

Plant science industry backs calls to get Australia growing

14 July 2020 (Canberra) – Australia's plant science industry welcomes the National Farmers' Federation's plan for agriculture's role in accelerating Australia's COVID-19 economic recovery and commends the NFF leadership for this important work.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, Mr Matthew Cossey, said, "All CropLife member companies have worked tirelessly to ensure the continued production and supply of critical crop protection and GM crop products during what has been such an important time for farming and food security and a challenging time for the nation.

"The broader agriculture sector has been united to ensure there have been no disruptions throughout the entire supply chain that would put farming and food supply at risk.

"Included in the NFF's plan are specific recommendations on the agvet chemical regulatory framework and ag-biotechnology innovations. These recommendations are very achievable, aimed at improving productivity and competitiveness across Australia's farm sector."

1.7 Champion a risk-based approach to genetic technologies

Access to safe and effective gene technologies will continue to deliver agricultural productivity and sustainability improvements. The Federal Government should champion the Productivity Commission's 2016 recommendation that state and territory restrictions on cultivating approved GM crops should be lifted. The Federal Government should also implement the recommendations from the Department of Health's Third Review of the National Gene Technology Scheme to strengthen and modernise the national scheme.

1.8 Prioritise reform of the agvet chemical regulatory framework

Agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines (agvet chemicals) are a major contributor to agricultural productivity and competitiveness. The national framework for regulation of agvet chemicals is being reviewed by an expert independent panel, which is expected to report in 2021. Government must act.

Mr Cossey continued, "The plant science industry has been under immense strain from peak domestic demand and global trade disruptions and significant increases in demand for product. All efforts remain on ensuring farmers have the products they need to farm productively.

"Recent significant fee increases on the plant science industry, along with unjustifiable large fee increases by the Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS) all add costs to the farming sector and are disappointing in both their timing and their size. The Government has failed to ensure better financial management by these public sector agencies and this threatens important new innovations being available in Australia and the long term viability and sustainability of the plant science industry to support Australia's farmers.

"These fee increases can have a real impact on which critical crop protection products make it to the Australian market. With 73 per cent of the total value of Australia's crop production enabled by crop protection products, government must be very cautious of any possible inhibitors to farmers accessing these vital products.

"Government must not take farm-input industries for granted. We need policy settings which enable growth and innovation so our farmers can get on with their jobs during this long road to economic recovery."

Mr Cossey concluded, "The plant science industry has been ready and willing to assist in any way that is required to ensure no threats to food security during this pandemic. We are just as ready to play our part in the next phase of economic recovery and growing Australia's agricultural sector."

Visit nff.org.au to view the full **Get Australia Growing** plan

Contact: Katherine Delbridge | 0410 491 261 | katherine.delbridge@croplife.org.au

About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than \$20 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.