
Diversity drives innovation: International Day of Women and Girls in Science

11 February 2022 (Canberra) – Today, on the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, we celebrate the achievements and contributions of women and girls in the field of science. The theme for this year is Innovate. Demonstrate. Elevate. Advance. Sustain. (I.D.E.A.S.), which highlights the critical role that women and girls play in driving plant science innovation and sustainable development in agriculture.

Despite the critical role that diverse workforces play, there continues to be a significant gap in the participation and retention of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) fields. Just 23% of senior management and 8% of chief executive officers in STEM industries in Australia are women. While enrolment in university STEM courses continues to rise, there needs to be more focus on keeping STEM qualified women in the workforce.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey, said, “A lack of diversity means we have a limited workforce which misses a broad range of perspectives. From science and research, manufacturing, policy, and on-farm, we all need to do better to drive gender equality in these sectors to ensure that we have the brightest minds and innovative thinkers continuing to pursue careers in these critical fields. At CropLife Australia we are very fortunate to have some amazing women scientists driving the next generation of policy and regulation for our industry.

“In Australia, the plant science and agriculture sectors are a critical part of the country's economy, and women play a vital role in driving innovation and sustainability in these fields. From pioneering research on new crop varieties, to developing innovative technologies and practices that help farmers to increase productivity and reduce waste, women and girls in plant science are at the forefront of some of the most important developments in the field.

“Whether it's by supporting female students and early-career scientists, structural change in the workplace, or encouraging new ways of thinking that bring innovative solutions and broader perspectives to policy makers, CropLife and its member companies continue to ensure that plant science is committed to closing the gender gap in STEM,” Mr Cossey concluded.

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Contact: Elyse Denman | 0459 550 010 | elyse.denman@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.

