

Press Release

World Food Day 16 October 2004 - Plant Science Technologies Critical to Biodiversity Conservation and Enhancement

Brussels, 13 October 2004 – Agricultural technologies are necessary for conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. This is the message CropLife International reminds the international community on the occasion of World Food Day, 16 October 2004. This year's theme is "Biodiversity for Food Security."

Biological diversity (biodiversity) refers to the variability among living things and the ecosystems they inhabit. It is key to ensuring continued life on Earth and is essential for sustainable agriculture and food production. Biodiversity is necessary to sustain vital ecosystem structures and processes, such as soil protection and health, water cycle and quality. It also provides the genetic resources for the breeding of new, locally adapted crop varieties.

"Habitat destruction is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity. Currently, more than 40% of the world's surface is used for agriculture. Unless agricultural technologies are used, it will be impossible to feed and clothe the rising world population without increasing the area of land used for growing crops and causing serious ecological damage," stated Christian Verschueren, Director General, CropLife International.

Beyond making agriculture more efficient and productive on limited land area, the plant science industry helps conserve and enhance biodiversity by:

- Promoting land management systems such as Integrated Crop Management (ICM) throughout the world, which encourages the protection of natural wildlife habitats within and around the farm. This is key to establishing a world wide network of protected areas around the world as stipulated by the Convention on Biological diversity. These areas include temporary, e.g. uncut, field margins, as well as permanent conservation areas.
- Researching on the impact of plant technologies on non-target species. This is a key component of product development and ensures a product's environmentally responsible use.
- Assisting with the management of invasive species, which is critical to an ecosystem's health.
- Maintaining seed bank collections, which helps to ensure the retention of biological diversity for future generations.
- Supporting the appropriate implementation of international treaties, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. If properly implemented according to sound science and risk assessment principles, these treaties will help to encourage innovation, development and capacity-building for agricultural technologies that are necessary for sustainable agriculture, while also achieving the goal of biodiversity protection.

"We applaud the FAO for bringing this important issue to the attention of the international community. Biodiversity conservation and enhancement are essential to the future well-being of the planet. CropLife International and the companies we represent are committed to making available the best technologies to help achieve adequate, safe and healthy food production, improved livelihoods and the preservation of non-renewable resources," said Christian Verschueren.

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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.

For more information on World Food Day: http://www.fao.org/wfd/index_en.asp

Or visit the CropLife web site www.croplife.org

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