

Disease Outbreaks Don't Wait for Slow & Inefficient Bureaucracy

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Australian farming is facing a looming biosecurity crisis due to a serious escalation of threats from diseases and pests affecting our crops and our natural environment as a result of weather conditions and climate change. Compounding the problem is the fact that farmers and environmental land managers don't have access to the solutions and defensive products to these threats due to the slow and inefficient regulatory assessment at the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA).

Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, points to one of many examples from recent media reports of crop damage this season. "Reports over the weekend of unseasonably widespread disease outbreaks in South Australia's wheat crop highlight the real-world consequences of the APVMA's delays in assessment of new crucial crop protection products," said Mr Cossey.

"The APVMA's own recent quarterly report stated that fewer than one in two approvals for major agricultural chemical applications are completed on time," he continued.

This category is critical for new and innovative crop protection technology and uses, including those that will help farmers to manage plant diseases in this year's winter crops and pests across all plant industries.

"Products that are already available to farmers and environmental land managers in the US, Canada and several other countries, and should already be available to Australian farmers this season, are still sitting offshore waiting upon the APVMA. Their on-time performance is holding one arm behind the backs of Australian farmers as they fight the destruction caused by pests, weeds and diseases," he said.

"Australian scientists are saying the current Stripe Rust outbreak in South Australia is 'incredibly early' and of concern. This is truly heart-breaking with farmers looking to consolidate following last year's drought conditions in SA.

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.



“The fact that these conditions mean this season’s crops are also vulnerable to other plant diseases, like powdery mildew, means the failure of our inefficient and expensive regulator has left our farmers exposed to loss when they should be capitalising on finally getting some good rain,” said Mr Cossey.

Climate change is speeding up vulnerability to new pests, weeds and diseases and resistance to existing defensive tools. Farmers plan well and are prepared for timely intervention, but as conditions become less predictable, the difference between containing a pest and managing a widespread outbreak can come down to one thing: having the right tools available at the right time.

“Australian farmers are doing the heavy lifting to manage growing risks from climate change. They need a regulator that can respond with the same urgency and efficiency in order to protect their crops, safeguard our food supply and international competitiveness as well as ensure we do not have a large-scale serious and uncontrollable biosecurity incident,” concluded Mr Cossey.

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