

D.O.No.CP/NCPCR/2007-08/8

February 25, 2008

Dear

Thank you for the brief meeting we had on 18th February 2008.

We would like to reiterate that there is an alarming growth of children working in the agriculture sector. Participation of children in the labour force is linked to growing investments of both national and multi-national in agriculture and seed industry. They work in sub-human conditions of poverty and deprivation and are often trafficked as migrant labor. For example, we have heard chronicles of misery and suffering of such children in Dungarpur at Rajasthan and Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh working for production of hybrid cotton seeds. Such children are engaged to work in production of vegetables, chilies, rice and wheat, soya bean and lentils, oilseeds, sugar cane, in fact in the entire agriculture sector.

It is found that children are preferred because they are a source of cheap and a docile labour, can be trafficked, work long hours and live in crowded spaces with minimal food and other supplies.

I am sure you agree that this is totally unacceptable and we would have to work towards making it impossible for children to be employed in the country. Our children must instead be attending full time formal schools as a matter of right. In this regard it is absolutely necessary that child labor in agriculture is included in the list of occupations to be prohibited under the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The Commission has already represented the matter to the Ministry of Labor.

It is in this context that we urge upon you send a strong message to the regional, national and multi-national seed companies that they must not employ children at any stage in the production process.

With

Yours sincerely,

(Shantha Sinha)

Shri Sharad Pawar,
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