
World Soil Day - Celebrating the foundation of our food systems

5 December (Canberra) - The focus of this World Soil Day is “Soil and water, a source of life”. 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.

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. Australia’s ancient soils face specific challenges that require strategies to prevent soil erosion, soil moisture loss and tillage.

“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,” said Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr. Matthew Cossey.

“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 most important of these farming practices has been the adoption of no-till cropping, in which farmers manage weed control between crops by applying crop protection products and plant their crop directly into the standing stubble of a previous crop. This is complemented by the use of selective crop protection products during the growing season that target specific types of weeds,” said Mr Cossey.

These practices enabled by crop protection and biotechnology innovations maximise retention of soil moisture between crops, maintain soil structure and in turn have prevented soil erosion by 90 per cent, while increasing productivity, carbon sequestration and drought resilience.

While no farmer is ever drought proof, these technologies are enabling farmers to preserve soil integrity while continuing to produce food with less rain. ABARES has identified that over the period 1979-80 to 2014-15 the negative impact of a one in 20-year drought was reduced by over a third. Another ABARES study in 2019 found that the yield of wheat crops grown in dry conditions had increased by 14 percent since 2007-08. This is double the rate of growth in wheat yields for crops grown under normal conditions for the same period of time.

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 concluded, “This is why it is so important to stick to the evidence when it comes to effective long-term protection and management of Australia’s soils. Not only is there a place for pesticides, without them we would significantly undermine our environmental and food production goals.”

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