From Pioneering Practices to Paradigm Shifts:

Charting Five Years of Decent Work Standards at ECHO

ECHO
Enabling Child and Human Rights with Seed Organisations



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ECHO: Enabling Child and Human Rights in Seed Supply Chains

ECHO is a collaboration between seed companies, NGOs and research organizations working to promote ethical practices, child rights and decent workplace standards in the hybrid seed industry.

Established in December 2019, ECHO builds on earlier child-labor initiatives such as the Child Labor Elimination Group (CLEG) and the Child Care Program (CCP) forum, which began around 2003. Today, it functions as a multi-stakeholder forum with 14 seed companies and 4 NGOs and research organizations, united by a shared commitment to responsible and sustainable practices.

ECHO brings together diverse stakeholders, including public and private seed companies, voluntary organizations, and professional associations, to protect human rights and ensure decent work conditions throughout the seed production supply chain.

THE PREMISE OF ECHO: Child Labor in Seed Supply Chain

ECHO was established to tackle the persistent issue of child labor within the hybrid seed production industry. This pressing social challenge, ubiquitous in cultivating cotton and vegetables, has been a subject of study and concern for decades across seed-producing regions.

Over the past five years, the ECHO forum has grown to include 14 seed companies and 4 NGOs and research organizations, all united in their commitment to ECHO's mission. This mission is both clear and focused: to champion and implement effective solutions that foster ethical practices and safeguard young lives in agriculture.









MISSION:

Sustainable seed production supply chain through protection of human rights and ensuring decent workplace standards.

OBJECTIVES:

- ECHO will maintain and sustain a regional forum for industry and formulate industry positions (policies) and recommendations on supply chain issues to improve seed sector performance in attaining Sustainable Development Goal 8.
- Represent the interests of ECHO members at regional and international levels.
- Encourage the establishment of state-level regional fora and support their development.
- Facilitate and contribute to the harmonization of regulatory procedures towards International standards.

PURPOSE:

1. **Advocacy and networking:** ECHO primarily does advocacy at various levels to network and bring alignment among government, NGOs, industry and other relevant stakeholders. Accordingly, ECHO organizes key events that gather seed industry professionals from across India and globally to share best practices and advancements in ethical supply chain management.
2. **Specialized Training and Knowledge Sharing:** ECHO aids in creating training courses tailored to the evolving needs and potentials within the seed industry. It serves as a central resource for information on global standards, local regulations, and recent legislative changes relevant to the seed industry.
3. **Uniform Human Rights Standards:** Development of standardized human rights and labor guidelines specifically for the indian seed industry.
4. **Research and Audits:** Conducting targeted research and systematic audits to ensure compliance with labor and human rights standards in member companies' supply chains.
5. **Collaborative CSR Initiatives:** Facilitating collaborative efforts among member companies to implement widespreed Corporate Social Responsibility programs, particularly in key production areas.
6. **Recognition and Rewards:** Establishing a recognition program that highlights and rewards member companies excelling in their implementation of ethical practices, based on comprehensive KPIs.

Aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG), focusing on decent work and economic growth, the Key initiatives of ECHO include:

1. **Policy Development:** ECHO facilitates industry discussions to formulate policies and recommendations that address key supply chain issues, aiming to elevate seed sector standards and practices.
2. **Risk Mitigation:** Promoting advancements in seed industry practices to mitigate risks in the production supply chain, thereby enhancing investor relations. ECHO minimum wage pilot projects through WISH project in vegetables and a collaboration project involving corn seed companies are testaments to ECHO's drive towards compliance.
3. **Technical and Business Cooperation:** Stimulating cooperation among members, ECHO fosters the exchange of information and experiences related to human rights and labor standards in seed production.
4. **Representation and Networking:** ECHO is establishing ties with organizations that have similar objectives, especially collaboration with government, industry associations, international bodies like ILO, NGOs bring an alignment to develop new strategies.
5. **Support for Regional Forums:** Encouraging the formation of state-level forums and aiding in their development to ensure consistency with international regulatory standards. These regional committees play a pivotal role to take forward the agenda of ECHO and ensuring effective field-level implementation.
6. **Best Practice Adoption:** Identifying and adapting best practices from various industries to suit the seed sector's unique challenges.
7. **Social Compliance and Awareness:** ECHO collaborates with seed companies to implement standardized strategies for managing human rights in their supply chains.
8. **Farmer Empowerment:** ECHO commits to empowering farmers by providing sustainable solutions and promoting the importance of education for children in farming communities.

Through these focused actions, ECHO aims to ensure ethical practices and improve social standards within the hybrid seed sector.

ECHO 5 year's Journey

KEY MILESTONES

1 YEAR — Institutional Strengthening
- Structured forum
- Industry and NGO representation
- Central & Regional Committees

2 YEAR — Multi-Stakeholder engagement
- Field level engagement
- Multi-stakeholder events
- Harmonization of tools, protocols and approaches

3 YEAR — Scoping towards MW compliance
- WSH Project launch
- Corn MW Pilot Project
- Field Assessments for Standardization

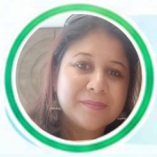
4 YEAR — Bettering Visibility: Website & Position Statement launch
- To align on minimum wages compliance
- Collaboration with government functionaries
- More Industry Partners

5 YEAR — Bringing more stakeholders on board
- ECHO & WISH Collaboration
- On boarding more partners (Industry & NGO)
- Benchmarks on decent work standards

ECHO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS:



Ms. Aranda UVL
East-West Seeds
- ECHO President



Ms. Subhadra Gupta
Syngenta
- ECHO Vice President



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