SUMMER 2025

CropLinks

THE LATEST PLANT SCIENCE INDUSTRY NEWS

Climate-smart agriculture

World-first Australian report launched at COP30

A world-first report has been released at the 2025 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 30). It highlights how Australian farmers are achieving large-scale sustainability, under some of the toughest climatic conditions on Earth.

The adoption of advanced plant science innovations has enabled productivity to increase while reducing farming's carbon footprint and environmental impact. The report shows that climate-smart, profitable farming is not just possible, it's already happening at scale. It highlights the importance of modern crop protection and crop biotechnology innovations for future climate-smart farming and further sustainability improvements for agriculture.

Climate-smart agriculture: Australian sustainable farming practices enabled by plant science innovation – an independent technical review was commissioned by CropLife Australia and authored by Dr John Rochecouste. The report provides a clear and compelling evidence-base for continued investment in research and development, technology adoption and risk-based regulation to enable Australian farmers to continue being sustainable, productive and globally competitive.

Key Findings:

- **Lower emissions intensity and higher output:** Agricultural emissions have declined by 20% over 30 years, while production has increased by 60%
- **Water-wise:** Cotton growers have boosted water-use efficiency by 40% in 10 years
- **Greater efficiency:** Adoption of GM cotton and IPM has cut insecticide use by 85%, ensuring long-term production and viability of the chemistry
- **Climate adaptation:** Hotter, drier conditions could reduce broadacre farm profits by up to 50% if adaptation slows

Scan to read the report

Read more on page 9.

Inside this issue

REPRESENTING THE BEST OF THE PLANT SCIENCE INDUSTRY

CropLife Australia

From the CEO

The current focus of the Federal Government on productivity could not come at a more critical time, particularly for Australian agriculture.

Matthew Cossey
Chief Executive Officer, CropLife Australia

CropLife acknowledges the original farmers and custodians of the lands we live on.

This is not just a challenge for the private sector. The efficiency, or lack thereof, within government departments and agencies remains one of the greatest barriers to improving productivity across the broader economy.

With barely half of pesticide applications approved by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) within statutory timeframes, a farming productivity drought looms without action.

Over recent decades, access to new plant science innovations has been one of the primary drivers of productivity and sustainability in Australian agriculture. These technologies will be even more vital in the years ahead to ensure farming remains viable, profitable and environmentally sustainable.

Yet continued delays in assessment times at the APVMA risk denying farmers access to an entire generation of innovation. CropLife is calling on the APVMA Board to take immediate action to prevent a future crisis in our production and international competitiveness.

Farming productivity benefits every Australian. It helps ease cost-of-living pressures at the supermarket, strengthens the economy, makes farming more sustainable and boosts global competitiveness. Farmers depend on access to technology that enables productivity growth, allowing them to adapt to climate change, minimise their carbon footprint, and reduce pressure on our natural environment without compromising food security.

On top of the current dismal performance of the APVMA, the Department of Health, Disability and Aged Care is now in its seventh year of what should have been an 18-month process to modernise Australia's national biotechnology framework.

These delays highlight how poor government productivity directly limits the ability of industry to deliver innovation that drives productivity. Improving public-sector efficiency would have a multiplier effect across the entire economy, beginning with the sector that feeds the nation.

Christmas Day the Aussie way

No matter what the Aussie festive season looks like for you this year, one thing unites us all - the joy of sharing good food made possible by hardworking farmers and the science that supports them.

With many households feeling the pinch, having affordable, high-quality produce on our tables is something worth celebrating. Behind every strawberry, cherry and mango that crowns our Christmas desserts is a partnership between farmers and the science that helps them grow more with less.

Crop-protection innovations safeguard fruit from pests and fungal diseases that thrive in Australia's challenging climate. Without them, growers would lose crops and consumers would face higher prices and fewer choices.

Thanks to science and stewardship, Australian farmers continue to deliver world-class fruit that's safe, nutritious and within reach, so everyone can enjoy a slice of something sweet this festive season.

Figures behind the fruit

43% of Australian households bought blueberries in 2022–23

78% of fruit couldn't be grown commercially without crop protection

100% of commercial berry production relies on modern farming innovations that prevent pest and disease damage

Crop protection saves millions of tonnes of food from being lost each year – keeping prices stable for Australian families.

Making Pavlova BERRY nice!

The pavlova debate - Australia or New Zealand?

