

Advances in Crop Science and Technology at ABARES Outlook 2012

Wednesday 7 March 2012 (Canberra) – CropLife Australia today hosted a panel session at one of agriculture's key annual conferences, ABARES Outlook 2012. Entitled "*Advances in Crop Science and Technology*," the session reinforced the need for the development of new technologies such as GM crops and modern agricultural chemicals for Australia's agricultural trading competitiveness.

Three of the leading minds in crop science and technology, Professor Rick Roush, Dean at the Melbourne School of Land and Environment, University of Melbourne; Mr Andrew Hewitt, Director of CPAS at the University of Queensland; and Dr Richard Richards, Chief Research Scientist at the CSIRO delivered presentations covering some of the cutting-edge developments in crop science and technology and highlighting not only the significant advances already made, but also the considerable hurdles facing the industry.

Professor Roush emphasised the on-farm benefits of transgenic crops, such as a reduction in pesticide use and fuel consumption, increased yields and billions of dollars in resultant savings. GM technology has already allowed agriculture to reduce carbon emissions equivalent to removing 6.9 million cars off the road each year. Through continued developments in GM technology Professor Roush outlined a number of further opportunities that exist to increase water and nitrogen efficiency in crops.

Mr Hewitt's presentation alerted delegates of the development of new models to assist in the management of chemical drift risks and the work being done to enhance their effectiveness and precision. He suggested that spray drift and runoff is currently very difficult to measure and that new research projects underway have the ability to better assist in improving application techniques for the benefit of farmers and the environment.

Dr Richard Richards led delegates through the contributions of crop science to food security. Dr Richards began by asking whether the current global trajectory for increase in yields, which now sits at 0.5% p.a., will be sufficient to feed 9 billion mouths by 2050. Alarming, the required yields are estimated at least 1.16%, this is a significant gap that has to be filled. Dr Richards outlined the significance of building initiatives now because of the lengthy and arduous path to market. Australia has a rare opportunity to provide global leadership, but that opportunity will only be realised with a drastic shift in government attitudes towards investment in agricultural research and development. He expressed his disappointment in the current imbalance in investment between industry, who contribute heavily, and government, who contribute poorly.

The plant science sector remains a very critical asset to the agriculture industry in the coming years, particularly in fighting the significant challenges of food security and climate change. CropLife and its member companies remain dedicated to this cause and will continue to support Australia's farmers in this increasingly difficult global environment. CropLife was very pleased to be able to participate in this very important forum for Australia's agriculture industry.

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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 is worth more than \$1.5 billion a year to the Australian economy and directly employs thousands of people across the country. CropLife ensures the responsible use of crop protection products and the disposal of waste through its industry code of conduct and its stewardship programs such as **drumMUSTER**, ChemClear® and Agsafe Accreditation and Training. CropLife Australia has 18 member companies and is part a global federation of organisations representing the plant science industry which supports a network of regional and national associations in 91 countries.

