EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As a requirement of a company’s affiliation with the Fair Labor Association (FLA), the FLA annually conducts independent assessments of a sample of each affiliated company’s supply chain. The FLA started conducting independent external monitoring (IEM) visits of Syngenta’s supply chain for seeds in 2008, focusing at that time on India only. The scope of IEM visits gradually extended to cover seven countries in 2013. In Argentina and Brazil, where the FLA started conducting IEM visits in 2012, the FLA monitors production of Syngenta’s corn, sunflower, and soybean seeds.

From January to October 2013, the FLA conducted six unannounced independent external monitoring visits during periods of peak production activities, to assess working conditions at Syngenta’s seed supplier farms in South America. Three assessments were conducted in Brazil in the provinces of Goias, Uberlandia, and Sao Paulo, and three assessments were conducted in Argentina in the Santa Fe province. Findings of the Argentina assessments are aggregated into one report. The detailed reports can be found at [http://www.fairlabor.org/affiliate/syngenta](http://www.fairlabor.org/affiliate/syngenta)

The team of external assessors covered approximately 1,600 acres of corn and soybean seed production in Brazil and 1,300 acres of corn, soybean, and sunflower seed production in Argentina. Altogether they visited nine large farms and interviewed 123 workers (63 in Brazil and 60 in Argentina), in addition to key stakeholders, such as Syngenta local program implementation staff, and representatives from local civil society organizations and relevant government agencies.

In Argentina and Brazil, farmers own large tracts of land and grow seeds for Syngenta on small parcels of it. Since 2013, in those two countries, Syngenta has directly hired the seasonal workers involved in the peak activities of their seed production. In most cases, Syngenta is directly responsible for the recruitment of the workers, their transportation, their accommodation, and for supervising their work and paying their salary. Soybean seed
production in Brazil is an exception; here, Syngenta has no direct relationship with the growers, and the workers and contract with subcontractors called seed organizers.

Independent External Monitoring Key Findings

1. **Code Awareness and Grievance System** – Workers’ awareness of a Workplace Code of Conduct was high at all farms where Syngenta has a direct relationship with the workers. However, in Brazil, in soybean production, growers and workers had no knowledge of the company code of conduct, which was not yet communicated to the third-party seed organizer. There was consequently no communication done at the farm level. The same applies to the existence of established grievance procedures, which Brazilian soybean workers were not aware of. Workers in Argentina were also not fully aware of the objectives and functionality of the toll-free number that Syngenta provided to confidentially raise grievances. In Brazilian corn production, some of the workers interviewed stated that they did not feel encouraged to raise their grievances directly to the company. They raise their issues informally to their group leaders, who are not well-trained and equipped for handling grievances.

2. **Forced labor** – In Argentina, seasonal workers residing in two housing camps were restricted in their freedom of movement by their group leaders. They were not allowed to leave the camps, even on rest days, and were not allowed to participate in sport activities due to the fear of injury.

3. **Health and Safety** – In Argentina, assessors found some health and safety related non-compliances, including improper storage of hazardous substances, issues with workers’ access to drinking water, and improper conditions of the kitchen in the visited camps. In Brazil, a number of health and safety related issues were identified, especially in the soybean seed producing farms. Health and safety policies were not visible at the farms and not communicated to the workers. First aid kits were not available in strategic locations, and there was no established health and safety management system. Periodic medical checks required by local law were not conducted for workers handling chemicals, who also did not receive the required training to perform this task.

4. **Hours of Work and Compensation** – In Brazil, not all workers were allowed the required 24 consecutive hours of rest in every seven-day period, and overtime work exceeded local law requirements. In Argentina, the workers’ travelling time to and from the field (up to four hours per day) was not compensated as per local law requirements. The wage calculation was not clearly understood by the workers and had created confusion about the wages earned.

**Corrective Action Plans**

In response to the FLA’s monitoring visits, Syngenta developed and submitted corrective action plans that are included in the FLA monitoring reports. The highlights of these plans include:
1. **Code Awareness and Grievance System** – Syngenta committed to take actions to increase growers’ and workers’ awareness of workplace standards in Brazilian soybean production. Syngenta will organize campaigns to inform growers and seed organizers of Syngenta’s policies and code of conduct, and will provide communication materials for growers and organizers to use at the farm level. Seed organizers have been made responsible to inform and train workers on workplace standards. Syngenta has planned to monitor working conditions on soybean farms through a contracted third party provider. Syngenta will ensure that workers in both countries understand the grievance channels available to them, and will emphasize that the company maintains a non-retaliation policy.

2. **Forced labor** – in Argentina, Syngenta will take measures to guarantee that workers can leave the camps whenever they want and on rest days. Contact details for taxis and other resources will be provided to the workers. Workers are also allowed to enjoy their hobbies during rest days. The company provides playing cards, bocce ball courts, and TVs for workers staying in the camps so that they can enjoy themselves during weekends.

3. **Health and Safety** – In Argentina, health, safety, and environment (HSE) campaigns will be strengthened before and during the season to increase awareness and implementation of good health and safety practices. Syngenta will also reinforce its monitoring of the farms on the problematic aspects identified through IEMs. The same applies to Brazilian soybean farms where Syngenta will undertake a facilitator’s role to foster best health and safety practices on the farms. Special emphasis will be put on ensuring first aid kits are provided in key locations and on chemical management training.

4. **Hours of Work and Compensation** – In Brazil, training, document review and monitoring will be strengthened to comply with the rest day provision. In soybean farms where workers are hired and managed by third-party service providers, good practices in record keeping with regard to days and hours worked will be shared with the service provider and monitored. In Argentina, local legislation with regard to travelling time will be further studied and enforced through revised policies and procedures. Syngenta also planned to further train supervisors in implementing payment procedures and to further educate workers on wage calculations and how to read payroll records.