

INNOVATION IN PLANT SCIENCE PROTECTS SOILS TO HELP COMBAT DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

Monday 17 June 2013 (Canberra) –On the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, CropLife Australia calls on policymakers around the world to renew their dedication to the advancement of research into sustainable agricultural practices that preserve water and soil; two of our most valuable resources.

CropLife Australia's Chief Executive Officer, Matthew Cossey said today "We know that soil - and the organisms that reside within it - is a vital ingredient of sustainable agriculture. CropLife Australia and our members are dedicated to the research and development of technologies which enable sustainable farming practices, enhance farm productivity and support healthy soils and natural habitats.

"Innovation in plant science is fundamental to a long term solution for combating desertification and drought. On this important World Day, we are reminded of the need for government, industry and the public research sector to work together to find innovative solutions that help the world's farmers adapt to drier conditions and grow food more sustainably.

"As caretakers of the land, farmers know that healthy soil delivers enormous benefits to the crops and livestock they raise. However, traditional intensive cultivation and land management practices can be hard on soil, reducing its quantity, quality and capacity to sustain life. With this in mind, the plant science industry has developed technologies and solutions - from novel crop protection products to seeds enhanced through biotechnology - that enable farmers to incorporate water efficient, soil-friendly, sustainable practices such as conservation 'no-till' farming.

"In one study on the effects of long-term no-till cropping in the United States, researchers found that organic matter increased by as much as 1,800 pounds per acre per year. With an estimated 100 million hectares farmed using conservation tillage every year, the potential increase in organic material could tally as much as 445 billion pounds; enough to blanket over 670,000 hectares with an inch of extra topsoil every year. That is an area larger than London, Paris and Moscow combined.

"Agriculture must find a way to meet the demands of a rising world population but do so in a way that protects and conserves natural resources such as soil and water. With continued investment in new solutions to bolster farm productivity and sustainability, we can help protect and improve today's land for today's farmers and future generations.

"The plant science industry is committed to providing farmers with the technology and knowledge they need to optimise yields and increase water efficiency, and to continuing partnerships to help ensure these tools reach those who need it most", concluded Mr Cossey.

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World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought Background:

In 1994, the United Nations General Assembly declared June 17 the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought to promote public awareness of the issue, and the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification.

About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia (CropLife) is the peak industry organisation representing the agricultural chemical and biotechnology (plant science) sector in Australia. CropLife represents the innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and agricultural 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 and its members are committed to the stewardship of their products throughout their lifecycle and to ensuring that human health, environment and trade issues associated with agricultural chemical use in Australia are responsibly and sustainably managed. Our member companies spend more than \$13 million a year on stewardship activities to ensure the safe and effective use of their products. CropLife ensures the responsible use of these products through its mandatory industry code of conduct and has set a benchmark for industry stewardship through programs such as **drumMUSTER**, ChemClear® and Agsafe Accreditation and Training. Our stewardship activities demonstrate our commitment to managing the impacts associated with container waste and unwanted chemicals.

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