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Global Plant Science Industry Celebrates Earth Day

Brussels—22 April 2017—Nearly 400,000 plant species provide our planet with the nutritious food, fiber, fresh air, and medicine we need to survive, but it is estimated that roughly one-fifth of those are at risk of extinction due to environmental threats. On this 47th anniversary of Earth Day, CropLife International and the plant science industry have joined together to celebrate the agricultural innovations that have improved the productivity, health and quality of crops while reducing agriculture's environmental impact.

"Around the world, the plant science industry is working tirelessly to research and develop the next generation of crop protection and plant biotech tools and technologies that will help farmers grow healthier, more sustainable crops to feed a growing population," said Howard Minigh, CropLife International's president and chief executive officer. "Farming is one of the greatest users of the earth's natural resources, which is why our industry pledges to provide the tools that will help farmers grow more with less and train them on environmentally friendly best practices."

In celebration of Earth Day, below are five facts about how advances in plant science are reducing agriculture's environmental impact and protecting our planet and its precious resources.

- **Fact #1: Plant biotechnology allows farmers to grow more food on less land.** Since biotech crops were first commercially planted in 1996, farmers have saved over 132 million hectares of land from cultivation and increased crop yields by 22 percent. This means preserving more wildlands and natural habitats for animals.
- **Fact #2: Crop protection products reduce food waste and protect biodiversity.** Food crops compete with 30,000 species of weeds, 3,000 species of nematodes and 10,000 species of plant-eating insects, which have the potential to destroy up to 40 percent of the world's food production each year. Crop protection products help farmers fight off these pests while protecting their crops, reducing food loss.
- **Fact #3: Plant science is helping rebuild the world's soil supply.** Roughly 50,000 square kilometers of soil are lost annually due to erosion, and drought and poor weather conditions continue to degrade soil even further. Modern farming techniques, such as no-till, and technologies, such as biotech crops, are preserving the soil's nutrients and moisture, which provides farmers with better quality soil to grow crops.
- **Fact #4: Innovations in plant biotechnology are reducing agriculture's carbon footprint.** Biotech crops enable agricultural practices such as reduced tillage, which allow farmers to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by burning less fuel and retaining carbon in the soil. Since biotech crops were first planted over 20 years ago, farmers have reduced carbon emissions by 28 billion kilograms, or roughly the equivalent of taking all of London's cars off the street for five years.
- **Fact #5: New developments in plant science aid in global water conservation.** Agriculture uses 70 percent of all fresh water to grow crops, but innovative water-efficient biotech crops are helping farmers use this resource more efficiently. For example, one hectare of corn now uses 450,000 liters less water than it did to grow 20 years ago.

Learn more about the ongoing research and development being conducted by plant scientists around the world on **CropLife International's website**.

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Note to Editor:
CropLife International is the voice of the global plant science industry. It champions the role of agricultural innovations in crop protection and plant biotechnology in supporting and advancing sustainable agriculture; helping farmers feed a growing population while looking after the planet; and progressing rural communities. The world needs farmers, and farmers need plant science. CropLife International is proud to be at the heart of helping farmers grow.