syngenta will convey the message during worker awareness sessions, especially during de-tasseling period. Refer to GEN 2 for further actions.

Deadline Date: May 2014
Action Taken:
Plan Complete:
Plan Complete Date:
Non-Discrimination: Sex-Based Wage Discrimination

D.3 There shall be no differences in remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value. Remuneration (wages, compensation) includes the basic minimum or prevailing industry wage and any additional payments to be made directly or indirectly, whether in cash or in kind, by the grower to the worker and arising out of the workers’ employment. Such additional payments include wage differentials or increments based on seniority or marital status, cost of living allowances, housing or residential allowances, family allowances, benefits in-kind such as the allotment and cleaning of work clothes or provision of fire wood, spices, raw material for food, equipment, and other benefits.

Noncompliance

Explanation: At one village, both men and women were involved in cleaning of weeds and other unwanted plants in the field and both were paid INR 100. However for all other activities, like sowing, weeding, and harvesting, women are paid INR 100 whereas men are paid INR 200. Male detasseling teams worked on piece rate basis and are paid INR 150-200 on an acre basis, whereas women detasseling teams work on daily wage rate of INR 150 per day.

Additionally, the daily wage rates for weeding, sowing, and harvesting, mostly done by female workers varied between INR 100 and INR 120. Wage discrimination also exists for the activities where men and women jointly participate. The daily wage rates for ploughing and pesticide application, which are exclusively done by male workers varied between INR 150 to INR 250 across the sample farms.

Source: Worker interviews and grower interviews

Plan Of Action: An assessment of the situation will be done with male and female workers in relation to sex based task allocation, and the findings used to arrive at a remediation plan.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken: Plan Complete: Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: General Compliance Health and Safety

H&S.1 Growers shall comply with all local laws, regulations, and procedures concerning health and safety. In any case where local laws and the Workplace Code of Conduct are contradictory, the higher standards will apply. The grower will possess all legally required permits.

Noncompliance

Explanation: The local law stipulates that employers provide training, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), and health check-ups to workers who are employed for handling of chemical pesticides. The company does not comply with these local law requirements.

Source: Worker interviews and grower interviews

The Insecticides Act 1968

Plan Of Action:

• Syngenta will develop a health and safety manual to be followed at the farms.

• During every pre-season campaign or grower/workers awareness campaign, the growers will be educated on health and safety and the use of PPE during chemical handling will be stressed.

• Syngenta will organize more health & safety, first aid, management training, etc., as mentioned under GEN 2.

• Distribute the PPE from company/vendor, and ensure their proper utilization during chemical management.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: Health and Safety Management System

H&S.4 The health and safety policy shall contain the framework for a comprehensive health and safety management system within which growers’ responsibilities and workers’ rights and duties, various responsibilities of designated personnel, procedures that enable workers to raise health and safety concerns, and procedures for reporting death, injury, illness, and other health and safety issues (for instance, near-miss accidents) are clear and regularly tested and reviewed.

Noncompliance

Explanation: The health and safety management system is not simplified, and not properly communicated to the growers and workers

Source: Management interviews, records review

Plan Of Action: Syngenta will provide a health and safety manual, with policies and procedures to be followed at the farms, to growers, and educate them on using the manual.

Syngenta will educate the grower leader on the form for reporting death, illness, and other health incidents/accidents. Additionally Syngenta will educate individuals at the grower/farm level on using this data to improve safety.

Syngenta will use different IEC materials to educate the target group.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: Communication to Workers

The health and safety policy shall be communicated to all workers in the local language or language(s) spoken by workers if different from the local language.

Noncompliance

Explanation: The hired workers have not received any communication regarding the company’s health and safety policy.

Source: Worker interviews

Plan Of Action: The implementing team has been communicating the message to the workers during their routine field visits. Additionally they have prepared the wall paintings at key places. Refer to GEN 2.

Syngenta will:

• Organize more awareness sessions at farm level
• Use different IEC materials to educate the workers
• Use audio – visual aids to communicate the message

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: Access to Safety Equipment and First Aid

H&S.6 Company should ensure that growers and workers have access to safety equipment and first aid.