(We all know the answer, but we'll humour the Kiwis).

What's certain is that without crop protection, there would be no berries to enjoy on it.

Crop Protection

Productivity drought looms without action

"Productivity" has been the word of 2025. But after months of consultation, the Productivity Commission has delivered a blunt warning: Australia won't lift productivity chasing shiny new things while ignoring the basics of effective regulation.

In its interim report *Creating a more dynamic and resilient economy,* the Commission identified regulatory red tape as one of the biggest obstacles to attracting investment necessary to drive productivity in the Australian economy. It called for sweeping reforms to scrap duplicate rules and overhaul overly prescriptive, risk-averse regulations that are strangling business investment.

CropLife members are copping the brunt of this failure with the sector warning that the continued delays in assessment times at the APVMA risks causing a long-term productivity drought for the nation's farming sector.

Barely half of the applications for new, innovative crop protection products are being assessed within their legislated assessment timeframe, and many are delayed by more than 18 months. In fact, current delays for CropLife member products alone add up to a combined total of nearly 40 years.

These are not arbitrary targets. Every delay means farmers are denied access to the latest technologies that improve productivity and sustainability. For farmers, it's the difference between having the tools to protect their crops this season or not, compared to their international competitors.

Despite this, the APVMA Board reduced expectations rather than lift the Regulator's efficiency in its latest Corporate Plan, entrenching a culture of underperformance.

Bureaucratic bottlenecks make for good satire, but it is unfortunate that the greatest inhibitors to productivity in Australian agriculture are some government departments, agencies and regulators. Until government and regulators confront their own systems and inefficiencies, red tape will keep costing Australia far more than it is worth.

APVMA processing timeframes in free-fall

Approval timeframes have plummeted since 2022 with barely half of assessments currently being completed on time.

Red tape drives food prices up at the checkout

Fruit and vegetable prices are climbing far faster than headline inflation, and it's not just the weather driving costs higher. Supply disruptions, rising inputs, and regulatory delays are all adding pressure.

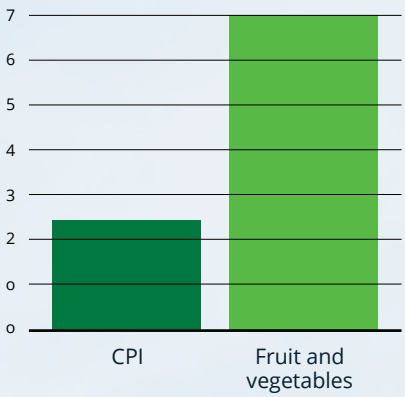
The ABS' January 2025 CPI shows fruit and vegetable prices rose seven per cent over the past year, more than double the inflation rate for food and non-alcoholic beverages. Over the same period, AUSVEG's *Pricing & Inputs Report* recorded an eight per cent rise in vegetable retail prices, both outpacing the overall CPI increase of just 2.5 per cent.

While Australia exports around 70 per cent of its total farm output, most fresh produce is consumed domestically.

Vegetables make up only a fraction of exports, highlighting how reliant Australians are on tight, regionally concentrated and perishable supply chains.

Plant science technologies build resilience and act as an inflation buffer, limiting the volatile spikes in fruit and vegetable prices that hit families hardest. Without these tools, almost three-quarters of Australia's food value would disappear, leaving supermarket shelves bare. Yet outdated, overly complex regulation keeps them from farmers' hands, pushing costs through to consumers.

Prices for fresh fruits and vegetables are increasing nearly 4 x faster than CPI



Source: ABS, 2025

Regulatory roadblocks push R&D offshore

Across the region, burdensome regulation is driving global innovators to walk away from local R&D.

In New Zealand, approval timelines for new technologies have blown out so far beyond their eight-year limits that entire research programs are being abandoned, leaving farmers without access to novel chemicals and biopesticides.

Australia risks the same fate. CropLife members are already facing nearly 40 years' worth of accumulated APVMA delays. Regulators must urgently modernise assessment tools, lift on-time performance, and restore the certainty investors need to back Australian innovation.

If dysfunction persists, it won't just stall progress, it will push innovation offshore entirely, leaving Australian farmers increasingly uncompetitive.

Crop Biotechnology

Fiona Simson to lead Australia's ag biotech sector as Chair of ABCA

Australia's agricultural biotechnology sector has gained a powerful new leader with the appointment of Fiona Simson, Vice-President of the World Farmers' Organisation and former National Farmers Federation President, as the new Chair of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council of Australia (ABCA).

