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Fair Labor Association Approves a Pilot Program to Test Its Methodology in the Agricultural Sector

Washington, D.C. – At the July 27 quarterly meeting of its Board of Directors, the Fair Labor Association accepted the application of Syngenta Seeds, the seeds product lines of Syngenta, as a Participating Company. The FLA sees this as a pilot program to test the applicability of the FLA monitoring methodology in the agricultural sector.

While most existing FLA-affiliated companies are involved in the apparel and footwear industries and while all have committed to compliance programs for factory-based production, the mission of the FLA—“to promote adherence to international labor standards and improve working conditions worldwide”—potentially encompasses many industries and modes of production. This pilot will allow the FLA to assess what modifications or clarifications, if any, are necessary to apply the FLA code of conduct and to implement the FLA monitoring methodology in the agricultural sector. Like other FLA Participating Companies, Syngenta Seeds will be expected to develop and implement an internal monitoring plan, including the training of internal monitors and consultations with local NGOs (including, especially, the MV Foundation, an Indian NGO that works to abolish child labor through village-level capacity building programs). Syngenta will also be required to promote code awareness among agents, farmers, and local stakeholders, and submit lists of suppliers from which the FLA can determine a schedule of unannounced monitoring visits by accredited independent external monitors.

By agreement with Syngenta Seeds, the FLA retains the right to discontinue the pilot program and to terminate Syngenta Seeds’ participation in the FLA if at any time during the program the FLA decides that it should not be in the agricultural sector. The agreement provides that the FLA may make this decision even if Syngenta Seeds is meeting its obligations as a Participating Company.

More specifically, the agreement between the FLA and Syngenta Seeds provides that:

- The FLA and Syngenta Seeds will jointly develop a monitoring methodology appropriate to the agricultural sector.
- Syngenta Seeds will bear the costs associated with this development process.
- Syngenta Seeds will meet all of the Charter obligations of an FLA Participating Company. The company has elected a three-year implementation period, which means that its compliance program will be considered for accreditation at the end of three years.
- The FLA Board of Directors will decide at the end of the implementation period whether to continue working in the agricultural sector. If the Board decides not to continue in that sector, Syngenta Seeds’ participation in the FLA will terminate and no other agri-business companies will be considered for participation.
- If the Syngenta Seeds monitoring plan encounters an obstacle during planning or implementation that in the opinion of the FLA is likely to make its implementation unviable, or if the FLA decides for any other reason that its engagement in the agricultural sector is unviable, the Board may decide to terminate the FLA’s relationship with Syngenta Seeds before the end of the implementation period.

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