
Important agvet improvements to be legislated but farming sector cops an extra unnecessary bill

1 December 2021 (Canberra) - The Senate has today passed the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Legislation Amendment (Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority Board and Other Improvements) Bill 2019, which will bring about minor but important measures that have been long-awaited by the Australian plant science and farming sectors.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey, said, "CropLife Australia welcomes the passing of this Bill which, in its first iteration, passed the House of Representatives in February of 2018 and for which CropLife has long advocated.

"While the original agvet improvements contained in the Bill are minor, they are nonetheless crucial for the effective and efficient regulation of agricultural chemistry and for Australian farmers to maintain timely access to important crop protection products.

"It took almost four years though, due to the Federal Government's rushed and last-minute amendment to its own Bill, their dogged insistence that the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority needs a governance board – despite the APVMA's previous board being abolished in 2007 after a comprehensive independent review – and their refusal to provide funding for the board.

"CropLife and our members have been clear that we do not, in principle, oppose properly considered and constructed governance structures, like boards, for regulators, but do oppose unnecessary and ill-conceived initiatives that impose significant costs on the farming sector and supporting industries.

"The Federal Government has at least included industry suggestions regarding the makeup and structure of the governance board and confirmed government would fund the set-up costs, however, they are only providing the funding for the first two years of operation.

"It's staggering that the Minister for Agriculture would introduce a governance board that he knows full well will add costs to the farming sector and not provide ongoing funding, instead shifting those costs onto the farming sector. This regulator is already fully funded through industry fees and levies. If the Federal Government does not commit to fully funding the ongoing operations of the APVMA board it will be the only governance board of a federal regulator that is not government funded, a serious and unfair blow to farmers and the ag industry after already incurring significant APVMA fee and levy increases in 2020, approved by Minister Littleproud.

"Equally disappointing is the backflip of the Federal Labor Opposition on their long-term public position to not support an ill-considered and unfunded board. They have supported this Bill to pass without securing ongoing funding for the governance board."

Mr Cossey concluded, "I call upon both sides of politics to now commit to ongoing full funding arrangements for the APVMA board so it is aligned with all other government regulators and Australia's farmers are not unfairly penalised."

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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.

