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## First International Day of Plant Health highlights need to prioritise pest and disease management

**12 May 2022 (Canberra)** - The United Nations (UN) has nominated today (12 May) as the first International Day of Plant Health to raise global awareness of the impact of pests and diseases to food security, agricultural productivity and livelihoods. The UN is campaigning for policies and actions that promote plant health which are fundamental to reaching Sustainable Development Goals particularly focussed on global hunger and the environment. These issues are core to the mission of the plant science sector.

Plants make up 80% of the food we eat and 98% of the oxygen we breathe and yet they are under constant attack from pests and diseases which destroy up to 40% of food crops every year.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey, said, "CropLife Australia welcomes the UN's decision to establish an annual International Day of Plant Health. It reinforces the need for policy and regulation which is informed by science and enables farmer access to the important tools and products of the plant science industry.

"Prioritising investment in plant health related research, outreach, technologies and innovation is crucial to delivering better environmental and food security outcomes. The plant science industry invests billions of dollars each year into the research and development of new crop protection products to support this endeavour.

"Our industry's products are used on the frontline of defence for maintaining plant health and natural environments. These products restrict the spread of invasive weeds on farming land and in our national parks as well as counter the risks posed to farming by insects, pests and diseases. These challenges will only be further exacerbated in the face of climate change. Growing healthy plants also ensures that harvested product is free from disease and safe for humans," said Mr Cossey.

"The plant science industry also invests in the development of new plant varieties that can withstand biotic and abiotic stressors through new breeding techniques enabled by biotechnology. These new varieties support the growth of healthy plants in changing and challenging environments, such as crops that are drought tolerant or resistant to insect damage.

"The plant science industry is playing an active role in achieving global sustainability targets by providing farmers and environmental land managers with the tools required to adapt and respond to the ever increasing challenge of sustainably producing food. However, this can only happen if all key sectors including industry, farmers, governments, NGOs and the community more broadly work together," concluded Mr Cossey.

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### About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than \$20 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.

