
Celebrating our soils: where food begins

5 December 2022 (Canberra) – This World Soil Day shines a light on soil: where food begins. Soil health is not only at the foundation of our food systems and critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also one of the most valuable assets to help address climate change and food and nutrition security.

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia said, “It takes over 200 years to develop just one centimetre of topsoil which erodes with tillage practices that expose it to wind and water. This is something we can’t afford from a farming or environmental perspective.

“By raising the awareness of soil health and providing the appropriate tools and innovations to farmers, Australia’s ancient soils can be protected against the threat of erosion, nutrient loss and tillage. Soils globally contain 25 per cent of the planet’s biodiversity and produce 95 per cent of food sources. But across the globe, not all soils are the same and Australia faces specific challenges.

“Plant science industry innovations and supporting stewardship initiatives using modern crop biotechnology and crop protection scientific breakthroughs have made major changes in the history of Australian agricultural practices, enabling improved farming practices on our soils and the environment.

“The use of crop protection products, specifically glyphosate, is an integral part of conservation agriculture practices. Not only has it prevented soil erosion by 90 per cent by reducing tillage, but it is also reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing soil organic matter over time.

“Research in biotechnology has also found ways to use genome editing to increase the amount of carbon stored in soils, resulting in megatons of carbon being scrubbed from the atmosphere. These carbon-rich soils then provide more nutrients to crops and hold more water and soil organisms to help them grow,” said Mr Cossey.

Australian agriculture emissions have reduced by 59 per cent since 2005, in part due to soil conservation practices. Despite food production quadrupling since the 1960s, land use has stayed almost the same.

“The plant science sector recognises that soil health is a priority to maintaining agricultural productivity and food and nutrition security. We should make every effort to promote soil conservation through enabling access to these biotechnology and crop protection innovations.” Mr Cossey concluded.

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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.