Her appointment marks a pivotal moment. As climate change intensifies and biotechnology advances at speed, Australia must ensure its farmers, scientists and policy-makers keep pace with global change.

Established in 2012, ABCA is the national coordinating body for agricultural biotechnology. It works to ensure the benefits of gene technologies are fully recognised and that public policy and regulation are guided by credible, science-based information. By uniting farmers, scientists, and industry, ABCA plays a crucial role in making sure public debates and regulatory frameworks are informed by credible evidence rather than misinformation.

Ms Simson's appointment strengthens that mission. With her unique local and global perspective, she is perfectly placed to highlight how Australian agriculture and science interconnect to address today's challenges.

"It is vital that Australia not only learns from global experiences but also contributes to shaping international standards and regulatory practices in agricultural biotechnology."

"As Chair, my focus will be on making sure that discussions about agricultural biotechnology are informed by facts and science, not misinformation. These technologies aren't a silver bullet, but they are an important part of the toolkit farmers need to remain productive and sustainable in a changing climate."

" I've seen first-hand how Australian farmers stack up against the rest of the world in adapting to drought, pests and climate change. We are world-leading in technology adoption and farming more sustainably, but to remain competitive we must keep learning and innovating."

Fiona Simson, new ABCA Chair

Redefining GM:

A "novel" approach to food labelling

Foods developed using new breeding techniques (NBTs), such as precise gene-editing tools, have been excluded from the definition of genetically modified (GM) food after an update to the Food Standards Code this year. The move modernises an antiquated Code, brings Australia into line with global trading partners and ensures Australia gets to take advantage of new technologies.

The updated definition provides a science-based, risk-proportionate definition of "novel DNA". From now on, only foods containing genetic material that could *not* occur through traditional breeding will be regulated and labelled as GM ensuring ongoing integrity in the food labelling system.

Why it matters

Gene-edited foods simply replicate changes that can occur naturally, only faster with greater precision. They're indistinguishable from conventionally bred crops but under the old rules they faced the same lengthy and costly GM assessments.

This change in definition prevents misleading labelling. Without it, everyday crops that are no different from conventional varieties risk being stamped "GM", confusing consumers and eroding trust.

It also cuts red tape. By removing unnecessary regulatory hurdles, changes to the food standard ensures Australia can remain competitive in global agricultural innovation and deliver benefits to consumers through crops with enhanced nutrition, longer shelf life or even reduced allergenic proteins, such as gluten-free wheat.

The missing link in modernising gene tech

This decision builds on earlier reforms by the Office of the Gene Technology Regulator (OGTR) which in 2019 modernised regulations to ensure that gene-editing innovations were not inappropriately treated as GM innovations by the Regulator. However, the journey isn't over.

Despite these positive actions over the last five years, no further necessary updates to the regulations can commence until the implementation of the recommendations from the Third Review of the National Gene Technology Scheme. Those reforms would modernise how gene-edited crops themselves, not just food, are regulated, ensuring consistency across agencies and giving farmers, consumers and innovators more clarity from research, to paddock, to plate.

What is Novel DNA?

Novel DNA means genetic material that couldn't be obtained through conventional breeding. Under the new rules, a food is only classed as GM if it contains:

- DNA from an unrelated species
- DNA rearranged in ways that can't occur through breeding
- Synthetic DNA built in a lab

If the change could occur on its own just faster or more precisely, it's not considered GM.

GM vs Gene-editing in action

Norfolk Healthy Produce

Genetically modified (GM): The Purple Tomato™

A GM tomato could soon appear in Australian supermarkets if regulators give the green light. The tomato contains genes from the edible purple snapdragon, enabling it to produce high levels of antioxidants. The high-antioxidant genes were incorporated using traditional GM techniques so this tomato falls under GM regulation.

Gene-editing: Climate resilient wheat

Australian and US researchers have collaborated on Australia's first gene-edited wheat field trials. The edits aim to boost yield potential and input-use efficiency, enhancing climate resilience and food security. These varieties do not contain foreign DNA, and the technique enables faster, more precise genetic improvement.

