
What goes around comes around: Celebrating a circular economy for Agricultural plastic this National Recycling Week

Canberra, 13 November: This National Recycling Week CropLife Australia is calling on government to get behind industry led initiatives to tackle agricultural plastic waste. Out of the 82,300 tonnes of plastic used in Australian agriculture annually, just over 12 per cent is recycled. However, with investment in the right logistics, infrastructure and know-how, the intelligent reuse of waste holds enormous untapped potential.

“Plastic packaging plays an essential role in Australia’s agricultural industry by protecting seed, pelletised pesticide and other agricultural inputs for their safe transport, use and storage. However, it can end up in landfill, is destroyed in an environmentally unfriendly manner or remains as on-farm waste,” said Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Matthew Cossey.

“Before regulatory requirements were introduced, industry-led solutions like CropLife’s **drumMUSTER®** program, part of its StewardshipFirst® initiative have long led the way towards a circular economy for plastic packaging.

“Ultimately what goes around, comes around, which is why the plant science industry invests heavily in stewardship initiatives that include product stewardship to manage each stage of a product through its lifecycle. In the future we will think only in cycles where end-of-life recycling is just one part of the circular economy,” said Mr Cossey.


This year, CropLife’s **drumMUSTER®** program celebrates 25 years of operation across 840 collection points across Australia. Since the first collection in 1999, **drumMUSTER®** has diverted over 42 million plastic drums from landfill and recycled them here in Australia into new products. This great initiative has been actively supported by the National Farmers Federation as a key partner in the program.

CropLife in partnership with the Australian Seed Federation also celebrates the first pilot of its new **bagMUSTER®** program, Australia’s first industry-led collection and recycling pathway for plastic agricultural input bags. Soft plastic recycling has come a long way in recent years. Innovative technologies developed right here in Australia can convert polypropylene plastic resins into new products like homewards, car bumpers and fuel.

Mr Cossey continued, “The launch of the pilot this year is another step closer to Australia’s transition to a more circular economy for agricultural plastics. It stands as an example to other industries, both nationally and globally, of what a genuine commitment to ensuring the proper management of plastic containers looks like.

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.



“However, from experience in developing, managing and running these programs, for Australia's successful transition to a genuine circular economy, further investment is urgently needed for the advancement and commercialisation of advanced recycling technologies and enabling new startup recycling pathways and programs.

“Only through well informed public policy settings and effectively targeted government programs that support initiatives like these, will we realise the true potential of recycling programs for agricultural plastics,” concluded Mr Cossey.

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