

Green groups turn farmers against farmers

Thursday 28 July, 2011 – It is disappointing and saddening to see conflict between farmers where there is no real reason to do so. All forms of farming are able to coexist successfully and it is critical for the success and growth of Australian agriculture that this practical and realistic culture remains.

CropLife Australia Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Cossey today said Australia's organic standards are out of step with the rest of the world. "The events that led to the decertification of the Marsh's organic wheat would not have resulted in decertification in any other country. This disadvantages all Australian farmers".

"Diversity in agricultural crops increases the resilience of our farms and are critical to the future production of food" Mr Cossey said.

"The ability of each Australian farmer to choose what they wish to produce allows them to adapt quickly to customer desires and provide the foods that Australians want to eat".

"Diversity also allows Australian farmers to produce 94% of all the food that we consume in this country, rather simply producing one crop and importing the rest".

"Tolerances" are typically low levels of acceptable presence of materials in a crop that were never intended to be there. "For example, there are tolerances for insect legs in some bulk crops and there are tolerances for low levels of pesticides in organic crops. Farmers do everything they can to avoid using these tolerances but in rare cases these impacts are beyond their control", Mr Cossey said.

Tolerances allow neighbouring farms to coexist without causing unintended consequences. This is essential because farms are living biological systems. Winds, rains, insects and many other factors can cause parts of, or an entire crop to move from its original location, onto a neighbouring farm. These factors can also transport diseases and weeds onto neighbouring properties.

"It is surprising that the organics industry does not recognise the potential of GM crops to contribute to the sustainability of agriculture. For example, GM crops have reduced the need for insecticide sprays by more than 85% in the cotton industry. Consequently, the Australian organics industry's outright rejection of GM crops is confusing".

Zero tolerances do not benefit any sort of agriculture. If zero tolerances were widely adopted our world leading food producers would spend more time in a court room than a paddock. This is not the future that Australian agriculture, or the world that we help feed, requires.

"A zero tolerance approach means that a neighbour can dictate what a farmer can grow on their own property. This impinges on every farmer's property rights and benefits no one", 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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