
Landcare Week: Environmental conservation is crucial

9 August 2023 (Canberra) - Invasive weeds are a major threat to Australia's native habitat, natural biodiversity and agricultural lands which are home to many plant and animal species that can't be found anywhere else on earth. More than 2,700 invasive weeds are now endemic in Australia, growing by 20 new species every year. With more droughts, fires and floods predicted as the impacts of climate change intensify, invasive weed are likely to become an even greater threat. Landcare Week is important opportunity to recognise that *Landcare is for Everyone*, and environmental land managers and farmers need access to all products and innovations to enable protection of Australia's precious natural environment and ecosystems.

"Anyone who has experienced the true scale and devastating impact of invasive plants, pest insects and diseases in Australia knows what a major challenge they pose," said Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr. Matthew Cossey.

Invasive weeds, particularly "transformers" (weeds with the capacity to overwhelm and transform entire habitats) can be as destructive as land clearing - dramatically altering the structure and function of ecosystems and displacing native species.

Gamba Grass, a declared weed of 'national significance,' is the single greatest threat in the Australian tropics. It kills eucalypt trees and displaces native grasses, fuelling fires eight times more intense and extends fire seasons by up to six weeks.

Likewise, Bitou Bush was introduced to Heritage-listed K'gari (formerly Fraser Island), to stabilise sand dunes. Its dense growth has had the opposite effect of increased sand erosion.


"Glyphosate is the only herbicide known to control Australia's worst weeds like Gamba Grass and Bitou Bush," said Mr. Cossey.

"There is a place for a variety of integrated weed management methods but when it comes to cropping and environmental weeds, there is no viable alternative to the judicious and targeted use of herbicides like glyphosate as the most genuinely environmentally sustainable option.

"That's why it's so important to develop land management practices based on a combined understanding of the threat, the science and local environmental conditions.

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.



“As custodians of 60 per cent of Australia’s landmass, no one understands this better than Australia’s farmers. Since prickly pear first engulfed whole landscapes in the nineteenth century, forcing many farmers from their properties, farmers know all too well the importance of agricultural chemistry as part of good land management.

“In fact, a recent [ABARES report](#) confirms that Australian farmers are world leaders in agricultural sustainability and innovative land management practices thanks to early adoption of plant science innovations,” said Mr Cossey.

As a means of conserving and restoring Australia’s ancient soils, Australia was among the first countries to wholeheartedly adopt ‘conservation farming’ practices such as zero-tillage, which are enabled by the judicious use of modern and innovative pesticides.

Around 85 per cent of the nation’s farms now use zero-till practices known to improve soil health and minimise soil erosion which have radically improved greenhouse gas emissions and taken water use efficiency to new heights.

Through sustainable intensification enabled by plant science innovations, land clearing has reduced by 75 per cent in the past 20 years, marking the greatest global shift in land use, delivering land back to nature and conservation efforts.

Mr Cossey concluded, “This is why it is so important to stick to the evidence when it comes to effective long-term protection and restoration of Australia’s pristine environment and sustainable farming. Not only is there a place for pesticides, without them we would significantly undermine our environmental goals.”

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