Noncompliance

Explanation:  
First aid boxes are not been maintained at all farms.  
Source: Grower interviews, management interviews, records review

Plan Of Action:  
• First aid boxes are installed at key places in the production villages, which are easily accessible to the workers. Field supervisors monitor the usage and stock of medicine in these boxes.
• Syngenta will encourage the growers to properly maintain first aid kits the at farm level. Syngenta has planned to support these growers with small kits (cost effective) containing medicines of less quantity/smaller volume, sufficient for individual farms.
• Vendors are also instructed by the team to maintain first aid kits with their team.

Deadline Date:  
April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: Personal Protective Equipment

H&S.7 All necessary personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, eye protection, respiratory protection, etc., should be made available to relevant workers to prevent unsafe exposure (such as inhalation or contact with solvent vapors, dust, etc.) to health and safety hazards.

Noncompliance

Explanation: The company has not distributed PPE to corn growers in this area. The workers involved in handling chemicals are not taking proper precautions while spraying pesticides. Workers involved in detasseling work are not provided with protective gear or safety shoes to protect them from cuts, injuries, and snakebites. Workers involved in weeding in parthenium-infested fields do not have proper PPE to protect themselves.

Source: Grower interviews, management interviews, records review

Plan Of Action:

• Syngenta will educate the growers on providing PPE to the workers.

• The vendors will be educated on supplying the proper safety equipment such as boots, goggles, protective caps, gloves, etc. to the corn detasseling workers.

• Workers will be educated on using PPE as mentioned in GEN 2.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken: Plan Complete: Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: Chemical Management and Training

H&S.8 All chemicals and hazardous substances, farm produce, and raw materials should be properly labeled and stored. The grower shall not use any banned (either by national or international laws) pesticides fertilizers, or any other agro chemicals in the farm. The grower shall ensure safe disposal of waste chemicals or empty containers of chemicals or packing materials. The grower/organizer/company will provide the necessary training to the worker with regard to handling of agro chemicals (pesticides, fertilizers, and other hazardous substances), their application and the use of personal protective equipment.

Noncompliance

Explanation: None of the workers, and most of the growers, interviewed reported that they have received any training on health and safety from the Company this season. The company has just conducted village level code awareness programs in some villages. No proper training programs on health and safety have been conducted so far.

Source: Grower interviews, management interviews, records review

Plan Of Action:

- Syngenta plans to conduct exclusive health and safety trainings for the growers at the village level.
- The company plans to train the workers on safety at the farm level during detasseling activity.
- Syngenta plans to distribute the various IEC materials to the growers and workers, and use the audio-visual aids to motivate them.
- Syngenta has planned to draw/post wall paintings and wall posters at common places in the villages.

Deadline Date: April – May 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Health and Safety: Machinery Maintenance and Worker Training

H&S.11 All production machinery, equipment, and tools shall be regularly maintained and properly guarded. Workers shall receive training in the proper use and safe operation of machinery, equipment, and tools they use.

Noncompliance

Explanation: Workers have not received any training on the proper use and safe operation of machinery and equipment. Workers were using sharp tools (sickles, weeders) and cutters for cleaning and weeding operations. Most of the workers were using these sharp tools while barefoot. Some of them reported cuts and injuries on their hands and feet, caused during weeding and cleaning operations.

Source: Grower interviews, worker interviews

Plan Of Action:

• Syngenta plans to conduct exclusive health and safety trainings covering safe operations of machines and equipment, as mentioned in GEN 2.

• The company plans to train the workers on safety at the farm level, and distribute the various IEC materials to the workers and growers.

Deadline Date: April – May 2013

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
**Hours of Work: General Compliance**

HOW.1 Growers shall comply with all local laws, regulations, and procedures concerning hours of work, public holidays, and leave.

**Noncompliance**

**Explanation:**
The procedures and regulations concerning hours of work, public holidays, and overtime compensations are not followed.

