
A call to action for women in STEM leadership this International Day of Women and Girls in Science

11 February 2024 (Canberra) – Today, as the world marks the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, CropLife Australia and our members support the call for enhanced career pathways for women and girls in the field of science. Under the banner of this year's theme, 'Women and Girls in Leadership, a New Era for Sustainability,' the focus must be on systemic change.

"Today offers a moment to applaud the remarkable achievements and invaluable contributions of women in science. However, it is still important that we highlight persistent disparities in order to progress beyond mere acknowledgment," said Chief Executive Officer of CropLife Australia, the national peak industry organisation for the plant science sector, Mr Matthew Cossey.

"The importance of a diverse workforce in driving plant science innovation and fostering sustainable advancements in agriculture cannot be overstated. While the enrolment of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) courses at universities is steadily increasing, only 23 per cent of senior management and a mere eight per cent of chief executive officers in STEM industries across Australia are women.

"In Australia, the plant science and agriculture sectors are a critical part of the country's economy and global food security. From pioneering research to manufacturing, policy advocacy, and on-the-ground agricultural practices, we must not merely acknowledge the pivotal role women play in driving innovation; it is time to close the gap in STEM leadership," said Mr Cossey.

CropLife welcomes the recent initiative by the Federal Government to introduce new pathways for female representation on the boards of the Department of Agriculture's Fisheries and Forestry. It's crucial that decision-makers in agricultural science, technology, chemical management, and Research and Development Corporations, are based on merit rather than gender bias.

Mr Cossey continued, "CropLife and its member companies also actively look to support initiatives that enable pathways for girls and women in science. As part of these efforts, CropLife has established a new Ph.D. internship program providing mentorship and professional avenues to students in disciplines relating to plant science and stewardship, yielding new insights into the pivotal role of industry-led stewardship in protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

"This program serves as a testament to the pivotal role women can and do play in championing science-based sustainable agriculture," concluded Mr Cossey.

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About CropLife Australia

CropLife Australia is the national peak industry organisation representing the plant science sector in Australia. CropLife's members are the world-leading innovators, developers, manufacturers and formulators of crop protection and crop biotechnology products. The plant science industry, worth more than \$31.6 billion a year to Australian agricultural production, provides products to protect crops against pests, weeds and diseases, as well as developing crop biotechnologies key to the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability and sustainability. CropLife is a part of the plant science industry's 91 country international federation.

