
The importance of empowering rural women

15 October 2021 (Canberra) - Today is International Day of Rural Women, which seeks to put a spotlight on gender equality and empowerment of women in rural communities as a key component for a world free from hunger and poverty.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey, said, "As an agricultural industry which supports strong rural and regional communities, we recognise how we all benefit from empowering rural women.

"We see the crucial and innovative role rural women play in the production of food, feed and fibre in our country. Working not just in farming, but in varied agricultural professions such as engineering and programming to food innovation and science, women are often shaping the future of farming and our rural communities."

The United Nations established International Day of Rural Women in 2008. In developing countries, women make up almost half of the agricultural labour force. When it comes to education, access to crop inputs and crop productivity, however, there's a significant gap between men and women. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization states that if women had the same access as men to resources like land, financing and technology, agricultural yields could increase by 20-30 per cent, enough to feed between 100 and 150 million people.

Mr Cossey continued, "It's astonishing to think that until 1994, Australian women could not legally claim to be 'farmers', with the law defining them as domestics, helpmates, or even farmers' wives.

"We must continually recognise the critical role, leadership and contribution of rural women and ensure equal opportunities for all, both within our country and around the world. We must commit to ensuring that women have equal influence on the agricultural agenda, which will benefit the entire agricultural sector."

Mr Cossey concluded, "Improving the lives of rural women around the world is key to ensuring a food secure world. We stand to gain so much if we focus on closing the gender gap and empowering rural women worldwide."

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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.

