Representing Australia's plant science industry

CropLife AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

FEEDING THE WORLD WITH AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

Thursday 10 July 2014 (Canberra) – World Population Day (tomorrow), is an appropriate time to give consideration to the enormous task of feeding a rapidly growing population. Using modern innovations and technologies, Australian agriculture stands in a unique and powerful position to significantly contribute to providing viable solutions to meeting the challenges of global food security.

"With Australia's population increasing by approximately 1,080 people every day and the UN predicting a global population of nearly 10 billion by 2050, agricultural industries around the world face the tremendous challenge of increasing food production by 70% while decreasing their environmental footprint and using limited arable land," said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia. "The ratio of arable land to people has halved in the last fifty years, and will drop by a further 25% by 2050.

"While food security appears to be a daunting challenge, Australian farmers, along with the support of industry such as the plant science sector, have the ingenuity, knowledge and skills to find solutions. The plant science industry is providing the Australian farming sector with innovative tools such as modern chemical crop protection products and agricultural biotechnologies to meet the challenge.

"A recent study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) profiled 11 different agricultural innovations including crop protection, drip irrigation, heat tolerance, drought tolerance and no-till farming, and found that agricultural technologies could increase global crop yields as much as 67 percent and cut food prices nearly in half by 2050.

"Alarmingly, 20-40% of the world's food production is lost to pests, weeds and diseases. This number would double without effective crop protection products. In particular, it is estimated that yields of most fruit and vegetables, which are integral to a healthy diet, would fall by 50-95% without the use of fungicides to protect from disease.

"The use of agricultural biotechnology is another way to reduce pressure on agricultural resources by improving food quality and nutritional value, increasing the productivity of current crops and helping crops adapt to environmental stresses such as drought.

"New varieties of crops are being developed using genetic modification that not only produce higher yields, saving millions of hectares of land from clearing, but also offer increased nutritional value. In Australia, the CSIRO is developing grains with enhanced nutritional properties with the potential to improve human bowel health and help prevent serious diseases such as colo-rectal cancer and type 2 diabetes.

"Agricultural biotechnology has also provided significant environmental benefits. The ISAAA reports that biotech crops have reduced the need for 497 million kg of pesticides, and cut CO2 emissions by 27 billion kg in 2012 alone (equivalent to removing 12 million cars from the road for one year).

"Using a variety of innovative agricultural tools is the only way to achieve sufficient and sustainable crop production for our growing population. The Australian plant science industry is committed to providing farmers with modern tools that increase yields, safeguard crops, preserve the environment and protect human health. Public policy should encourage innovation and ensure Australian farmers have access to the latest, modern, safe agricultural technologies to assist them in becoming more productive, profitable and sustainable", Mr Cossey concluded.

About World Population Day: Established by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme in 1989 as a way to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues. It was an outgrowth of the interest generated by the Day of Five Billion, which was observed on 11 July 1987.

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia (CropLife) is the peak industry organisation representing the agricultural chemical and biotechnology (plant science) sector in Australia. CropLife represents the innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and agricultural biotechnology products. The plant science industry provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies that are key to the nation's agricultural productivity, sustainability and food security. The plant science industry is worth more than $17.6 billion a year to the Australian economy and directly employs thousands of people across the country. CropLife and its members are committed to the stewardship of their products throughout their lifecycle and to ensuring that human health, environment and trade issues associated with agricultural chemical use in Australia are responsibly and

sustainably managed. Our member companies spend more than $13 million a year on stewardship activities to ensure the safe and effective use of their products. CropLife ensures the responsible use of these products through its mandatory industry code of conduct and has set a benchmark for industry stewardship through programs such as ***drum****MUSTER,* ChemClear® and Agsafe Accreditation and Training. Our stewardship activities demonstrate our commitment to managing the impacts associated with container waste and unwanted chemicals.

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