Plant Science Industry Welcomes Positive Developments in Biotech

Brussels, 19 May 2004 --- CropLife International welcomes this week’s developments in agricultural biotechnology as further confirmation of the benefits, safety and compatibility of this technology. The Plant Science Industry hopes that in the future governments will have the confidence to adopt this technology as a safe and proven complement to other agricultural technologies, and to implement case-by-case, science-based biosafety assessments of its resultant products.

On Monday, the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation released its annual report, concluding that there are global benefits to be gained by the integration of biotechnology into farming practices. Today, the EU Commission approved a genetically modified sweet corn (Bt-11) for food use in the European Union - the first agricultural biotechnology food product to be approved in Europe since 1998. The EU’s Scientific Committee on Food judged this genetically enhanced Bt-11 sweet corn to be as safe as conventional sweet corn. Time will tell whether this will lead the way for further such product approvals (including for cultivation), but it represents a positive signal.

‘The encouraging move in Europe should also give developing countries a greater level of security to adapt this technology for their own use’ says Dr Christian Verschueren, Director General of CropLife International. ‘FAO’s report provides clear evidence that agricultural research can contribute to lifting people out of poverty and I hope that more governments will now take advantage of the potential that agricultural innovation and technology offers.’

The FAO reported that in the few developing countries where transgenic crops have been introduced, small farmers have gained economically. A specific example given is that of small farmers growing insect-resistant cotton in China, where 20% higher yields have been achieved when compared to conventional varieties. The report also states that the benefits of agricultural biotechnology have been widely distributed among farmers, consumers and industry.

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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.


More information on the EU Commission approval can be accessed at www.europa.eu.int and www.europabio.org

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