

ABARES REPORT CONFIRMS IMPORTANCE OF MINOR USE PROGRAM AND CONSISTENT REGULATION

Tuesday 5 November 2013 (Canberra) – The recently released ABARES *Review of Selected Regulatory Burdens on Agriculture and Forestry Businesses* has confirmed the importance of the federal government's commitment to funding a minor use and specialty crops program and highlights the urgency of implementing the program as soon as possible.

"CropLife Australia has been advocating on behalf of the plant science industry for government to address a number of inconsistencies in, and market failures caused by, the regulation of agricultural chemicals and biotech crops. ABARES has confirmed that there are simple, effective ways available to address these inconsistencies, which are damaging Australia's agricultural productivity," said Matthew Cossey, CEO of CropLife Australia, today.

"In particular, the ABARES report shows that the minor use and specialty crops program, to which the Coalition government commendably committed \$8 million during the recent election campaign, is a vital initiative for improving the productivity, sustainability and diversity of Australian cropping.

"In relation to the registration process for agricultural chemicals, the report highlights the importance of an efficient regulator and a low cost regulatory framework. It further reinforces the importance of the Coalition's election commitment to unwind the unnecessary red tape in the agchem registration system.

"The government's current plan to increase the efficiency of the APVMA will better enable farmers to access the tools they need to farm productively and sustainably. It is absolutely vital that agchem regulation is commensurate with risk as the costs of unnecessary regulation are unfairly borne by farmers and consumers.

"The overlaps and inconsistencies between state laws governing the use of agricultural chemicals are also identified in the report as an area of concern. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has been developing a national framework to harmonise control of use laws, but has made little progress over the past five years.

"This report offers some hope for the reinvigoration of COAG's work towards a nationally harmonised regulatory system for agricultural chemical use, something CropLife has been advocating for over several years now.

"The report has also confirmed that the uncertain path to market for GM crops continues to impose an unnecessary burden on farmers and the plant science industry through inconsistent regulation and lengthy, unscientific decision-making.

"Although it is state moratoria on the use of GM crops causing the uncertainty, the report notes that the federal government could play a coordinating role in negotiating for a shorter, well-defined regulatory path to market for tested and approved GM crops.

"This report does not cover the field in identifying areas for increased regulatory efficiency, but it has confirmed the importance of improvement along the lines of a number of CropLife's key priority areas.

"The federal government has often emphasised that improving agricultural productivity is one of its core economic goals. This report sets out a clear, objective analysis of the heavy and unnecessary regulatory burdens carried by Australian agribusiness and the farming sector. It also illustrates a simple path to alleviating some of those burdens. A more productive, sustainable agricultural sector is now at the government's fingertips.

"In particular, it is vital that the government's minor use program gets up and running as soon as possible, to improve responsible chemical usage; to significantly assist in addressing the challenges of weed and pest resistance problems; and to ensure that Australian food producers develop environmentally friendly, sustainable, integrated crop management systems through access to the latest chemistry." Mr Cossey concluded.

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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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