



## MEDIA RELEASE

### ANAO ASSESSMENT OF APVMA PERFORMANCE IS A CALL TO URGENT ACTION

**22 June 2017 (Canberra)** – The national peak industry body for the plant science sector today welcomed the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) detailed and considered performance audit report on the implementation of pesticide and veterinary medicine regulatory reform tabled today. It highlights the serious failure of the reform processes to deliver real regulatory efficiencies and confirms industry's long-standing call that urgent action is needed.

CropLife Australia's Chief Executive Officer, Mr Matthew Cossey, said "this ANAO report confirms that the regulatory reform imposed on the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) has failed to improve efficiency. The report's main findings reflect industry's justified criticism and are best summed up on page eight of the report that **'...overall, the regulatory burden on industry has not been reduced since the reforms were implemented.'**"

"While there are clear failings at the APVMA to properly implement reform, the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources also needs to take responsibility and start developing regulation that can be effectively implemented," said Mr Cossey.

"CropLife acknowledges there were promising signs emerging in 2016, with timeframe performance for assessing pesticide applications reaching 83 per cent in the September quarter. The report, however, confirms that there has been a massive blowout in the number of overdue assessments since the September quarter while at the same time the total number of applications significantly fell. This should ring alarm bells about a loss of confidence by industry in the unnecessarily timely and expensive Australian regulatory system, which means farmers will miss out on the latest tools to which their international competitors have access."

"The Department imposed the previous government's 2014 reform package on the APVMA without realistic implementation timeframes or sufficient funding, and this has also directly contributed to this poor assessment by the ANAO. It is clear the Department and the Regulator need to work better together to improve the implementation of regulatory reforms."

"It is about time the Department and the APVMA deliver tangible improvements to the regulation of agricultural chemicals in Australia, otherwise the hundreds of millions of dollars every year in lost productivity currently experienced due to regulatory inefficiency, will continue and worsen into the future," said Mr Cossey.

"CropLife and our members have constructively engaged for years in all the previous reform agendas and proposed specific initiatives to improve the system. Despite our frustration with the slow process and lack of proper implementation of these reforms, we remain committed to continuing to work constructively with Government to ensure Australia has the world's best agricultural chemical regulator."

"The cost burden of the APVMA falls on the regulated entities – the developers, manufacturers and registrants of innovative crop protection products – through a cost recovery process. Delays and inefficiencies end up adding unnecessary costs to crucial agricultural input products which is a cost that ends up on the farm gate."

"It is clear that urgent action is needed and it is important that future reforms must also be appropriately funded by Government. It is, however, important that the report findings are well understood, considered in context, and not sensationalised or underplayed for the benefit of any one certain political agenda."

"The importance of this regulator maintaining its technical competencies whilst significantly improving efficiencies is crucial to the plant science industry and the nation's farming sector. It's simply time for the development and implementation for real reform that delivers genuine improvements to the regulator's efficiency," 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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