



MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN FARMERS GROWING GM CROPS GAIN \$766 MILLION

Wednesday 7 May 2014 (Canberra) – Significant economic and environmental benefits, and unparalleled improvement in farmer income have been realised from the widespread adoption of crop biotechnology, according to an international report released by PG Economics.

“Australian GM cotton and canola farmers have realised farm income benefits of more than US \$766 million over the 17 year period covered by the report,” said Matthew Cossey, CropLife Australia’s Chief Executive Officer.

“Crop biotechnology has also contributed to significantly reducing the release of greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural practices. This results from less fuel use and additional soil carbon storage from reduced tillage with GM crops. In 2012, this was equivalent to removing 27 billion kg of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere or equal to removing 11.9 million cars – 69 per cent of the cars registered in Australia – from the road for one year.

“The adoption of GM crops has also significantly reduced the need for the use of chemicals for pest management. Over the period 1996-2012, crop biotechnology has reduced pesticide spraying by 503 million kg (-8.8%).

“Since 1996, the global farm income gain from GM crops has been US \$116.6 billion. This is an impressive increase and demonstrates the value of agricultural biotechnology, not just for farmers, but for the global economy as a whole. In total, half of this gain has been by farmers in developing countries. On average, farmers in developed countries received US \$3.04 for every dollar invested in GM crop seeds, while farmers in developing countries received US \$3.74.

“In 2012, Australian GM canola growers realised an average farm income gain of US \$47.5 per hectare and a total farm income gain of US \$8.3 million. Australian GM cotton farmers realised a total farm income gain of US \$129.2 million in 2012 and used 54% less insecticide in GM cotton than what would have used if only conventional varieties had been planted.

“Even more impressive is the contribution of biotech crops to on-farm productivity. Between 1996 and 2012, crop biotechnology was responsible for an additional 122 million tonnes of soybeans and 231 million tonnes of corn. The technology has also contributed an extra 18.2 million tonnes of cotton lint and 6.6 million tonnes of canola.

“If crop biotechnology had not been available to the 17.3 million farmers using the technology in 2012, maintaining global production at the 2012 levels would have required additional plantings equivalent to 32 per cent of the arable land in Australia. That’s more than 15 million hectares of forest and natural habitat not used for agricultural purposes.

“Given that the United Nations predicts we need to produce 70 per cent more food by 2050 than we do today in order to meet the needs of our growing population, this report gives real, concrete evidence that agricultural biotechnology is a crucial asset for achieving that goal.

“The figures released by PG Economics once again put solid data behind the benefits of GM crops. The facts speak for themselves. It’s crucial that the benefits of this innovation be made available to all farmers across Australia and the rest of the world if we are genuine about meeting the challenges of global food security and farming in a more environmentally sustainable way,” concluded Mr Cossey.

The full report from PG Economics can be downloaded at: www.pgeconomics.co.uk

Contact: Jaelle Bajada (Manager – Public Affairs) Ph: 02 6230 6399 Mob: 0410 491 261

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.

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