

FARMERS, AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT BENEFIT FROM 20 YEARS OF GM CROP CULTIVATION

15 April 2016 (Canberra) – The latest independent report published by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) confirms the benefits that plant biotechnology has delivered for farmers, communities, consumers, economies and the environment for twenty years.

“This report confirms the importance of Australian farmers being able to choose innovative, safe and approved technologies to remain globally competitive, meet the requirements of increased food demand and farm sustainably in a changing and challenging climate,” said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia.

“Modern farming using biotechnology innovation will play an increasingly crucial role in food, feed and fibre production in Australia and this report highlights the need to ensure non-science based and unnecessary costly regulation doesn’t hold Australia back from reaping the benefits and being a world leader in agricultural innovation. This is further evidence that state moratoria on genetically modified (GM) crops are antiquated and serve no purpose.”

The ISAAA report marks twenty years of successful commercialisation of GM crops with more than 4.9 billion acres of GM crops planted since 1996 across 20 developing and eight industrialised countries representing more than 60 percent of the world’s population. This 100-fold increase in plantings since 1996 makes GM crops the fastest adopted crop technology in recent times.

The report also highlights that since 1996 GM crops have improved the sustainable use of pesticides, saving 583.5 million kg of active ingredient; conserved biodiversity by saving more than 375 million acres of land from being placed in agricultural production; alleviated poverty for 16.5 million small farmers and farm families, totalling more than 65 million people; and reduced CO₂ emissions from agriculture by 27 billion kg in 2014 alone (equivalent to removing 12 million cars from the road for one year).

Australian farmers continue to embrace crop biotechnology with an increase in GM crop plantings of 21 percent, to a total of more than 1.6 million acres in 2015. GM herbicide tolerant canola increased by around 30 percent to more than 1 million acres in 2015, with the fastest rate of adoption occurring in Western Australia as growers there recognise the advantages of superior weed control, higher yields, increased market demand and greater on-farm economic and environmental benefits.

“Australian farmers, like farmers all around the world, recognise the enormous agronomic, economic and environmental benefits that come with the use of agricultural biotechnology innovations. The repeal of state GM moratoria will unshackle Australian farmers and secure their choice to access modern agriculture innovations that allow them to compete on a level playing field in an aggressively competitive global market,” said Mr Cossey.

“GM crops are the most tested and regulated food product in the world. Countless independent, long-term studies have been carried out by universities, government organisations, public institutions and private companies around the world over the past few decades. Every legitimate scientific and regulatory body that has examined the evidence has arrived at the conclusion that GM crops and the foods they produce are as safe as their conventional counterparts.

“Australian farmers must have confidence in their access to these safe, effective modern agriculture innovations to maintain and improve on their position as global leaders in agriculture. It is time that public policies and regulations for GM crops are based on facts and evidence, and the ideologically driven, baseless scare campaigns by activist groups stop unduly influencing agricultural policy,” concluded Mr Cossey. More information about the ISAAA report is available online at www.isaaa.org.

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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 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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