

Pesticides essential to celebrate International Coffee Day

01 October 2021 (Canberra) – The first of October is International Coffee Day, an occasion to promote and celebrate one of the world’s most loved beverages.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey said, “The world consumes around 500 billion cups of coffee each year. While it is not a major crop in Australia, as a commodity, coffee is worth over \$100 billion globally.

“Coffee is one of the most widely traded commodities in international markets and is an agricultural crop of global economic importance. Coffee is grown in 80 countries around the world with 70 per cent being produced by smallholder farmers.

“However, the large-scale production of coffee beans would not be possible without farmer’s ready access to crop protection products.

“Without pesticides, coffee crops would suffer yield losses of up to 40 per cent due to devastating diseases such as coffee leaf rust and pests like root nematodes and the coffee borer beetle.

“It’s the judicious application of crop protection products that assist farmers to successfully produce healthy crops and remain profitable.

“Farmers around the world are having to adapt to farming in even more challenging climatic conditions. They are constantly faced with pests, weeds and diseases which damage and consume their crops. This means they need access to all farming tools and agricultural innovations to assist them.

“In addition to continual advances in crop protection products, scientists are using biotechnology innovations to breed new varieties that are resistant to environmental threats, changing weather patterns, increased temperatures, disease and insects.”

There are more than 100 coffee species in the world but only two are currently commercially viable. Arabica coffee contributes almost 75 per cent of production with the remaining 25 per cent coming from the Robusta species. Of these two species, Arabica coffee is considered a superior beverage but is highly sensitive to pests like fungi, nematodes and insects. Robusta coffee, while lower in quality, is more resistant to pests. It would be desirable to combine these genetic traits, however, to date, traditional plant breeding techniques have been largely unsuccessful.

Mr Cossey continued, “Agricultural biotechnology research and innovations hold great promise in meeting the types of challenges we see in crops like coffee – and thankfully chemistry is protecting it in the meantime.”

Mr Cossey concluded, “The plant science industry is committed to improving farming practice so that farmers and farms benefit environmentally, agronomically and economically.

“As you enjoy a coffee this International Coffee Day, take a moment to recognise all of the hard work and inputs that take coffee from crop to cup.”

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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.