

20 YEARS OF BENEFITING FROM GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS PROVES TIME IS UP FOR ANTIQUATED MORATORIA

6 June 2016 (Canberra) – Australian farmers growing genetically modified (GM) crops for the last 20 years have realised significant economic and environmental benefits according to an independent report released today by Graham Brookes of UK-based PG Economics.

The *Adoption and Impact of Genetically Modified (GM) Crops in Australia: 20 Years' Experience* report provides insights into the reasons why many farmers in Australia have adopted and continue to increasingly use crop biotechnology since becoming commercially available 20 years ago. The 20 years of success of GM crop cultivation in Australia is also confirmation that time is up for antiquated and entirely unnecessary state-based moratoria on GM crops.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of the national peak organisation for Australia's plant science sector, CropLife Australia, today said "Australian farmers have always embraced innovation in agriculture and the rapid adoption of GM crops is evidence of farmers seeing the clear financial, agronomic and environmental benefits modern crop breeding innovation provides."

"It is also evident that state-based moratoria on GM crop cultivation serve no purpose other than to stifle innovation and in some cases act as a political football for people who blatantly refuse to acknowledge the real-world benefits GM crops provide to farmers and the nation."

"GM cotton is credited as being the saviour of Australia's cotton industry with Australian farmers among the first in the world to plant GM cotton seeds in 1996 and herbicide tolerant canola has been successfully grown in Australia since 2008 with almost 40% of WA's canola growers choosing GM crops. Many more farmers choose to grow GM canola as a rotation crop to help manage weed issues in other crops such as wheat and barley. It's about time state policy settings are supportive of Australian farmers and their right to choose to reap the well-established benefits of GM crops," said Mr Cossey.

"The report released today shows that since 1996 Australian cotton and canola farmers have gained \$1.37 billion worth of extra income and produced an additional 226,000 tonnes of canola that would otherwise not have been grown if conventional crops had been used."

"The cultivation of GM crops have led to more sustainable use of crop protection products with a reduction of 22 million kilograms of product used. The environmental benefits from the adoption of GM crops by farmers has also resulted in a saving of nearly 27 million litres of fuel use and 71.5 million kilograms less carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere."

"In the face of these numerous benefits of GM crops and the real-world experience of 20 years of GM crop cultivation in Australia, state-based moratoria just doesn't make sense. Several independent and government commissioned reports show that Tasmania and South Australia have not gained a marketing advantage from a GM-free status, while their farmers have missed out on their share of the \$1.37 billion income gained by Australian farmers with access to crop biotechnology over the last 20 years."

"GM crop state-based moratoria was initially introduced as a temporary measure to address perceived concerns around market access; concerns that after 20 years of real-world experience are proven to be unfounded. Australia's gene technology regulatory system is one of the best in the world. It is a system that consumers can be confident in that approved GM crops are perfectly safe."

"A truly productive and competitive agriculture sector that can sustainably contribute to food security challenges in a changing climate requires farmer access to modern farming technologies. Australian farmers deserve to have confidence in their choice of safe and approved crops and it is time that public policies for GM crops are based on facts and evidence, not political game-playing or ideologically driven scare campaigns," concluded Mr Cossey.

The *Adoption and Impact of Genetically Modified (GM) Crops in Australia: 20 Years' Experience* report is available at www.croplife.org.au

Contact: Jaelle Bajada (Manager - Corporate Affairs) Ph: 02 6273 2733 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 *drum*MUSTER, 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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