

MEDIA RELEASE



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More \$\$\$ needed for non-chemical biosecurity measures

Funding is urgently needed to support research into non-synthetic chemical solutions for Australian farmers tackling plant and animal pests and diseases.

Mark Anderson, General Manager, National Association for Sustainable Agriculture which represents nearly 1000 organic operators, said the lack of non-synthetic chemical alternatives was seriously impacting producers who risk losing certification by using prohibited substances under government and industry standards.

"Every farmer benefits from strong biosecurity which includes strong pest and disease management," said Mr Anderson in response to the announcement of the third round of the Agvet Chemicals Grants Program yesterday.

"Yet while the Australian Government has put \$8 million on the table for producers to gain greater access to agricultural chemicals, we've seen nothing to support serious R&D into alternative pest or disease management methods."

Last month, organic operators across the country protested against proposed mandatory systemic broad-spectrum fungicides being introduced as part of a review of import conditions for brassicaceous seeds such as broccoli and cauliflower.

Alternatives may include cold or hot treatments, acceptable biological preparations under the organic and biodynamic standards or a systems approach using a combination of non-synthetic chemical measures.

"The challenge for the organic industry, and many other producers committed to sustainable agricultural practices, is finding effective non-chemical biosecurity measures that maintain yields while remaining accessible, affordable and relatively easy to implement," said Mr Anderson.

"We know consumers want clean, green produce for their families so why can't more focus and dollars be directed to research and development on a range of biosecurity solutions?"

Mr Anderson said greater investment in on farm monitoring and advanced testing of imported seed sourced from Pest Free Areas could make a significant difference in supporting sustainable farming practices and protecting the environment and biodiversity.

"We've always supported successful co-existence with conventional farming systems and we're certainly not suggesting an abolition of all agvet chemicals," said Mr Anderson. "What we'd like to see is just a portion of the current public funding redirected to alternative biosecurity solutions that don't involve synthetic chemicals.

It's about recognising the need for broader thinking around some of the more traditional, one-size-fits-all responses to agricultural pests and diseases.

The Australian organics industry is now worth \$2.4 billion with over 4000 certified organic producers, processors and handlers.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, AUSTRALIA

The National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia supports the education of industry and consumers on organic, biodynamic and sustainable agricultural practices. NASAA's Standard covers the organic supply chain – from input manufacturers to producers, processors to wholesale and retail operations - ensuring organic integrity 'from paddock to plate'.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE, AUSTRALIA LTD

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