
International Coffee Day – Plant science innovations are protectors of the coffee bean worldwide

01 October 2023 (Canberra) – For centuries coffee has transcended borders and cultures, as one of the worlds most loved beverages. Unfortunately, the threat of major pests and disease to the crop also knows no bounds. As the Australian coffee industry continues to grow, it is crucial to protect these important crops from pests and disease to ensure a thriving coffee sector in Australia and globally.

“The world consumes around 500 billion cups of coffee each year making it one of the worlds most beloved and traded beverages,” said Mr Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector.

“While it is not yet a major crop in Australia, Australians take their coffee culture very seriously, with three quarters of Australians regularly drinking coffee, totaling nearly two kilograms of roasted beans per person every year.

“The specialty coffee market in Australia continues to expand, with consumers seeking high-quality, sustainably produced coffee which is exciting. However, it’s important that consumers understand what it really takes to produce their daily cup of ambition.


“Coffee is grown in far north Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, producing less than one per cent of the beans consumed in Australia. The rest of the coffee we consume is grown in 80 countries around the world with 70 per cent being produced by smallholder farmers. Coffee is more than a beverage, it’s a lifeline for many,” said Mr Cossey.

The sobering reality is that the large-scale production of coffee beans would not be possible without farmer’s ready access to crop protection products. Without pesticides, coffee crops would suffer yield losses of up to 40 per cent devastating diseases such as coffee leaf rust and pests like root nematodes and the coffee borer beetle.

With climate change making coffee even harder to grow, farmers around the world are having to adapt to new climatic challenges and the increasing pests, weeds and disease that damage and destroy their crops. This means they need access to all farming tools and agricultural innovations to assist them.

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 \$31.6 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 a part of the plant science industry’s 91 country international federation.



Mr Cossey continued, “Likewise agricultural biotechnology research and innovations provide great promise to meeting the challenges we see in crops like coffee. There are more than 100 coffee species in the world but only two are currently commercially viable. Arabica coffee contributes almost 75 per cent of production with the remaining 25 per cent coming from the Robusta species. Of these two species, Arabica coffee is considered a superior beverage but is highly sensitive to pests like fungi, nematodes and insects. Robusta coffee, while lower in quality, is more resistant to pests.

Biotechnology could be instrumental in combining these genetic traits, as, to date, traditional plant breeding techniques have been largely unsuccessful.

“Whether you’re an espresso aficionado, a latte lover or drip brew drinker, take a moment this International Coffee Day to recognise all of the hard work and inputs that take coffee from crop to cup,” concluded Mr Cossey.

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Audio grabs available [online](#).

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