

## Who is going to protect consumers from **CHOICE**?

**Wednesday 15 June 2011** – Recent public commentary on the use of pesticides by Australian farmers by CHOICE, the WWF, the Public Health Association of Australia and the National Toxics Network is misleading and deceptive. CropLife is disappointed that Australia's consumer advocate group CHOICE has decided to engage in an unscientific, false and fraudulent campaign against Australia's farmers.

Modern, responsible farmers carefully choose and apply agricultural chemical products to manage pests, weeds and diseases. Our farmers choose to implement safe and sustainable agricultural chemical products that are essential to produce healthy, nutritious and affordable food that all Australians enjoy. Without these tools, farmers face the dire possibility of losing more than half of their production. It is extraordinary that CHOICE would advocate a position that would significantly increase the cost of fresh food produced in Australia.

CropLife's Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Cossey, said "every single agricultural chemical product available for sale in Australia has been subjected to a rigorous, science-based risk assessment that takes into account Australia's unique circumstances, including demography, society and environment. Different circumstances, crops and companies consequently mean that different products are available in different countries".

"CHOICE only undermines its own integrity by suggesting that chemicals not available overseas should be removed from Australia's market. Differences in product availability are often also due to the commercial decisions made by manufacturers and registrants. It is not a reflection on the health or environmental risks associated with a product."

It is disappointing to see that CHOICE has sought to hoodwink and mislead a range of eminent Australians through its deceptive actions.

For CHOICE to now advocate a position that is not based on science leads us to one of two conclusions: CHOICE is either seeking to deliberately mislead Australian consumers in an attempt to secure political objectives, or they are incompetent", said Mr Cossey.

"CHOICE, in choosing to align itself with alarmist, anti-science green activists has failed in its core responsibility to provide Australian consumers with unbiased and independent information to enable consumers to make informed choices", said Mr Cossey. "Rather than being a watchdog for Australian consumers, CHOICE has become a lapdog for activist organisations promulgating populist, but incorrect, assertions about pesticide regulation."

All agricultural chemical products are scientifically and rigorously assessed for their potential safety, health and environmental effects prior to them becoming available for farmers to use. Strict controls on the way that farmers can use agricultural chemicals ensure that all Australians have access to plentiful, safe and disease-free food. Targeted residue monitoring ensures that farmers are using chemical products in patterns that are known to be safe. Where additional information becomes available, the pesticides regulator has the capacity and capability to swiftly and decisively take appropriate actions to manage any additional concern.

Advocating a position that will hinder Australia's capacity to produce its own food is to advocate for greater imports from countries that may not employ the same strict controls for food production as Australia.

CropLife calls upon CHOICE to publicly correct its false and misleading statements about agricultural chemical regulation in Australia.

CropLife and its members are committed to the responsible and sustainable management of agricultural chemicals throughout their lifecycle. Our members invest millions of dollars each year to ensure that products remain safe and present no unacceptable risks to users, consumers or the environment.

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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<sup>®</sup> and Agsafe Accreditation and Training.

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