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CottonConnect Child Labour Statement

CottonConnect does not employ children in the workplace and is committed to the principles of protecting children from child labour exploitation through its operations. CottonConnect strictly adheres to all relevant international and national regulations and conventions relating to child labour. It strives to ensure that the cotton farmers in its programmes do not breach any of the local laws.

CottonConnect works with cotton farming communities and recognises child labour is a complex socio-economic problem arising from many causes. In its REEL Cotton agricultural training programme with cotton farmers in India, CottonConnect insists that children do not work and instead focuses on the importance of primary education. The training module 'Decent Work Policy and the Rights of Children' educates implementation partners and farmers about child rights (according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) and how to prevent child labour on the farm.

CottonConnect has developed a declaration of decent work which each farmer in a CottonConnect programme reads, signs and adheres to. This follows the ILO Convention Nos. 138 and 182 and states that farmers will not permit any labour from children below 14 years of age and will not give hazardous work to children below 18 years of age. It prohibits the worst forms of child labour as defined in ILO 182.

CottonConnect's position on no child labour is strengthened through training with farmers and farm labourers, creating awareness of the issue and running child rights campaigns at a community level. CottonConnect's focus on primary education for children is demonstrated by supporting parents in getting school admission for their children and co-ordination with the local school administration to enrol out of school children.

CottonConnect recognises that in some cotton growing communities, children of smallholder farmers or farm labourers may help family members with farming activities. Programmes may therefore allow for children aged 14 and above to carry out light, non-hazardous work that does not interfere with schooling. Farmers are aware they must not give any hazardous work to persons below 18 years of age.

The REEL Cotton programme includes creative activities with children, for example essay writing, drawing, education on child labour, a focus on the importance of primary education and hand

washing activities to teach about personal health and hygiene. Children are also encouraged to keep a biodiversity register in order to learn about the importance of the trees and plants in their villages.

Training with farmers and farm labourers includes creating awareness about the hazardous effects of chemical pesticides. The REEL Cotton Programme requires farmers to store chemical pesticides at a safe place out of the reach of children. Precautions must be taken while spraying the chemical pesticides on the farm. Children are not allowed on the farm while spraying or for two to three days after application.

As the issue of child labour is related to other socio-economic issues such as migrant labour, CottonConnect believes that greater impact can be achieved by working in partnership with governments, NGOs and the wider cotton sector.