

Carbon tax not the only solution to reducing Emissions

Wednesday 13 July, 2011 - Although agriculture might be exempt from the Government's carbon pricing scheme, a range of innovative measures remain available to farmers to assist them in their task of increasing agricultural productivity and reducing carbon output.

Research indicates that modern farming tools, including GM crops can be part of this solution. This was the message advocated by CropLife Australia's Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Cossey, noting that in the new carbon tax environment, we shouldn't just be pointing the finger at the biggest polluters, but also acknowledging new technologies and practices that reduce climate impact.

Mr Cossey today called on the Australian Government to recognise the climate benefits from growing GM crops. "A carbon tax is not the only solution to reducing emissions. [A report](#) compiled by world leading agricultural economists Brookes and Barfoot revealed that in 2009, GM crops saved around 18 billion kg of CO₂ gas emissions – or the equivalent of removing 8 million cars from the road", Mr Cossey said.

The Brookes and Barfoot report revealed that the fuel savings associated with making fewer spray runs (relative to conventional crops) and the switch to conservation, reduced and no-till farming systems, avoided more than 1,409 million kg of carbon dioxide emissions in 2009 alone. "These figures provide clear proof that GM crops can play a significant role in reducing global carbon emissions", Mr Cossey said.

Mr Cossey said the Australian plant science industry leads the way in reducing agriculture's carbon footprint and should be recognised by government. "Australia's plant science industry is ahead of the game when it comes to leading edge science and innovation. GM crops have been the most rapidly adopted technology in agricultural history, not only for their high-yielding qualities and economic return to farmers, but for their environmental benefits. Globally, the plant science industry is one of the world's most innovative sectors, with the top 10 companies investing an estimated \$4.72 billion in research and development each year".

"The benefits of biotechnology have been evident since the technology's widespread adoption 15 years ago. In Australia alone, we have seen firsthand the benefits that GM cotton has delivered to farmers. The use of GM cotton has reduced the amount of insecticide applied to each hectare of Australian cotton by 65-85% and caused yields to increase by 48% between 1998 and 2008", Mr Cossey said.

"GM crops require fewer broad spectrum pesticide applications, enabling cotton farmers to better implement integrated pest management strategies".

"Australia's plant science companies are dedicated to enhancing and safeguarding our natural environment and working with the nation's farmers to grow our agricultural sector in a sustainable way", Mr Cossey concluded.

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the peak industry organisation representing the agricultural chemical and biotechnology (plant science) sector in Australia. CropLife represents the innovators, developers, manufacturers, formulators and registrants of crop protection and agro-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 \$1.5 billion a year to the Australian economy and directly employs thousands of people across the country. CropLife member companies spend more than \$13 million a year on stewardship activities to ensure the safe use of their products on the environment and human health. CropLife ensures the responsible use of these products through its industry code of conduct and has set a benchmark for industry stewardship through programs such as *drumMUSTER*, ChemClear[®] and Agsafe Accreditation and Training.

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