Industry Stewardship

Packaging stewardship in focus: A national framework needed

As the Australian Government prepares to finalise a new national packaging regulatory scheme, the decisions made now will determine whether Australia finally delivers credible, lasting environmental outcomes or repeats the same mistakes that have plagued packaging policy for more than a decade.

drumMUSTER® by the numbers

- 25+ years in operation
- 46 million + drums collected
- Around 1.5 million drums collected annually
- Nearly 50,000 tonnes of material recycled
- 700+ collection points across Australia

A decade of missed opportunities

Since the early 2010s, packaging regulation under the *National Environment Protection (Used Packaging Materials) Measure 2011* has struggled to achieve meaningful results. An independent review in 2021 found the co-regulatory system was ineffective, and brand owners reported little value from membership with the Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO).

Despite Environment Ministers agreeing in 2023 that the Commonwealth should take on regulatory responsibility, businesses still face duplicative state-based reporting or costly APCO membership fees, with little evidence of genuine environmental benefit or regulatory certainty for business.

A proven model already exists

While other sectors wrestle with fragmented regulation, the plant science industry has been setting the benchmark for effective stewardship. Through Agsafe, CropLife's wholly owned stewardship subsidiary, programs such as drumMUSTER have operated for over 25 years, recycling nearly 50,000 tonnes of agricultural chemical containers.

The 2024 launch of the Drums-to-Drums initiative closes the loop by turning used drums directly into new ones, while bagMUSTER expands soft plastic recovery across regional Australia. Together, these initiatives show how industry-led, transparent and data-driven stewardship can deliver measurable outcomes for both the environment and the community.

Time to raise the bar

Reform should not be about setting arbitrary targets or layering new bureaucracy over old. It's an opportunity to embed what's already proven to work. Now is the time for government to ensure that packaging regulation meets that same standard.

A credible national framework must:

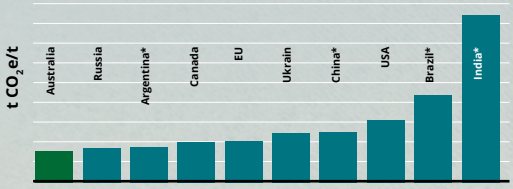
1. **Establish** clear, fit-for-purpose national standards over duplication and inconsistency
2. **Reward** programs with a proven track record of environmental outcomes
3. **Streamline** reporting for brand owners
4. **Deliver** measurable, evidence-based environmental outcomes.

Australia's farming sustainability scorecard

The innovations behind Australian farming practices highlighted at COP30

Lowest Farmgate Emissions Intensity Among Major Exporters

- **Up to 42% lower emissions** than other major exporters.

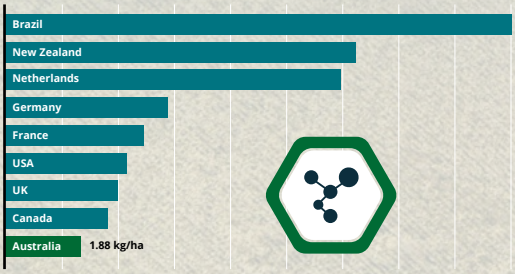


Note: Excludes rice. * Indicates countries for which calculations of greenhouse gas emissions are based on Tier 1 default factors per the 2019 refinement to the 2006 guidelines

20% Reduction

in GHG emissions since 1990 with 60% more output

Most sustainable pesticide use among major exporters



- **1.88 kilograms per ha** – well below Canada, US, and New Zealand.
- Access to modern pesticides, coupled with **strong industry-led stewardship,** has resulted in relatively low pesticide usage in Australia.

Up to 90% adoption

of minimal and no-till farming

Both minimal and **no-till farming** and **stubble retention** help maintain soil organic matter, reduce soil erosion and improve water retention.

7.4 million ha

of land for conservation or environmental protection purposes

Australian agriculture is a global leader in sustainable intensification.

More water efficient

Grains:

- **Up to 60% improvement** in water use efficiency achieved through smarter farming practices.
- **$5.60 return** for every dollar invested.

Cotton:

- Water use efficiency has **improved by 40%** over the past decade.
- Achieving an **average of 1.03 bales** per megalitre; the global average is 2.07 bales per megalitre.