The minimum wages act has provisions for overtime compensation after eight hours of work, one day off in every seven-day work period, and that a normal working day constitutes nine hours of work, including rest hours. However, in case of piece rate workers for detasseling activities, they work for more than nine hours (approximately 10-12 hours) but are not provided with adequate overtime compensation. Additionally, they work continuously for 25-30 days to complete detasseling activities in the stipulated time frame. So, they do not have one day off in every seven work days.

**Source:** Grower interviews, worker interviews

**Plan Of Action:**

- Syngenta will educate the growers by conducting village level campaigns, and sensitize the workers during field level awareness sessions about the local regulations on hours of work.
- Syngenta will assist the seed organizer to maintain hours of work records for the detasseling workers. The seed organizer will monitor their working hours, and further educate them about the local laws and regulations concerning hours of work.

**Deadline Date:** April – June 2014

**Action Taken:**

**Plan Complete:**

**Plan Complete Date:**
**Hours of Work: Rest Day**

HOW.2 Workers shall be entitled to at least one day off in every seven-day period. In case workers have to work for several days without a day off due to the requirement of the production cycle, they can do so as far as they voluntarily agree to it.

**Noncompliance**

**Explanation:** Detasseling work is done continuously for 25 - 30 days by a batch of 10-30 workers, in order to cover the total production area in a stipulated time frame. Hence, the workers engaged in the contract work (batch of 10-30) do not tend to take one day off in every seven. The local regulations require that workers are provided with one day off in every seven-day period. If the workers are engaged on Sundays, they should be provided double the wages. However, workers engaged in detasselling work do not get one day off in every seven.

**Source:** Grower interviews, worker interviews

The Minimum Wages Act 1948

**Plan Of Action:**

The de-tasseling workers are not engaged for the whole the season. Based on the requirements, the organizer hires the workers. During local sandy market day of every week all the workers will be given the day off. And as per the requirements, the workers will also be provided with leave.

- Syngenta will train the seed organizer/growers on maintaining proper systems to provide one day off in every seven and leave to the workers. Alternate days can be planned to provide the leave to every worker.

- Syngenta will insist that the grower/seed organizer maintain records about the workers weekly day off.

**Deadline Date:** April – May 2014

**Action Taken:**

**Plan Complete:**

**Plan Complete Date:**
Hours of Work: Overtime

HOW.4 No worker shall be expected to work for more than 8 hours per day, excluding the breaks. In extraordinary circumstances, the daily working hours can be extended to 10 hours.

Noncompliance

Explanation: During the peak detasseling period, workers are engaged on piece rate basis (per acre basis). They start their work at 7.00 in the morning and continue till 19:00 in the evening, with short breaks, not amounting to one hour. They do not take breaks, as they want to cover more acres in a day to earn more income. In these instances the work extends beyond eight hours, due to movement of workers from one field to another field.

Source: Grower interviews, worker interviews
The Minimum Wages Act 1948

Plan Of Action:
Syngenta will assist the seed organizers in maintaining hours of work records for detasseling workers, in order to monitor their working hours. Additionally, Syngenta will further educate them about the local laws and regulations concerning overtime.

Deadline Date: April – May 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Wages, Benefits and Overtime Compensation: General Compliance

WBOT.1 Growers shall comply with all local laws, regulations and procedures concerning the payment of wages and benefits, including overtime compensation. In any case where laws and the FLA Workplace Code of Conduct are contradictory, the standard that provides the greatest protection for workers shall apply. Where provisions are lacking, growers shall take measures to reasonably accommodate matters concerning the payments of wages and benefits, including overtime compensation.

Noncompliance

Explanation: The local procedures and regulations concerning wages, benefits, and overtime compensation are not followed. The wages paid for certain tasks are below the legal minimum wages. The minimum daily wage rate, as per local law, is INR 173. This is applicable for all agricultural operations, and applies to men and women equally.

