Representing Australia's plant science industry

CropLife AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

WORLD FOOD DAY: AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION READY TO MEET GLOBAL FOOD SUPPLY CHALLENGES

15 October 2014 (Canberra) – World Food Day on Thursday 16 October, which celebrates 'family farming: feeding the world, caring for the earth', is a perfect opportunity to recognise and support the agricultural and scientific innovations that will assist farmers rise to the challenge of meeting global food demand.

Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, Matthew Cossey said, "It is no secret that the world must produce a daunting quantity of food to meet the rapidly growing demand. The United Nations predicts that the global population will reach 9.6 billion by 2050. At the same time, it is anticipated that wealth will grow considerably for billions of people currently living in developing countries, leading to a larger and more diverse diet. Farmers must produce higher yields while using fewer resources, to ensure long-term, sustainable food production."

"The plant science industry embraces innovation and technology to provide farmers with the tools they need to rise to this challenge. Modern crop protection products provide pest management solutions that prevent the loss of 50% of the world's food crops annually.

"Scientists around the world have not only developed food crops that are more resistant to drought, heat and pests, they have also used genetic modification to create crops that have increased nutritional value. The World Health Organisation has reported that about 250 million preschool children are affected by Vitamin A deficiency. Providing those children with Vitamin A could prevent about a third of all deaths that occur under the age of five, meaning that 2.7 million children could be saved.

"Given that almost half of the global population exists on a diet consisting mainly of rice, a not-for-profit initiative by the Rockefeller Foundation has seen the development of Golden Rice, which is designed to produce beta-carotene, a precursor of vitamin A, in the edible part of the rice plant," said Mr Cossey.

"Bananas are also a main source of food in many developing African countries, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has funded the development of a genetically modified variety of banana, engineered by a team of scientists from the Queensland University of Technology, which is also designed to contain higher levels of beta-carotene. Australia's own CSIRO are developing genetically modified wheat and barley crops that have the potential to reduce instances of bowel cancer in Australian by 80%.

"Unfortunately, these humanitarian initiatives are still opposed by ideological activist organisations that choose to deny extensive scientific evidence that deems genetically modified food to be just as safe as its conventional counterparts. These privileged few choose to misinform public debate for the gain of their own agendas at the cost of those people who do not have adequate access to nutritional food.

"The use of GM crops globally has also reduced CO2 emissions by 27 billion kg in 2012 alone (equivalent to removing 12 million cars from the road for one year), and have conserved biodiversity by saving 304 million acres of land from being placed in agricultural production. According to a recent brief by the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications, the use of GM crops alleviated poverty for 16.5 million small farmers and farm families, totalling more than 65 million people," said Mr Cossey.

"A 2013 report by Deloitte Access Economics showed that 68 per cent ($17.6 billion) of Australian agricultural production is attributable to the use of crop protection products. The plant science sector is just one of many industries providing innovations that assist farmers in being more productive and sustainable.

"Equitable food systems are made possible by evidence-based public policy, incentives for research and innovation, and responsible stewardship. For over 200 years Australia has been at the forefront of modern agriculture and if we choose a path of informed public discussion and policy making, it will continue to be so into the future," concluded Mr Cossey.

For more information about World Food Day visit ***http://www.fao.org/world-food-day/home/en/***

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia (CropLife) is the peak industry organisation representing the agricultural chemical and biotechnology (plant science) sector in Australia. CropLife represents the innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and agricultural biotechnology products. The plant science industry provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies that are key to the nation's agricultural productivity, sustainability and food security. The plant science industry is worth more than $17.6 billion a year to the Australian economy and directly employs thousands of people across the country. CropLife and its members are committed to the stewardship of their products throughout their lifecycle and to ensuring that human health, environment and trade issues associated with agricultural chemical use in Australia are responsibly and sustainably managed. Our member companies contribute more than $13 million a year to stewardship activities to ensure the safe and effective use of their products. CropLife ensures the responsible use of these products through its mandatory industry code of conduct and has set a benchmark for industry stewardship through programs such as ***drum****MUSTER,* ChemClear® and Agsafe Accreditation and Training. Our stewardship activities demonstrate our commitment to managing the impacts associated with container waste and unwanted chemicals.

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