The adoption of GM Bt cotton has reduced insecticide use by 85% since 1996

CropLife members' news and events

This year, BASF's Research Farm in Tamworth, NSW, celebrates its 10th anniversary. Over the past decade, the farm has conducted more than 800 trials and validated over 15 product innovations. Beyond research, it supports education through agronomy training, underscoring BASF's commitment to sustainable solutions and the next generation of agriculturalists.
basf.com.au

Nufarm was proud to sponsor and participate in the National Farmers' Federation's AgXchange conference on the Gold Coast, bringing together industry leaders to discuss the next wave of agricultural innovation. The sponsorship highlighted Nufarm's commitment to supporting Australian growers through sustainable crop solutions, local manufacturing, and investment in regional innovation and productivity.
nufarm.com.au

Bayer Crop Science Australia has partnered with Humans of Agriculture (HoA) to bring to life the stories of passionate advocates, innovative growers, and community champions across the country. The collaboration has delivered a podcast series that captured the voices of farmers, employees, and innovators, showcasing Bayer's commitment to elevating the voices of Australia's farming community and supporting innovation in agriculture.
crop.bayer.com.au

240 students recently attended the Adelaide University Agricultural Students Association's *Growing the Future 2025* networking dinner. Among the industry representatives were Lauren Innes (Regional Manager – Central SA) and Taylor Marsh (Graduate Agronomist) from Eurofins Kalyx Adelaide, who joined students and fellow professionals for an evening of connection and career conversations.
kalyx.com.au

At FMC's August Field Day near Parkes, NSW, agronomists observed the latest field trials for Overwatch® herbicide and previewed a new formulation under development. The demonstrations followed national trial work presented by FMC Technical Services Specialist Stephen Pettenon at WeedSmart Week in Western Australia. He highlighted Overwatch's strong and consistent performance across regions, soil types and growing seasons.
fmccrop.com.au

Corteva Agriscience, in partnership with GlobalGiving, has donated US$10,000 to Foodbank Australia. This contribution supports Foodbank's vital work addressing food insecurity nationwide. GlobalGiving's trusted grant making ensures philanthropic best practices, amplifying the impact of Corteva's commitment to community wellbeing.
corteva.com.au

Five years ago, UPL set bold sustainability targets aligned with the UN SDGs and has exceeded every goal. In its most recent Sustainability Report it shows:

- **49%** less water used
- **38%** less CO_2 emissions
- **52%** less waste generated
- **38%** of revenue from sustainable and differentiated products
- **60%** sustainable sourcing achieved

upl-ltd.com

Syngenta recently hosted young agronomists at learning centres around the country. At its Learning Centre in Strathalbyn, promising young agronomists from across South Australia gathered to explore current and future crop protection solutions. Led by Kieran Wauchope with technical experts Ash Pilkington, Jason Sabeeney and the southern team, participants gained practical insights into product efficacy and integration. Now in its fourth year, the two-day event showcases Syngenta's commitment to nurturing emerging talent in the industry.
syngenta.com.au

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and Nutrien Ag Solutions have joined forces to launch the Victorian Drought Support Program, providing vital assistance to farmers facing record-breaking drought conditions. Funded by Nutrien, the program enables the VFF to employ a dedicated Drought Support Advisor who will help farmers access grants, wellbeing initiatives, financial counselling and mental health services. The role will also ensure on-the-ground insights are communicated directly to policymakers and industry decision-makers.
nutrienagsolutions.com.au

Canegrowers in Northern New South Wales are now getting on top of difficult grass and broadleaf weeds by deploying powerful herbicides in a one-two punch rotation strategy to help growers achieve extended control.
adama.com/australia

The AgNova team were hard at work on International Potato Day, harvesting a potato research trial! AgNova have a range of products for use in potatoes and are working on developing more for the humble spud.
agnova.com.au

Intergrain gave science teachers from across Australia a behind-the-scenes look at the cereal breeding processes as part of an agricultural tour this year, looking at how the ATAR agricultural curriculum connects with real-world innovation. Intergrain is proud to support the development of customised agricultural science programs into secondary schools to ensure a future workforce in plant science.
intergrain.com.au

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, suppliers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry's innovations directly enable more than $31.6 billion a year of Australian agricultural production. Our members provide 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.

Representing the best of the plant science industry

nufarm · BAYER · syngenta · ADAMA · Nutrien Ag Solutions · FMC · CORTEVA agriscience · BASF We create chemistry · UPL OpenAg · SIPCAM Innovation Not Imitation · SUMITOMO CHEMICAL · accensi · AgNova · autopak · INTERGRAIN · DGL · Gowan · eurofins | kalyx · PHILSTIC

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