
International Day of Plant Health - Putting Science at the Centre of Plant Health

Canberra, 12 May 2024: The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) forecasts a requirement for a staggering 60 per cent increase in agricultural output by 2050 to sustain our burgeoning global population. Yet, up to 40 per cent of our food crops are lost annually to the ravages of insect pests and diseases, endangering food security, environmental stability, and economic progress. On this International Day of Plant Health, it's time to put genuine scientific based innovations and outcomes at the forefront of global sustainability and biosecurity.

"Weeds, diseases and pest insects are the main drivers of food and biodiversity loss globally," warned Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector.

"Climate-change is driving further ecosystem shifts for pests to establish in new territories. We're seeing the consequences of this to Australian agriculture and native habitats now playing out in real time.

"Fall Armyworm worked its way down to Australia in 2020, wreaking havoc on 80 different crops worldwide. Once contained in the North, the pest has spread across Queensland like bushfire over recent months, feeding on staples like sorghum, wheat, maize and now oats.

"The plant science industry provides a crucial defence against biosecurity threats, deploying cutting-edge solutions to safeguard against both established pests here at home and new incursions of even more damaging, noxious pests. CropLife Australia's members are also continuing to invest billions of dollars annually on R&D for the next generation of pesticides to further assist farmers and environmental land managers manage future challenges.

"A 2023 Deloitte report revealed that a staggering \$31.6 billion of Australia's annual agricultural output can be attributed to the judicious, measured, and optimised deployment of crop protection product. This accounts for a remarkable 73 per cent of the total value of crop production, while also providing the foundation for effective control of weeds and plant diseases that threaten both natural environments and farmland, as well as parks and public spaces.

"Importantly, the plant science sector is also pioneering the development of new crop varieties, capable of withstanding environmental stresses, from droughts to insect onslaughts. These biotechnological innovations will continue to play a key role in our transition to climate adaptation and sustainable food production.

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 \$31.6 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 a part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.



Mr. Cossey concluded, "Plant health is not just a necessity; it's the only way we will achieve long term sustainable outcomes. Policy settings which enable science-driven regulation of the tools of the plant science industry is vital to ensuring these tools remain accessible to the farmers, environmental land managers, and local councils that manage Australian landscapes."

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