Small Holder Farmers in Developing Countries Continue to Benefit from Biotech Crops

*Scale-neutral technology continues to improve farmer livelihoods while supporting sustainable agricultural practices*

**Brussels, 7 February 2012** — With the majority of biotech crops being grown by small holder farmers in developing countries, plant biotechnology is playing a significant role in helping small-scale farmers improve their incomes and quality of life while employing sustainable agricultural practices. In 2011, of the 16.7 million farmers worldwide growing 160 million hectares of biotech crops, 90 percent were small holder farmers in 19 developing countries, according to the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA).

“For the world’s farmers, biotech crops offer the opportunity to produce more food and improve incomes while being good stewards of their land,” said Denise Dewar, Executive Director for Plant Biotechnology at CropLife International. “For over a decade, farmers with access to plant biotechnology have enjoyed reduced input costs, increased crop productivity and higher incomes, which has led to improvements in the home, and for families and communities.”

In 2011, 19 of the 29 countries growing biotech varieties were located in the developing world. These countries represented the largest growth in biotech plantings, adopting the technology twice as fast as industrialized countries, according to ISAAA. “For the world’s neediest farmers, improving yields with less labour not only provides better incomes but a higher quality of life,” 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’s obvious that farmers recognize multiple benefits from plant biotechnology.”

Global biotech crop acreage is at a record high and governments worldwide have continued to support the benefits their farmers, the environment, and larger populations receive from plant biotechnology. Growth of the technology worldwide includes:

**Africa**

- Kenya is expected to become the fourth African country to allow commercial cultivation of biotech crops, with national performance trials for Bt cotton planned for 2012.
- Nigeria and Ghana have passed biosafety bills, which are currently working towards Presidential assent and the development of regulations for full implementation.
Asia-Pacific
- Japan approved the import of biotech papaya from Hawaii.
- Vietnam has tested biotech crops including vitamin-rich rice, herbicide-tolerant and insect-resistant corn, and drought-tolerant beans.
- The Philippines reported a 20 percent increase in hectarage of biotech maize in 2011, and approved field trials of insect-resistant biotech eggplant.
- In China, 71.5 percent of cotton hectarage were planted with biotech varieties.

Latin America
- The region approved a total of 17 new biotech events for cultivation in 2011, including: eight in Brazil; three in Argentina; five in Uruguay; and one in Paraguay, the country’s first approval in seven years.
- The first biotech plant variety developed completely by a public research institution, a virus-resistant bean, was commercially approved in Brazil last year.
- For the third consecutive year, Brazil had the largest increase in biotech area in the world at 4.9 million hectares, representing a year-over-year increase of 20 percent.

European Union
- Biotech corn plantings in Portugal increased by 60 percent and by 26 percent of the total corn cropland in Spain in 2011.
- The EU has adopted a low-level presence policy for biotech crops in animal feed imports and approved 11 new biotech crops for import including six corn, three soybean and two cotton varieties.

North America
- The United States continued to be the lead cultivator of biotech crops globally. The country grew 69 million hectares of biotech varieties, with an average adoption rate of approximately 90 percent across principal biotech crops.
- In 2011, Mexico held its first biotech corn field trials.

“As food security and sustainable agriculture have become key concerns globally, we have seen more governments and world leaders increasingly support research, development and production of biotech crops,” said Dewar, noting that governments in countries such as Nigeria, Thailand and Indonesia are publicly stating their support for plant biotechnology.

Pioneers such as Bill Gates have recently noted the key role of plant genetics in accelerating food security, declaring in his 2012 annual letter that, “It is hard to overstate how valuable it is to have all the incredible tools that are used for human disease to study plants.”

CropLife International and its members are dedicated to furthering the acceptance of plant science technologies in 2012, and continuing partnerships that provide farmers with broad access to innovations, as well as the knowledge and skills to make these new tools valuable on the farm.

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Note to Editors:
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