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MEDIA RELEASE

Agricultural training initiative signs up new partners at Jo'burg Summit

Today at the Stakeholder Forum's Implementation Conference* in the run-up to the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, CropLife International signed up three new partners for agLe@rn, a type 2 initiative it is supporting. The agLe@rn project is a web-based educational tool designed to improve the knowledge and skills related to sustainable agriculture amongst agricultural professionals.

The three new partners are:

- The Arid Lands Information Network (www.alin.or.ke), a Kenya-based international non-governmental organisation focusing on information support and capacity building for community development workers
- The E-Choupal Project (www.itcportal.com), an integrated agribusiness initiative providing web-based agricultural information and market intelligence to 900,000 small-scale farmers in India
- The Farmers Monthly magazine, a South African educational publication to help new, emerging farmers to raise their level of competence and understanding of modern agricultural techniques

All three new partners see great potential in working together with agLe@rn as a means of reaching out to more agricultural professionals worldwide promoting the concepts of sustainable agriculture and sharing knowledge.

The agLe@rn programme was developed in the Asia Pacific region in 2001 by the Asia Pacific Regional Technology Centre (APRTC), a non-profit organisation, in partnership with the WorldView International Foundation**.

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Due to agLe@rn's value for implementing sustainable agriculture, CropLife International decided to support and submit this partnership initiative to the WSSD in a bid to extend its scope and geographical outreach, so that many farmers in need of information could benefit from it.

The current agLe@rn courses cover areas such as:

- Digital literacy for agricultural professionals
- Integrated Pest Management
- Responsible use of agrochemicals

"We are delighted that these other like-minded organisations have joined us in supporting AgLe@rn. As an industry we understand that we have a role to play in ensuring that agriculture develops in a sustainable way. We also understand that we do not have all the answers and cannot achieve this alone. We require partners, mutual understanding and commitment to ensure success and we are pleased to have found such support for this initiative here at the WSSD," said Annik Dollacker, Chair of the CropLife International WSSD Project Team.

Providing access to the latest agricultural information and technologies allows farmers and their communities to make educated choices to improve agricultural productivity, contribute to food security, alleviate poverty and enhance their livelihoods.

In addition to the outcomes to be agreed by governments at the Summit (referred to as Type 1 outcomes), partnership initiatives submitted by civil society members, including the public and private sector (referred to as Type 2 outcomes), are an important element of WSSD. CropLife International is fully committed to supporting such partnerships and has submitted agLe@rn as a Type 2 outcome of the Summit.

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Supporting the agLe@rn programme is an example of CropLife International's commitment to the partnership approach of building capacity amongst farmers, farmer organisations, NGOs and governmental organisations.

For more information on the agLe@rn programme visit: <http://www.aprtc.org>

For more information on CropLife International's activities at WSSD, case studies of sustainable agriculture and its partnership initiatives, visit: www.croplife.org

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Notes to Editors:

*The Stakeholder Forum's Implementation Conference is a three day conference held from 24 to 26 Aug in Johannesburg with the aim of bringing together a wide range of stakeholders to work together to develop action plans for implementing Type 2 Initiatives to be submitted to the WSSD.

**WorldView International Foundation is a non-profit organisation dedicated to using media technology to disseminate environmental information in developing countries.

CropLife International's member companies strongly support the implementation of Integrated Pest Management and have a long-standing commitment to farmer and distributor training. Initiatives such as the Safe Use Projects, container management schemes and stewardship programmes are practical examples of how the plant science industry is investing in training and education.

CropLife International is the global federation representing the plant science industry. It supports a network of nearly 100 regional and national associations and their member companies worldwide, led by companies such as BASF, BayerCropScience, Dow AgroSciences, DuPont, FMC, Monsanto, Sumitomo and Syngenta.

CropLife International promotes the benefits of crop protection and biotechnology products and their importance to sustainable agriculture and food production.

For further information contact:

Stephen Weller, CropLife International Communication Manager
Johannesburg local mobile number: 082 858 1852
International mobile number: +32 479 372 339
Brussels office number: +32 2 542 0413
Email: stephen@croplife.org

Carolyn Gill, CropLife International Public Relations Officer
Tel: +32 2 541 1662
Email: Carolyn@croplife.org
