



MEDIA STATEMENT

BASELESS ACTIVIST CAMPAIGNS AND SECONDARY BOYCOTTS FUELLED BY BUSINESS DECISIONS

30 January 2018 (Canberra) – CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector in Australia, has serious and deep concerns with the recent decision by some of Australia's major retailers to remove home-gardening use insecticides containing neonicotinoids from shelves without any scientific or independent regulatory basis to such a decision. It appears to have been purely driven by baseless overseas activist campaigns.

Australia has one of the healthiest and growing honeybee populations in the world¹ and is free of some major pests and diseases that are the real threat to honeybees. Australia is the only continent in the world with a substantial bee keeping industry that does not have the invasive varroa destructor mite (*Varroa*), which has devastated bee colonies internationally. The latest bee keeping industry figures show a strong and thriving sector² with number of hives and number of bee keepers having increased by 45 per cent and 58 per cent respectively since 2015³ – record-high levels.

Retailers such as Bunnings, Mitre 10, Coles and Woolworths have a responsibility to ensure their customers are educated to use these types of products in strict adherence to their label instructions and undertake integrated pest management in their home gardens, which would effectively ensure proper and safe use of insecticides, just like farmers do. They also have an obligation to Australian consumers to be guided by independent and Australian scientific regulatory assessment, not knee-jerk reactions to foreign based political campaign that are not in the interest of their customers.

Australian farmers are world-class in managing crop-pests using best-practice integrated pest prevention and monitoring methods before intervening with the use of biological controls, physical methods or pesticides.

Australian businesses succumbing to baseless foreign activist campaigns spuriously adopted in Australia will only fuel further evidence-free campaigns and secondary boycotts that will make it increasingly difficult for home gardeners, land managers and farmers to manage pests.

The use of pesticides, whether they are natural or synthetic compounds, is crucial in all forms of farming – insects, fungus and weeds are a constant threat to food, feed and fibre productivity. Australian consumers can be assured in the knowledge that the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) is a globally respected, scientifically and technically sound regulator of agricultural chemicals.

The APVMA conducts risk assessments on all agricultural and home gardening chemical products, ensuring that when used in accordance with label directions, the products present no unacceptable risk to users, consumers, pollinators or the environment.

APVMA approved label directions for home gardening products and agricultural chemical products must comply with all regulatory requirements, including appropriate statements to alert users of potential hazards to bees and other pollinators, and provide information regarding best management practices to be employed during use.

CropLife recognises that insecticide spray drift during crop flowering season can also unintentionally cause harm to bees. For this reason, CropLife, in partnership with the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, developed [BeeConnected](#), a world-first smart-phone platform to enable clear, rapid communication between farmers and beekeepers.

Industry programs such as BeeConnected along with retailer food safety programs such as Freshcare assure consumers not just about food safety and quality but also the stewardship of Australia's natural resources.

Statement by Mr Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia

¹ CSIRO, [It's official: our honey bees are some of the healthiest in the world](#), 14 January 2016,

² Australian Honey Bee Industry Council Survey, Monthly News, August 2017

³ [ABARES 2015 Honey Bee Industry Report](#), 8 December 2016