
Plant Virus detection illustrates critical importance of Biosecurity

Canberra, 06 September 2024: The recent discovery of tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) once again highlights the crucial role of biosecurity in defending both Australia's farming sector and sustainable food production against damaging insects, invasive weeds and diseases. Alone or combined, these pose a serious threat to the nation's agricultural productivity, sustainability, food security as well as our precious natural environment.

Tomato brown rugose fruit virus (ToBRFV) is a highly infectious plant virus that can affect tomato and capsicum production, reducing yields in affected crops by up to 70 per cent. Once a crop is infected, the only control action is destroying all affected plants.

"While there is no current organic or synthetic chemical or biological based product to neutralise this extremely damaging virus, growers should ensure the highest level of non-chemical management and prevention tactics are employed," said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector.


"Knowledge is power: ensuring that farmers and agronomists are familiar with potentially damaging pests, as well as their signs and symptoms is crucially important. Effective scouting and crop surveillance is critical in identifying and managing damaging crop pests. When properly identified, management options can then be tailored to the current specific situation or threat. Whether there exist effective plant protection options, paddock or facility quarantine, or the eradication of suitable hosts: the first step is in positive identification.

"Proper management of alternate hosts and potential refuges for the pathogen is another tactic which can prevent the introduction of new pests. Always use seeds, cuttings, or other propagation material that has been tested and certified as free from pests and diseases. The entry and movement of crop pests can be prevented on-farm by ensuring your machinery, equipment and vehicles are regularly inspected, cleaned and disinfected.

"Biosecurity doesn't just happen at the border. Climate change will only intensify one of the most significant challenges to biosecurity and pest management that farmers will face in the coming decades. Growers, industry and the government all have a role to play in preventing the establishment of new and damaging pests in, Australia, be they insect, plant or – as in this case – pathogen. Which is why the plant science sector invests billions each year into the development of new cutting-edge crop protection products and genetically modified crops to give farmers the tools they need to manage protect their crops."

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, “Each farm should have a biosecurity plan based on Integrated Pest Management strategies. This recent incursion highlights the necessity of non-chemical prevention and management tactics working in tandem with chemical control options to ensure farms remain free of this potentially damaging threat. ”

- ENDS

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 \$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.

