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Agricultural Leaders Unite to drive Spray-Drift best practice

Four of Australia's top agricultural peak-bodies have united to send an important message to all farmers about adhering to best practice during the summer spraying season.

Combined, the National Farmers Federation, Cotton Australia, Grain Growers Limited, and the Ricegrowers Association of Australia represent primary producers who generate billions of dollars for the Australian economy each year. They have strong advice this summer spraying season aimed at protecting each other's livelihoods.

"This isn't about one sector or industry, its about an entire farming community coming together to take action to prevent potential losses which can be devastating for farming families," National Farmers Federation CEO Tony Mahar said.

"We know that the vast majority of farmers are doing the right thing and taking the actions required as part of our best practice methodology. But we need everyone to be on the same page because one mistake can make a huge difference."

Grain Growers CEO Dave McKeon reminded all agricultural stakeholders that it's not just best practice that guides farmers but there are laws in place to ensure compliance. "There is no question that growers need to comply with the laws around chemical spraying, and we support authorities in bringing to justice anyone who knowingly breaks the law."

Mr McKeon said cooperation between all growers and respect for what they produce should drive the best outcomes for all. "Due to the wet summer this year, we all recognise the higher weed burden and less available spraying days, which mean we have to be extra vigilant. We all share a love of the land and many farmers grow a variety of crops. No-one wants to lose produce because someone has been negligent in their spraying activities and it is the industry itself that can minimise damage."

However, Mr McKeon said cooperation between all growers and respect for what they produce should drive the best outcomes for all. "We all share a love of the land and many grow a variety of crops. No-one wants to lose produce because someone has been negligent in their spraying activities and it is the industry itself that can minimise damage."

Ricegrowers Association of Australia Executive Director, Graeme Kruger agrees farmers and their peak-bodies are driving the solutions. "There are a range of tools to assist spray management and most are online, making access easier and timely. I applaud the actions of organisations in their development and supply of very effective tools for a range of applications including weather monitoring, field mapping and planning and spray recording technology."



Cotton Australia's CEO Adam Kay said cotton is particularly sensitive to spray drift from Group I herbicides (phenoxy herbicides including 2,4-D) and the sector had suffered many millions of dollars in production losses due to off-target damage.

"Suffering spray drift damage is frustrating and has a detrimental financial impact on our growers, which is why Cotton Australia has continued to invest considerable time and money into tackling the issue.

"We train, educate and communicate regularly on what is expected while encouraging all our farmers to map their activities on SataCrop, a mapping tool informing all stakeholders of the location of potentially sensitive crops."

Mr Mahar said Australians care about their neighbours, a sentiment felt strongly by farmers throughout the country who are committed to doing the right thing.

Instructions for safe, effective and responsible spraying:

1. Know what to do - Read and follow label instructions – it is a legal requirement.
2. Ensure spray applicators are fully trained and accredited.
3. Check the conditions. Monitor conditions before, during and after spraying. Do not spray when there is a surface temperature inversion – likely to occur between midnight and sunrise – or when wind speeds are very low.
4. Consider your neighbours. Always notify your neighbours of your spray plan.

Ends