



MEDIA RELEASE

IMPORTANCE OF INNOVATION IN AGRICULTURE CONFIRMED IN PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT

4 May 2016 (Canberra) – The importance of innovation in agriculture, the need for removal of antiquated state moratoria on the cultivation of genetically modified (GM) crops and the value of appropriate risk-commensurate regulations were confirmed in a Parliamentary Committee’s “Smart farming – Inquiry into agricultural innovation” report released today.

The Inquiry was carried out by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry with the purpose of ensuring Australian farmers remain at the forefront of development and adoption of new technologies that help reap advances in productivity, sustainability and efficiency.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of the national peak organisation for Australia’s plant science sector, CropLife Australia, today said “the Parliamentary Committee’s report confirms there is no other sector where innovation is more crucial than that which is charged with producing the food, feed and fibre for the nation.”

“We call on all Parties to publicly commit to pursuing these recommendations immediately,” said Mr Cossey.

“As outlined in CropLife Australia’s submission to the Inquiry, Australian farmers with access to crop biotechnology over the last 20 years have benefited from the environmental advantages and have gained more than US\$885 million of farm income. Furthermore, several independent and government commissioned reports, along with real-world experience, show that moratoria on GM crop cultivation in place in Tasmania and South Australia have not delivered a marketing advantage and have only served to deny farmers in those states from gaining the financial, agronomic and environmental benefits of new technologies such as GM crops.”

“The Committee has called on the Government to pursue all available options to achieve a nationally consistent approach to the approval for commercial use of gene technology, including the phase out of state-based moratoria on the cultivation of GM products. This recommendation equates to a declaration that common sense and science-based evidence should prevail in policy decisions,” said Mr Cossey.

“The Committee’s recommendation that a threshold for approved genetically-modified material be introduced in the National Standard for Organic and Bio-Dynamic Produce would bring Australia’s organic standards in line with our international competitors’ standards.”

“It’s important to ensure that our farmers have the latest and best tools available to them through that innovation. Nothing kills innovation more quickly or effectively than the dead weight of unnecessary Government red tape. That is why a regulatory environment that is efficient, effective and only commensurate with risk is so crucial,” said Mr Cossey.

“Not surprisingly, the Committee also found the need for efficiencies to be found in the current agricultural and veterinary chemical regulatory framework to prevent disincentives for registration of new crop protection products. Unnecessary additional labelling of agricultural chemicals was noted, along with a recommendation for the agvet chemical regulator to streamline processes and use the decisions of trusted and comparable international regulators as a basis for product registration.”

“We applaud the Committee for its work and look forward to all parties publicly committing to support the recommendations before the election,” 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.

