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ESA is the voice of the European seed sector. ESA's members are national associations and individual companies active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural and ornamental plant species. ESA represents more than 7000 seed businesses in the EU and beyond.

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POSITION

ON THE PREVENTION OF CHILD LABOUR IN THE SEED SECTOR

ESA is the voice of the European seed sector, representing more than 7000 seed businesses in the EU and beyond. This sector is a highly international business. Seed companies based in Europe often breed, produce and market seeds not only in European countries but also in many other countries elsewhere in the world.

In line with the EU Directive on the protection of young people at work (Directive 94/33/EC, in place since 1994), Member States must prohibit the employment of children under the age of 15 or still in full-time compulsory education. The Directive is not applicable to occasional work, or work carried out for a limited period in domestic service in a private household, or to work in a family business which is not considered likely to harm, injure or endanger the young person. According to the Directive, in the European Union a young person below the age of 18 years should not be employed to undertake dangerous or hazardous work.

The International Labour Organisation Minimum Age Convention (no 138) also sets 15 years old as the minimum age for admission to employment and work and has been ratified by all 28 EU Member States.

Being a reality in various countries, child labour is strongly rejected by the European Seed Association.

Child labour 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.

Even though ESA acknowledges cultural as well as economic differences that are present in a global industry, child labour should not be tolerated.

ESA therefore actively advises its members not to employ children within their company organisations and encourages companies to work on securing the same commitment from their business partners.