



MEDIA RELEASE

APVMA PERFORMANCE DECLINES FURTHER TO AN UNPRECEDENTED LOW

21 August 2017 (Canberra) – The recently released Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) performance statistics highlight the ongoing ramifications of the loss of key specialist staff and structural inefficiencies. The Regulator achieved only 24 per cent of work within statutory timeframes for crop protection pesticide product registrations – this is a significant drop from the previous all-time low of 30 per cent last quarter.

All indicators and performance statistics in this most recent report show deeply concerning trends that suggest the situation is only going to worsen.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia said, “The Regulator failing to meet its obligated timeframes for more than three quarters of crop protection product registration applications is plainly unacceptable. The plant science industry and the nation’s farming sector were seeking improvement when 82 per cent of crop protection registrations were being finalised within statutory timeframes by the APVMA last year. At 24 per cent we are now far beyond needing just the standard public sector bureaucratic response.”

“Australian farmers are now missing out on a significant number of important agricultural products, putting them at a massive disadvantage to their international competitors. This will be the cause of Australian farmers losing at least hundreds of millions of dollars of possible improved productivity in the immediate future.”

“Despite the total number of applications submitted to the APVMA for crop protection products remaining consistent with the normal average over a couple of years, the total number of applications that are in progress and still in timeframe has been trending down since September 2016 and the backlog of applications is only increasing. All of this does not bode well for the ongoing performance of the APVMA with urgent and significant operational improvement needed,” said Mr Cossey.

“Considering the vast majority of the APVMA’s work is the assessment of applications to register crop protection products, the significant and declining numbers makes any minor improvements in any other area essentially meaningless for the farming sector as a whole.”

“I acknowledge and commend the APVMA’s interim Chief Executive Officer, Dr Chris Parker, for recognising the need to identify the causes of this operational inefficiency and commissioning an independent review of operational performance; however, this needs to be completed and agreed actions taken urgently if they are going to address the problems and mitigate the impact on Australian farmers, as opposed to simply identify the problems again. CropLife encourages the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources to take a similar pragmatic view with a significantly increased urgency, and work constructively with industry and the Regulator to progress the development of reform proposals industry has provided over the last few years as a priority.”

“Maintaining the world-leading components of the Australian regulatory system is of paramount importance, however, it will all be for nothing if the Regulator continues to operate at what is now a ridiculous timeframe performance level for registering agricultural chemical products.”

“A comprehensive package of operational reforms is urgently required to enable the efficient and effective regulation of the critical crop protection products Australian farmers need to produce the nation’s food, feed and fibre while the APVMA transitions to Armidale,” 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 \$18 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.