



MEDIA RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL REPORT CONFIRMS GM CROPS DELIVERING BENEFITS TO FARMERS, AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

08 May 2017 (Canberra) – The latest independent report published by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) confirms that twenty-one years of plant biotechnology has had significant benefits for farmers, communities, consumers, economies and the environment, both in Australia and globally.

“The 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. 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 the remaining state moratoria on genetically modified (GM) crops are antiquated and serve no purpose.”

“The ISAAA report marks twenty-one years of successful commercialisation of GM crops with more than 5.3 billion acres of GM crops planted since 1996 across 19 developing and seven industrialised countries representing more than 60 per cent of the world’s population. This 110-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 620 million kg of active ingredient; and conserved biodiversity by saving more than 430 million acres of land from being placed in agricultural production. They have alleviated poverty for 18 million small farmers and farm families, totalling more than 65 million people; and reduced CO2 emissions from agriculture by 26.7 billion kg in 2015 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 29 percent, to a total of more than 2.1 million acres in 2016. This improvement is mostly from GM cotton which saw a significant increase in plantings due to the introduction of new GM varieties. GM cotton is one the great success stories of Australian agriculture, comprising nearly 100 per cent of the Australian cotton crop. Adoption of GM technology has resulted in greater water use efficiency and has greatly improved the cotton industry’s sustainable use of pesticides,” said Mr Cossey.

“GM herbicide tolerant canola was grown on over one million acres in 2016, planted by more than 1000 Australian farmers with more than 180 growers planting it for the first time. Since 2008, the average yield gain from GM canola in Australia has been 11 per cent, resulting in an additional 226,000 tonnes of canola being produced.”

“The repeal of the GM crop moratorium in Western Australia provided WA growers with the certainty they will have access to the full range of innovative tools and opportunities the plant science industry has to offer. Industry will also now be more inclined to invest research dollars into new varieties in WA which will become increasingly suited to the local environment and will encourage further adoption.”

“With more than 21 years of successful use of GM crops being grown side-by-side with non-GM crops in Australia and internationally, it’s not surprising to see the Productivity Commission recommend the repeal of the remaining State moratoria on GM crops in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory,” concluded Mr Cossey.

The full report can be downloaded here:

<http://isaaa.org/resources/publications/briefs/52/download/isaaa-brief-52-2016.pdf>

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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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