

WORST APVMA PERFORMANCE STATISTICS IN HISTORY

11 May 2017 (Canberra) – The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) performance statistics released today confirm the serious impact of the decision to relocate the agency, with the regulator achieving only 30 per cent of work within statutory time-frames for crop protection registrations – down from 82 per cent from the September quarter last year. These are the worst performance statistics in the history of the regulator.

“Excessive loss of key specialist staff, due to the Government’s relocation decision, has led to the failure of the regulator to meet its obligated time-frames for more than two-thirds of product registration applications. This means that farmers are missing out on a significant number of important agricultural products, putting them at a massive disadvantage to their international competitors,” said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia.

“This relocation is crippling the plant science industry in Australia but the real victims will be Australia’s hard-working farmers.”

“Conservative estimates calculated by EY in the ‘Cost benefit and risk analysis of the potential relocation of the APVMA’ report indicate the impact of a one year delay in the approval of just one new agricultural chemical product will cost broad-acre crop farmers between \$64m and \$193m per annum. Considering many of the delayed applications are associated with crop protection products that have short annual application windows, these delays effectively equate to an entire farming season.”

“This means that the delays the industry is now facing as a result of failing APVMA operations could result in billions of dollars of lost revenue to the Australian farming sector over the coming years.”

“Despite opposing this relocation we have sought to constructively work with Government to make this a success however, this sort of performance report is making that very difficult. As far back as June last year CropLife provided a comprehensive and constructive suite of measures around the development of a digital strategy, streamlined business procedures and improved regulatory outcomes to deliver a next generation regulator,” said Mr Cossey.

“The Deputy Prime Minister’s commitment to do whatever is necessary to make this a success is what is keeping CropLife committed to working with the Government but it’s time for the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to deliver real outcomes as opposed to simply looking busy and shirking responsibility as they have been for the last three years.”

“This latest performance report surely signifies that it is time to stop and reconsider the decision to relocate a crucial agricultural regulator that is dependent on technical scientific specialists for which there is a global shortage.”

“Urgent action is now well overdue to save the regulator from getting to the point of not being able to register agricultural chemical products in timeframe at all. The Department’s promised and long-overdue regulatory fixes are now three years behind schedule and these changes are about fixing the Department’s last mistakes and aren’t specific to addressing the disaster we are facing now.”

“If the Department doesn’t show a dramatic increase in both its capacity and its competency to address this serious problem, then it will be facing an even greater crisis in Australian farming over the coming years as a result of farmers not having access to crucial agricultural chemical products that are essential for producing the nation’s food, feed and fibre,” said Mr Cossey.

“The relocation of the APVMA was an arbitrary government decision that had no endorsement or support by anyone in the agriculture industry. With the regulator about to hit rock bottom, industry shouldn’t be forced to wear the brunt of the consequences and serious consideration for compensating registrant losses should be given. A comprehensive package of reforms delivered immediately is necessary to avoid this being a complete failure.”

“The solutions and initiatives needed to address the consequences of relocation are going to have to be drastic and undertaken quickly to stem the bleeding from the nation’s farming sector,” 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. 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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