

POSITION PAPER

CropLife Position on Child Labor in the Seed Supply Chain

12 June 2009

Summary

According to International Labor Organization (ILO)¹, more than 200 million children around the world are still involved in work which is considered to interfere with their education or to be damaging to their mental, physical and/or emotional development. In many countries child labor has been declared illegal but may be a common practice with numerous children working for their own survival and that of their families. In some countries, agriculture has been found to be specifically susceptible to the occurrence of child labor due to certain manual labor requirements.

CropLife International Position

CropLife member companies do not tolerate child labor and do not employ children within their organizations. These companies also work to secure the same commitment from their contract partners in the seed supply chains.

CropLife believes that the implementation and enforcement of its no-child-labor policy can best and most effectively be dealt with at the member company level taking into consideration local conditions and seed production processes.

CropLife member companies are committed to continuously working towards the complete abolition of child labor within their respective spheres of influence. To this end, CropLife expects the member companies to meet certain minimum standards, outlined in this paper, in order to address any potential child labor challenge within their supply chains.

CropLife understands that child labor is not a fleeting phenomenon and that the effective elimination of child labor is a long-term goal requiring the joint

¹ http://www.ilo.org/global/Themes/Child_Labour/lang--en/index.htm
<http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/childlabour/c182.htm>
<http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C184>

efforts of international, national and local stakeholders from the political, public and private sector.

Definition of Child Labor

*In line with the UN convention on the rights of a child and the ILO Conventions (C-138, 182, 184¹), **Child labor** is considered any work or activity that **interferes with the full time schooling** of a child and/or is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children. Child labor deprives children of the opportunity to attend school, obliges them to leave school prematurely, or requires them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and/or heavy work. CropLife acknowledges that a young person below the age of 18 years should not be employed to undertake dangerous or hazardous work.*

CropLife supports temporary workplace internship and apprenticeship education programs for younger persons as well as customary seasonal employment so long as such persons are closely supervised and their morals, safety, health, and compulsory education are not compromised in any way and all local, state and national laws regarding the employment of minors are observed.

Contractual Agreements with Suppliers

CropLife member companies do not tolerate the use of child labor within their seed supply chains. CropLife International strongly encourages its members to appropriately reflect this no-child-labor commitment in contractually binding ways vis-à-vis their supply chain partners (e.g., “**no child labor clause**”). Companies should consider appropriate **sanctions** for suppliers who fail to comply with these policies and contractual agreements; sanctions could range from losing incentives up to the termination of the business relationship.

Monitoring and Control

To verify compliance or non-compliance with the no-child-labor policies, CropLife considers monitoring and related control mechanisms to be useful tools and strongly recommends their use. These tools need to be implemented in a way that takes into consideration the seed production processes and the probability of child labor under the prevailing local conditions. This can be achieved through a **risk based** approach where the mode and/or frequency of any such monitoring activity will depend, for instance, on the specific crop and/or the severity of a potential child labor challenge in the production process.

If under certain local conditions the age of a working individual can not be ascertained with certainty (**doubtful cases of child labor**) a conservative

approach should be adopted and the individual in question should be considered a child according to the above definition.

External verification of the monitoring results is recommended to ensure continual improvement and credibility of the monitoring process.

Transparency through Reporting

Where monitoring and/or action against child labor in a company's supply chain are implemented, the trends should be made available to the **public** via corporate reporting. Such reports should, *inter alia*, address areas for further improvement. For clarity and the sake of documenting progress in a company's efforts against child labor, suitable **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** should be calculated by each company and used for their reporting. These KPIs should be suitable to reflect the situation of the seed production sector and to measure progress. The following KPIs have proven suitable and are recommended for reporting:

- Total cases of proven child labor in percent of total workforce monitored
- Proven cases of child labor at contract farms in percent of total farms monitored
- Total cases of proven child labor per total area monitored.

Supporting Initiatives to Contribute to the Elimination of Child Labor

CropLife recognizes that child labor is a broader social issue that can not be eradicated by its member companies alone. While the implementation of effective mechanisms of monitoring and control by the member companies is a significant contribution to the eradication of child labor, similar actions by other groups outside the direct spheres of influence of the member companies are necessary to achieve a long-term solution to the issue.

CropLife encourages its member companies to contribute to capacity building and **improving the educational situation** of children in deprived agricultural/rural communities by emphasizing a government and multi-stakeholder approach through adequate supporting initiatives.