Developing Countries Embrace Benefits of Plant Biotechnology

Global Biotech Crop Acreage Continues to Grow and Benefit Farmers, Consumers and the Environment

Brussels, Belgium (20 February 2013) – Today, the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) released its annual global biotech crop acreage report, which found that worldwide adoption of plant biotechnology continued to grow, reaching over 170 million hectares planted with biotech crops in 28 countries. Biotech crops are scale-neutral, meaning all farmers can enjoy the economic and environmental benefits they bring to growers, consumers, and farms – this was evidenced in 2012 when developing country hectarage of biotech crops exceeded the area planted with biotech crops in developed countries. Two new developing countries grew biotech crops for the first time last year – Sudan and Cuba – which helped increase biotech plantings in developing countries by over nine million hectares in 2012 over 2011.

Increasingly, farmers face more challenges in producing high-quality foods from extreme growing conditions, to rising consumer demand, to reduced availability of natural resources, said Denise Dewar, Executive Director for Plant Biotechnology at CropLife International. Plant biotechnology can play a significant role in developing countries, which face the most extreme food security and productivity challenges.

Global biotech crop adoption for 2012 rose to over 170 million hectares planted by 17.3 million farmers, representing a significant and unprecedented milestone in agricultural technology adoption. Biotech crops have now experienced a 100-fold increase in hectarage since the first varieties were commercialized from 1.7 million hectares in 1996 to 170 million hectares in 2012. No other farm technology in history has been adopted this quickly.

ISAAA report highlights the significant benefits rapid biotech crop uptake has brought to farm families and communities through higher farm incomes, improved food security and better protection of our environment. In India, farmers who grow Bt cotton are shown to send their children to school at higher rates than those growing conventional varieties. Brazilian farmers who grow biotech earned an extra US$100,000 over the past four years and more than US$300,000 extra in the past sixteen. In just the past two years, nearly 200 million hectares of land and biodiversity has been saved from agricultural use due to biotech crops, or approximately 1/3rd of the world’s tropical rainforests.

For the 15 million smallholder farmers growing biotech crops and their families, these benefits can transform communities and offer unprecedented opportunities for agricultural and economic development, said Dewar. With more than 90 percent of farmers re-purchasing biotech seed year after year, coupled with the increase in global biotech crop acreage, it is clear that farmers have placed their trust and confidence in biotechnology.

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Note to Editors: CropLife International is the global federation representing the plant science industry. It supports a network of regional and national associations in 91 countries, and is led by companies such as BASF, Bayer CropScience, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont, FMC, Monsanto, Sumitomo and Syngenta. CropLife International promotes the benefits of crop protection and biotechnology products, their importance to sustainable agriculture and food production, and their responsible use through stewardship activities.