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Press Release

FOOD AND A BETTER LIVELIHOOD THROUGH POVERTY ALLEVIATION

The plant science industry and a variety of stakeholders support smallholder farmers in developing countries to reach sustainable agricultural production. This collaboration clearly illustrates that joining forces is in the interest of all concerned.

Brussels, 4 December 2001 -- They cultivate honey mandarins, rice and corn, as well as cotton. On tiny plots of land they hold their own against the imponderabilities of nature, droughts and floods, pests and diseases: Many of the 1.8 billion small holders in developing countries are fighting for their livelihoods and often can barely make a living. Harvests are bad, many farmers also lack knowledge and experience on basic agricultural techniques and many of them are food insecure.

Help is needed to improve the livelihoods of small-holder farmers. This is an activity CropLife International and its member companies have been involved in over the past years. To reach the largest possible number of people, the CropLife International organisation cooperates with many stakeholders ranging from farmers, governments and non-governmental organisations in the various countries, agricultural cooperatives, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, a specialised UN agency).

CropLife International thus follows an appeal launched by Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary General and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, who said: "Let us choose to reconcile creative forces of private entrepreneurship with the needs of the disadvantaged and the requirements of future generations".

The positive impact of CropLife International's activities highlighted in the interim results of worldwide projects, approaches and concepts were presented today in Brussels at a press briefing session. Four representatives of developing countries explained how successful the multi-stakeholder approach can be in support of small-holders, their families, the local communities and the many regions in the developing countries. "Increased agricultural production is essential to address the challenges of population growth and poverty" says A. Charles Fischer, President of CropLife International.

Take Malaysia, where back in 1996 a handful of small holders started to cultivate honey mandarins on some 300 hectares of land. Tai Choon Kuah, the project leader, proudly announces that soon over 4000 hectares will be farmed more sustainably than before.

Whether in Latin America, Asia or Africa - when the plant science industry initiates sustainable farming projects together with local stakeholders, chances of real achievements are clear. Benefits include:

- The safe and efficient use of crop protection products within integrated programmes secures yields for rural families. Food insecurity is reduced and poverty alleviated.
- The multi-stakeholder approach creates networks of farmers, engaging in an exchange of experience and information and finding better ways to market their products.
- A more sensitive approach to nature promotes sustainable management.
- Information given by experts within the projects that is adapted to the local needs, improves local food quality.
- Farmers are better informed about agricultural products and new technical solutions and they learn how to apply them in the fields.

"All this creates real opportunities for sustainable agriculture" underlines Annik Dollacker of CropLife International, "even in remote rural areas where they previously did not exist. The multi-stakeholder approach shows how much the plant science industry can do for the people and their development: for improved livelihoods, food security and economic growth - if only we work together."

"The multi-stakeholder projects are designed to meet the economic needs of all involved" says Annik Dollacker, "therefore the projects also open up opportunities for further economic development. In the long run the goal of sustainability is best met when all stakeholders benefit from the projects' activities."

Notes to the editor:

CropLife International is the global organisation representing the plant science industry in over 75 countries. It is led by companies such as Aventis CropScience, BASF, Bayer, 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. Through collaboration with a range of stakeholders, CropLife International initiates stewardship programmes that work hand in hand with other stakeholders to foster a start-to-finish approach to the sustainable use of agricultural products that are environmentally sound, economically viable and socially acceptable.

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The brochure "Creating Opportunities for Sustainable Agriculture" can also be obtained from the CropLife International Secretariat