The number of working hours for normal working day is eight hours. Women do activities like sowing, weeding, and harvesting, for which they are paid INR 100-120, which is less than the legal minimum wage. Men do activities like land preparation, fertilizer, and pesticide application. These workers are paid between INR 150 for some activities, which is below minimum wage, and INR 250 mostly for pesticide application. Male detasseling teams, who work on a piece rate basis, are paid INR 150-200 based on the area covered, which may lead to them being paid less than the daily minimum wage. Detasseling done by women workers is compensated on daily wage basis of INR 150 per day, which is also below minimum wages.

Source: Grower interviews, worker interviews

The Minimum Wages Act 1948

Plan Of Action:

- Syngenta will educate the workers on local minimum wage and overtime compensation through awareness sessions, wall paintings/posters, and different IEC materials, as mentioned in GEN2
- Syngenta will make sure the vendors pay the minimum wage for the detasseling workers through monitoring and follow up by the regional production staff.
- Syngenta will encourage the growers and vendors to record the wages provided and hours of work with the documentation kit.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken: Plan Complete:
Plan
Complete
Date:
Wages, Benefits and Overtime Compensation: Minimum Wage

WBOT.2 Growers shall pay workers, the legal minimum wage or the prevailing regional wage, whichever is higher.

Noncompliance

Explanation: The wages paid for certain tasks are below the legal minimum wages. Women do activities like sowing, weeding, and harvesting, for which they are paid INR 100-120, which is less than the legal minimum wage. Men do activities like land preparation, fertilizer, and pesticide application. These workers are paid between INR 150 for some activities, which is below minimum wage, and INR 250 mostly for pesticide application. Male detasseling teams, who work on a piece rate basis, are paid INR 150-200 based on the area covered, which may lead to them being paid less than the daily minimum wage. Detasseling done by women workers is compensated on daily wage basis of INR 150 per day, which is also below minimum wages.

Source: Grower interviews, worker interviews, The Minimum Wages Act 1948

Plan Of Action:

- Syngenta will educate the workers on local minimum wage and overtime compensation through awareness sessions, wall paintings/posters, and different IEC materials, as mentioned in GEN2
- Syngenta will make sure the vendors pay the minimum wage for the detasseling workers through monitoring and follow up by the regional production staff.
- Syngenta will encourage the growers and vendors to record the wages provided and hours of work with the documentation kit.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
Wages, Benefits and Overtime Compensation: Worker Wage Awareness

WBOT.6 Grower/Organizer/Company will make an effort to educate workers so that the terms of employment, wages, benefits and deductions shall be clearly understood and acceptable by the worker.

Noncompliance

Explanation: Workers are not aware of their legally entitled wages and benefits, as per local law.

Source: Grower interviews, worker interviews

Plan Of Action:

• Syngenta will create awareness among the workers about the local minimum wage rate recommended by the government during village level worker meeting and worker awareness sessions for detasseling workers.

• The same information will be communicated through various Information education communication materials like wall paintings/posters and pamphlets.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date:
**Wages, Benefits and Overtime Compensation: Record Maintenance**

WBOT.7 Company shall make efforts to educate and assist the growers in maintaining records of wages provided to the worker in cash or in-kind or both, and such records shall be acknowledge by the worker.

**Noncompliance**

**Explanation:** The growers maintain no records wages paid. The company has not yet supplied documentation kits to the growers. The kit is in the process of being printed.

**Source:** Grower interviews, worker interviews

**Plan Of Action:** The documentation kits are being printed and supplied to all the growers, to enable vendors to maintain the records of attendance, proof of age for young workers, wages provided, hours of work, etc.

**Deadline Date:** April 2014

**Action Taken:**

**Plan Complete:**

**Plan Complete Date:**
Wages, Benefits and Overtime Compensation

Others

Noncompliance

Explanation: In one of the villages, male workers reported that during detasseling activity, they might work for one or two additional hours. But they are not aware of overtime payment. They work on piece rate basis. Hence at times they might be paid below minimum wage.

Source: Workers Interview

Plan Of Action: The company will verify this practice, and if it finds any deviation it will be rectified, as per FLA benchmark.

Deadline Date: April – June 2014

Action Taken:

Plan Complete:

Plan Complete Date: