

Action needed on importation and trade of illegal agricultural chemicals

Tuesday September 27, 2011 – Illegal pesticides endanger agriculture, human health, the environment and the economy. The global trade in illegal and fake pesticides is growing and Australia is at risk.

Urgent action is required by government agencies to ensure this dangerous trade is stopped immediately.

The trade in counterfeit and illegal crop protection products present serious threats to Australian farmers and food safety around the world. Law enforcement authorities throughout Europe have seized major shipments of illegal products over the last two years. These illegal products have originated predominantly from China and India.

There is now growing and significant evidence that Australia is the target of considerable illegal imports of unregistered crop protection products. This is as a result of a 'perfect storm' scenario; an extremely strong Australian dollar, major illegal production predominantly in Asia, and established transport links and markets for agchem products in Australia," CropLife Australia Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Cossey said.

"Significant illegal trade is currently the single greatest threat to the agchem regulatory system."

"The problem that has emerged is systemic by nature and highlights that the traditional compliance arrangements and capabilities in this area are not able to effectively protect against the threat."

"The plant science industry is one of the most extensively regulated industries in Australia. A rigorous and robust registration system is designed to ensure that only those products that are demonstrated to be safe and effective are used by Australia's farmers to protect, improve and increase agricultural production. Australia's regulatory system needs to be able to quickly and effectively respond to the illegal import and sale of agchem products. This is not just a threat to Australia's legitimate plant science industry, but to the whole agricultural sector," said Mr Cossey.

"It is imperative that our regulatory system is effective in ensuring that only legitimate registered products are imported and sold on the Australian market. The Government needs to ensure that immediate initiatives are implemented to enable our customs and agchem regulatory systems to address this real and present danger as a matter of urgency."

"Australia has one of the world's best plant science industries, delivering high-value and innovative agchem products to Australia's farming sector. The productivity increases that the nation needs from our agricultural sector over the coming years, and decades, means that Australia's farmers will need the support of a reliable, innovative and value-for money plant science industry. It is an industry that has a long-term commitment to supporting Australia's farming effort."

In response to this serious threat, CropLife Australia has commenced a targeted public information campaign aimed at raising awareness of the dangers of purchasing illegal and unregistered agricultural chemicals from illegitimate overseas suppliers. (See sample advertisement attached)

CropLife will continue to seek to work with the Government to address this problem. CropLife is seeking to convene a roundtable between APVMA, Australian Customs and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to get a coordinated response to this growing threat.

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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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