



## MEDIA RELEASE

### MINOR USE PROGRAM A SMART INVESTMENT IN AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURE

#### - Government delivers on election commitment

**Tuesday 13 May 2014 (Canberra)** – In the midst of a tough federal budget, the government's responsible decision to deliver on its election commitment to fund a minor use and specialty crops program is to be congratulated as an initial smart and responsible investment in Australia's future agricultural competitiveness.

"The government's initial \$8 million commitment, if utilised properly, will be a profitable investment in Australia's agricultural sector. Economic analysis of the United States' minor use program has estimated that for every dollar invested by the US government in a similar initiative, the program facilitates a return to the US economy of US\$550," said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia.

"Minister Joyce should be congratulated for delivering on the promise to fund minor use, despite the significant pressure on the federal budget. The program will result in productivity and economic gains for the Australian farm sector.

"Not only will a minor use program increase the productivity of Australian agriculture, it stands to enable more environmentally friendly pest management practices. Accessibility to modern, target-specific chemicals can reduce the excessive use of older, broader-spectrum chemicals. A minor use program also encourages more investment in developing these products.

"In a report last year, ABARES confirmed that improving access to agricultural chemicals for minor uses is a simple, effective way to address inconsistencies, which are damaging Australia's agricultural productivity and diversity. For some time the plant science industry and the farming sector has advocated for a program to address a number of inconsistencies in, and market failure caused by, the regulation of agricultural chemicals.

"As the cost of developing data and registering products continues to increase, so too does the risk that the nation's farmers will not have adequate access to tools and products to control pests, weeds and diseases. The small size of Australia's crop protection product market on a global comparison means that the implementation of this initiative is vital so that Australian agriculture is assured access to the latest innovations from the plant science industry and their full range of uses.

"It is estimated that a fully funded minor use program will cost around \$45 million. Today's \$8 million first investment shows that the government is committed to ensuring that farmers have access to the same products as their competitors overseas, creating a more diverse and productive sector."

"The obligation now is on the Department of Agriculture to ensure this funding actually goes to delivering outcomes through an effective program and is not just absorbed in unnecessary administrative costs. All relevant organisations in the sector have already been working to assist in delivering on that outcome.

"The minor use program will improve responsible and effective chemical product usage, while ensuring that Australia's farming sector is a world leader in environmentally friendly, sustainable, integrated pest management systems through access to the latest chemistry. Australian farmers must be able to access the latest technologies and innovations to remain globally competitive and continue to produce safe, high quality food, feed and fibre." 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 \$17.6 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.

