

## LUDDITES REJOICE AS EUROPEAN AGRICULTURE IS CONSIGNED TO THE DARK AGES

**26 JULY 2018 (Canberra)** – The European Union (EU) Court of Justice ruling overnight that plants resulting from some of the latest plant breeding innovations, including gene editing techniques such as CRISPR, are considered genetic modification has no basis in scientific evidence and has significant negative implications for plant breeding and farming.

Mr Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of the national peak organisation for Australia's plant science sector, CropLife Australia, today said "the decision by the EU Court of Justice highlights the ridiculousness of EU regulations on plant breeding and should be the trigger for the EU to finally clarify the regulation of plant breeding innovations based on scientific evidence and facts, not extreme anti-science agendas. As it stands, this decision will send European agriculture back into the dark ages."

"This ruling is a clear signal to the Australian Government to ensure that Australia's regulations of these plant breeding innovations are based on evidence and science, not on the bizarre, luddite opinions of European activist organisations."

"This decision provides nothing but regulatory uncertainty and places a handbrake on crucial global research on gene-edited crops that was working towards improvements in food crop nutrition, crop ability to cope with changing climate conditions and increased farming yields."

"Europe has some of the most fertile and productive agricultural land yet is one of the world's largest importers of food and animal feed. It is time Europe genuinely commits to contributing to global food nutrition and security, and to do anything else is morally reprehensible when global food nutrition and security remains such a significant challenge."

"The ruling is based almost entirely on the breeding process and the technology involved rather than the final outcome of the process and flies in the face of the recently stated opinion of the EU Advocate General. It is also at odds with decisions and interpretations made elsewhere in the world, including Australia, US, South America and Israel."

"This interpretation should not be followed by governments wishing to facilitate access to innovation by their local seed industry and farmers. It is crucial that Australia's plant science researchers in both the public and private sectors can have access to these methods. This will be key if Australia is to capitalise on the significant nutritional, environmental and productivity benefits that these latest breeding methods will deliver," said Mr Cossey.

"The latest plant breeding innovations like genome editing are easier and faster and can help to more efficiently develop plant varieties that have a reduced need for inputs. The latest innovations can also dramatically improve the efficiency of breeding programs and help achieve results in a much more targeted manner."

"Now, more than ever, it is critical that the Australian Government adopt pro-innovation policies so that Australian farmers have access to the latest tools and technologies to remain internationally competitive and sustainably feed a growing population," 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 \$20.6 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 millions of dollars 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.

