



MEDIA RELEASE

MINDLESS GOVERNMENT RED TAPE WILL COMPROMISE FARMER SAFETY AND IMPOSE \$58 MILLION EXTRA COST FOR THE PRIVILEGE

29 April 2016 (Canberra) – In a classic example of bureaucracy gone mad, the Federal Department of Employment and Safe Work Australia are putting farmer and other agricultural workers safety at risk and imposing an extra \$58 million of unnecessary red tape costs on Australian agriculture with the implementation of duplicative labelling regulation on crucial agricultural chemicals.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of the national peak organisation for Australia's plant science sector, CropLife Australia, today said "this is one of the most mindless and ridiculous bureaucratic actions by a government department and agency that I have ever seen. It seems almost macabre that an agency that is supposedly tasked with worker safety will in fact compromise the safety of farmers and other users of crop protection products by requiring confusing, duplicative and entirely unnecessary extra labelling on already fully assessed, registered products with comprehensive labels."

"To add insult to injury, if implemented, these new requirements will impose an additional \$58 million of red tape costs onto Australia's farmers. This cost to the agricultural sector is particularly galling, considering by Safe Work Australia's own admission at Senate Estimates, there has not been one workplace incident relating to the lack of a hazard and precautionary statement on agricultural chemical labels," said Mr Cossey.

"Australia's crop protection chemical products are some of the most regulated products in the world and the plant science industry will continue to always support regulation that offers the best and most efficient outcomes for the protection of worker health and safety. All available evidence from around the world points to the scientific, evidence-based risk assessment system used by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA), the relevant Federal Government regulator of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. These mindless changes by Safe Work Australia to the labelling regulations will effectively undermine the existing world's best practice regulation by the APVMA. Several state governments have also been misled by Safe Work Australia into mirroring these changes"

"The additional labelling regulations enforce the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) that is designed for developing countries, such as Burkina Faso and Turkey, that don't have an appropriate, independent and technically proficient agricultural chemical regulator. GHS was never meant to be implemented where there already is a high-level risk assessment process in place. That is why our major trading partners with comparative regulatory systems, such as the United States of America, specifically exempted agricultural chemicals from GHS in recognition that their existing regulatory system provides the best Work Health and Safety requirements. It is crucial that Australia apply a similar pragmatic, sensible and logical approach," said Mr Cossey.

"Despite strong objections from farmer representative groups, all relevant industry bodies, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources and the APVMA, Safe Work Australia along with the Department of Employment have belligerently pushed ahead with the ridiculous and potentially dangerous duplication of agricultural chemical labelling regulations."

"The fact that the SWA Board and management have failed to take corrective action on this is deeply concerning. Accordingly we call on Senator Michaelia Cash and her relevant state government colleagues to immediately restore confidence in Australia's world-class agvetchem regulatory system and reinstate the recognition of APVMA approved labels. This mistake, which originated under the previous government, has been ushered in under this Government's watch. From 1 January 2017 the colossal confusion of these confusing and dangerous regulations will undermine worker safety."

"This is one of those ridiculous bureaucratic solutions in search of a problem and is more about justifying the existence of relevant policy branches and Safe Work Australia than about actually improving worker safety. We hope that common sense will prevail," concluded Mr Cossey.

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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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