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## **Bipartisan action needed to support innovation for farming productivity and sustainability and to fight food cost inflation**

**Canberra, 04 April 2025:** With Australians heading to the polls in May, CropLife Australia is calling on all political parties to commit to policies and regulations that encourage innovation that enables a more productive and sustainable farming sector now and for the coming decades. Access by Australia's farmers to new and existing crop protection and biotechnology products is crucial for them to be able to produce affordable nutritious food and ease the cost-of-living pressures overwhelming Australian families.

"Australians are paying the price for inaction. Fruit and vegetables remain among the biggest drivers of food inflation, with the Consumer Price Index showing a 6.3 per cent year-on-year increase," said Matthew Cossey, Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector.

"Meanwhile, 35 per cent of horticultural farms report significant crop losses to pests and disease before their produce even reaches supermarket shelves. CropLife Members collectively spend tens of billions of dollars annually in scientific research, development and commercialisation of innovations that underpin the productivity and sustainability of farming.

"Yet, consecutive governments have continued to fail to implement policies that support research, development, and the efficiency of our regulatory system to get these technologies across the line. Without action, Australian farmers will continue to struggle to grow more - more sustainably, remain profitable and deliver the fresh, affordable food that Australian families need."

### **A Critical Election Priority: Permanent APVMA Funding**

CropLife welcomes the Government's recent one-off \$5.2 million funding boost for the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA). However, permanent government funding of the APVMA is needed to fix a structural flaw in Australia's regulation of crop protection products.


Without a long-term, sustainable funding model, the increasing demands placed on the regulator - such as compliance, enforcement, and the chemical review program - will leave Australian farmers footing the bill at a time they can least afford it.

"After 12 years of reforms, the failure to provide permanent government funding the APVMA remains one of the biggest public policy failures by both sides of politics," Mr Cossey said.

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### **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.



"It's not fixed until it's properly funded. Australian plant science industry and farmers can't continue entirely paying for a system that has a significant community and national public good role - an unfair burden that only exacerbates cost pressures on food production," added Mr Cossey.

### **Breaking Down Barriers to Agricultural Innovation**

"Likewise, Australia must do more than just talk about the importance of research and development (R&D). It must create an environment that attracts global investment in agricultural innovation - ensuring Australian farmers and consumers aren't the last to benefit from cutting-edge technology due to commercial disincentives.

"The first step is delivering long-overdue reforms to modernise the National Gene Technology Scheme - recommendations that have been sitting idle for eight years. Australia's slow progress on gene technology reform has left it lagging behind other nations, delaying access to next-generation crop varieties that enhance climate resilience, productivity, and sustainability.

"We must also ensure that the plant science industry isn't commercially penalised by regulatory delays that eat into time-on-patent for technologies requiring enormous investment to develop and bring to Australia," Mr Cossey said. "Modern gene technologies are inherently safe, yet Australia's outdated approach is slowing our ability to adapt and remain competitive on the global stage."

### **Practical Solutions for Immediate Impact**

CropLife is also calling for:

- Investment in a Centre of Excellence in Agricultural Chemicals and Technology Innovation to drive R&D and attract global investment.
- The re-establishment of the Industry Collaborative Minor Use Forum to improve access to 'minor use' crop protection products - helping fruit and vegetable growers manage pests and diseases when existing registrations are insufficient.

"Now, more than ever, Australia must secure its place at the forefront of agricultural innovation. Investing in plant science innovation and regulatory reform will ensure fresh, nutritious and affordable food remains accessible to all Australians, today and into the future. It's time for Australian policymakers to act - prioritise the plant science industry, support agricultural biotechnology, and fund the APVMA to secure a sustainable and affordable food future," concluded Mr Cossey.

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