

## **Press Release**

### **Plant Science Industry Pledges its Commitment to Safer Use of Chemicals in Agriculture at Inaugural Conference for Rotterdam Convention**

**Brussels, 21 September 2004** --- The plant science industry expresses its support for the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent and is advocating for risk-based decisions in international chemicals management. Ministers and officials from over 100 countries are taking part in the Convention's inaugural conference, which is being held in Geneva, Switzerland this week.

As the first major global treaty to deal specifically with chemicals, the Rotterdam Convention represents a major success story for governments, industry, and all those involved in ensuring the safer use of chemicals.

"The regulation and management of crop protection products has become a complex subject. Many governments have developed sophisticated regulatory systems to ensure the safe use of crop protection products in their territories, the Rotterdam Convention and its principle of prior informed consent facilitates the safer management of chemicals in countries that may not have such sophisticated regulatory regimes. It empowers governments to make informed decisions about the use of chemicals in their territories," stated Christian Verschueren, Director General, CropLife International.

As pointed out in a recent press release issued by UNEP, agricultural chemicals such as crop protection products are necessary to meet the increasing food, feed and fibre demands of the world – particularly the 800 million people that live in developing countries and are food insecure - as well as future populations. Although crop protection products are the most thoroughly tested group of chemicals in the marketplace, there is no doubt that these biologically-active substances can be dangerous if not used properly. The plant science industry understands that the safe management of chemicals represents a significant challenge for many countries, especially developing countries and economies in transition.

The Rotterdam Convention provides an additional safeguard to protect human health and the environment, especially in those countries where effective controls are rudimentary. However, it is not a substitute for effective national regulation. In order to have a marketplace that provides the best levels of human and environmental health, national governments, particularly in developing countries, must increase their own regulatory capacities. Countries should continue to strive to implement sound regulatory systems based on science and internationally accepted risk assessment principles. Only with a national registration scheme can fully-informed decisions be made.

CropLife International will continue to assist individual countries and the FAO, GTZ and other development organizations, to establish science-based regulatory schemes for crop protection products where they do not already exist. CropLife International is also involved in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), one of UNEP's programme to advance the sound management of chemicals.

Industry supports a globalised, innovation-friendly regulatory framework – one that is predictable, transparent and consistent, as well as guided by good science. It calls for Parties to the Rotterdam Convention to use science-based criteria and a recognized risk evaluation processes as a basis for decisions. Otherwise, society risks losing out on the important benefits crop protection products help to bring – economically, socially and environmentally.

Appropriate regulation is only one element. CropLife International also initiates stewardship programmes that work hand-in-hand with regulations to foster a start-to-finish approach to the sustainable use of agriculture products. To date, programmes supported by CropLife International have trained more than 2.5 million farmers and members of their communities in over 80 countries in the safe and effective use of crop protection products. The plant science industry is committed to continuing to work in partnership with relevant stakeholders to ensure the safer and more responsible use of crop protection products.

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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 88 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.

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