



WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY — INNOVATION IS KEY TO SUSTAINABLE FARMING

Thursday 5 June 2014 (Canberra) – On World Environment Day 2014 it is important to acknowledge the role of the plant science industry in supporting the nation's farmers in becoming more resource efficient in a changing climate, whilst still producing high quality food, feed and fibre for the world.

"This year's theme, World Under Water, places a focus on a changing climate," said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia. "Australian farmers are experts at producing food, feed and fibre for the world under variable, and sometimes harsh, climatic conditions."

"Australian farmers must continue to have access to the latest agricultural technologies and innovations to feed a growing population while improving sustainable use of precious resources. Advancements in modern agricultural chemistry and biotechnology are allowing farmers to better meet this challenge.

"Global food production is energy and resource intensive. It is responsible for 70 per cent of fresh water consumption and 30 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions. With more than 30 per cent of the world's land mass devoted to farming, agriculture has a tremendous role to play in protecting and preserving our natural resources and biodiversity.

"According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there was an increase of 32 per cent in the volume of water used for agriculture, mainly irrigation purposes, in the last financial year. Thanks in part to plant biotechnology and the adoption of herbicide-tolerant crops; farmers are now able to switch to growing crops with minimal or no soil cultivation. These methods help conserve water and minimise run-off by increasing moisture penetration and retention in the soil.

"Over the past decade a combination of agricultural biotechnology and best management practices has achieved a 40% increase in water productivity in Australia's cotton industry. It is now considered the most water-efficient cotton industry in the world, producing "more crop per drop" than any other nation at two and a half times the world's average yields.

"Crop protection products also play a major role in water conservation by efficiently controlling weeds that threaten scarce water resources."

"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 plant science industry in Australia has also shown its commitment to safeguarding the environment through world leading industry stewardship programs designed to minimise environmental impacts of the industry. Agsafe, the wholly owned subsidiary of CropLife Australia, runs successful programs such as **drumMUSTER**, which collects and recycles pesticide containers, and ChemClear®, which safely removes damaged or expired agricultural chemicals from the environment.

"Globally, the plant science industry is one of the world's most innovative sectors, with the top 10 companies investing an estimated \$4.72 billion in research and development each year. This kind of investment is proving vital to the Australian farming sector's ability to meet demand in face of a changing climate and diminishing natural resources.

"This is why our industry invests in research and development to establish new products and better formulations, packaging and use systems. Government and industry need to continue working together to invest in the joint challenges of improving sustainability and productivity. Governments can also contribute by minimising and removing regulatory barriers to new technologies where they are proven to be safe and effective," Mr Cossey concluded.

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World Environment Day Background:

World Environment Day (WED) is an annual event that is aimed at being the biggest and most widely celebrated global day for positive environmental action. WED is also a day for people from all walks of life to come together to ensure a cleaner, greener and brighter outlook for themselves and future generations.

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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