



## MEDIA RELEASE

### INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE STIFLED BY INEFFECTIVE REFORMS AND INEFFICIENCY

**24 February 2016 (Canberra)** – The performance statistics released by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) today are abysmal and highlight that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources' last round of reforms has failed on their key goal to improve regulatory efficiency.

"This abysmal performance is best demonstrated by the fact that the regulator is only achieving 52% of work within its statutory timeframes. Such lengthy delays in assessing crop protection product applications for registration means that Australian farmers are being denied the benefits of new and innovative products that their global competitors already have. The innovation of new crop protection products or new uses for existing products that is core to improving productivity by Australian farmers is being stifled by a slow, inefficient and cumbersome regulatory system," said Mr Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia.

"Australia is fortunate to have an independent, scientifically competent and technically proficient regulator, however ongoing issues relating to efficiency, predictability and consistency are seriously affecting farmer access to the latest crop protection products."

"These results are a direct consequence of the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources' complete disregard for the impact of their previous reform agenda, developed between 2010 and 2014, on the APVMA. The transitional funding provided to the APVMA was also largely insufficient, particularly when a quarter of the amount provided needed to be paid back to the Department well before any efficiency could be realised."

"The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources must hasten to correct the mistakes of the previous 'so called' efficiency reform agenda that has thus far delivered nothing more than extended registration timeframes, before the APVMA is completely overwhelmed. These fixes must be fast-tracked so that the promises made so many years ago can finally be delivered," said Mr Cossey.

"For years CropLife Australia, national and state farmer organisations and producer groups have dedicated substantial resources to support the multiple agricultural and veterinary chemical reform agendas in the hope that it would help deliver efficiency in the regulatory system. It is now beyond time that the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources shows it is genuinely listening to those who use and understand the regulatory system, and demonstrate competency by focusing on delivering real efficiency reform without further disrupting the performance of the regulator."

"Irrespective of the impacts of the reform agenda, these performance results are unacceptable and the APVMA must do better. It is however important to acknowledge that while trying to deal with the impacts of legislative reform, the APVMA has implemented a range of significant administrative and operational efficiency initiatives that CropLife is optimistic will deliver some regulatory efficiency. It is heartening to at least see a regulator seeking to genuinely deliver, at an operational level, on the Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources' objectives in terms of efficiency reform. It's about time the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources stops being an inhibitor to real efficiency reform and starts showing a similar willingness to deliver on the Minister's own drive and commitment to regulatory efficiency."

"The Department of Agriculture and Water Resources needs to explain how they have allowed Australia's agricultural and veterinary chemical regulator to become a growing barrier to innovation at a time when access to the latest agricultural tools is crucial for Australia's farmers," said Mr Cossey.

"Ensuring Australia's farmers have access to crop protection products so they can farm productively, sustainably and competitively is crucial. Years of Department of Agriculture and Water Resources 'efficiency reform' agendas and disruptive external influences have now culminated in a regulator that delays crucial product registrations and stifles innovation. This denies farmer access to the latest innovative products and is effectively tying the hands of farmers and preventing them from being able to compete globally on a level playing field."

"Fixing the mistakes of the previous reform agenda and prioritising reforms that drive real efficiency are imperative to enabling innovation in agriculture. That's how the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources can help deliver on the Government's innovation agenda," Mr Cossey concluded.

**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 contribute more than \$13 million a year to 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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