

Press Release – World Water Day

Plant Science Industry Highlights its Contribution to Protecting and Conserving Water Resources

Brussels, 22 March 2004 -- Agriculture accounts for some 70% of all water use, and water management is becoming one of the key collective challenges to achieving sustainable development worldwide. With World Water Day on March 22, the plant science industry highlights its contribution to the water challenge in agriculture and aims to raise awareness for the need to use water more efficiently while at the same time increasing agricultural productivity.

"Industry is stepping up to the water challenge through its activities that contribute to water use efficiency and water quality protection, which are key to sustainable agriculture. It is vital that the private sector, the public sector and civil society work together in partnership to preserve our world's natural resources. Just a 1% increase in water productivity in food production could potentially make available 24 litres of water a day per head of population. Our industry has a role to play in achieving such savings" states Christian Verschuere, Director General, CropLife International on the occasion of World Water Day.

Industry promotes improved land management systems that play a major role in enhancing water use efficiency and protecting water quality. Increased soil organic matter and reduced soil erosion can be achieved by low or no tillage land practices, which improve the land's ability to capture and retain moisture. The plant science industries' herbicides make this type of land management approach possible. Herbicides also help increase a crop's access to water, by reducing the weeds that compete for moisture and use of scarce water resources – resulting in "more crop per drop." New rice production systems enabled through innovative weed control has, for example, reduced water consumption by one-fifth in the Philippines. This is particularly critical as rice is the most water intensive crop, with 5000 litres of water needed to produce 1 kilogram of rice.

In any agricultural production system, the promotion of good agricultural practices and product stewardship is fundamental. By engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships, the plant science industry's stewardship activities seek to protect water quality by reducing soil erosion, avoiding run-off of crop protection products, and increasing wildlife habitat as part of a holistic farm or land management approach. Throughout Europe, for example, the plant science industry has teamed up with farmers and water utility companies to protect water areas and inform farmers regarding application timing, amount, and choice of a crop protection product.

Research carried out by industry into new products that address farmers' needs while at the same time protecting essential water resources are underway, including development through traditional breeding or plant biotechnology, of new plant varieties that require less water or use water more efficiently.

A publication highlighting examples of industry's contribution to water protection and conservation will be available in April. For more information, please contact christine@croplife.org.

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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 87 countries, 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.

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