

Croplife India promotes Grow Safe Food campaign

With food production demand increasing every year, there is a need to augment agricultural productivity. Yet, despite an increase in the country's population the cultivable area has not increased, there is thus a need for sustainable agriculture. Among other factors, pest infestation is a major bottleneck to agricultural productivity, more so, with the pests becoming more numerous and varied. Crop protection products are the sine qua non for sustained agricultural production. They play a vital role in protecting crops from attack by insects, diseases, weeds, fungi and other harmful pests. They help improve crop yield and efficiency, ensuring better quality and affordable and abundant food thereby contributing to food security and sustainable agriculture. However, unregulated and indiscriminate use of crop protection products can be harmful to crop, farmer as well as to the environment. Crop protection products should be used judiciously and in the correct dosage and manner.

To improve agricultural output without comprising on the nutrition and the quality of the produce, the Department of Agriculture and Co-cooperation, Government of India has initiated 'Grow Safe Food' campaign in October 2014. A simple message on the five essential principles of judicious pesticide use, viz. the application of pesticides on the right crop, against pests for which the pesticide has been approved, at the right time, in approved doses and as per approved method of application-is sought to be conveyed through hoardings, banners etc. in regional languages in Gram Panchayats and rural areas throughout the country. In this context, the Department of Agriculture feels that licensed dealers/retailers can play a pivotal role in this campaign and consequently they have directed them to refrain from selling, exhibiting and distributing counterfeit products. Further, a logo has been developed by the Department of Agriculture and co-cooperation, Government of India to highlight the campaign.

It is imperative to point out here that efforts in the direction have also been made by the industry. Croplife India, an Association of technology driven, Plant Science Industry is committed to responsible crop care for the safe and sustainable development of Indian Agriculture. CropLife India promotes the benefits of responsible use of Crop Protection Products, as well as sound regulatory frameworks in support of sustainable agriculture in India.

CropLife India's stewardship activities are focused on responsible & safe use of crop protection products and Empty Pesticides Container Management. Croplife India are coordinating their efforts with the Government to promote Good Agricultural Practices. The organisation has adopted the Grow safe food logo and is using it on all communications, posters, banners and all other material used for farmer trainings. Croplife India have produced a film educating the farmers on counterfeit and illegal crop protection products. The film has been produced in 7 languages namely Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. The film aims to spread the message for farmers to buy genuine, untampered crop protection products from

licenced shops, to insist on cash memo on every purchase and check for manufacturing and expiry number along with CIR number and active ingredients.

Croplife India have secured Government support on Stewardship projects to be initiated in East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh; Bharuch, Gujarat; East Champaran, Bihar. They have also received support from Department of Agriculture &Co-operation, Government of India and State Agricultural departments for pilot projects on Responsible Use of Pesticides and Container Management that are been conducted under the aegis of Grow Safe Food campaign.

The objectives of the Pilot Projects on Responsible Use of Pesticides and Container Management are to create awareness for safe and effective use of pesticides and responsible management of empty pesticide containers which would endeavour to promote environmental, public health and sustainable agricultural best practices. The project aims to cover around 6000 farm families in 3 states covering 6 villages. It involves a comprehensive 2 year project involving class room and field training for farmers. These trainings includes 16 modules covering a wide range of topics including Agricultural inputs and their Responsible Use ,Counterfeit and illegal pesticide products, crop / pest knowledge, IPM – identifying beneficial insects, PPE, correct spraying techniques, maintaining sprayer and nozzles, triple rinsing of empty containers and the secure storage of crop protection products.

CropLife India was also instrumental in providing a total of two lakh plus dealer address labels to the Department of agriculture and co-operation for addressing letters to the dealers in the states with the purpose of creating an awareness on the consequences of selling illegal products.

It is hoped that the dissemination of awareness on the responsible use of crop protection products by the Croplife India would contribute to a sustainable agriculture and food security.