



**For Immediate Release**  
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**Solving Africa's Weed Problem Is Key to Improving  
Women's Lives and Increasing Crop Production**  
*Study Finds Potential Increase of 40 Million Tons of Crops, 24 Billion Fewer  
Hours Spent Handweeding*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – The handweeding method commonly used on smallholder farms in sub-Saharan Africa is largely detrimental to both women and agricultural production, according to a new study released by the Crop Protection Research Institute (CPRI), part of the CropLife Foundation (CLF). Women represent 90% of all handweederers and dedicate nearly half of their time to the demanding work. Yet crop yields still suffer due to wrongly timed and insufficient weeding, with yield losses averaging 30%. The new report from CPRI, “*Solving Africa’s Weed Problem*,” highlights the importance of solving the weed control issues in Africa and current industry efforts to provide African farms with modern weed control technology.

The new report from CPRI summarizes 40 years of research which tested the application of herbicides in controlling weeds on smallholder farms. Scientific literature has consistently documented that herbicides would more effectively control weeds, leading to a 90% reduction in handweeding and opportunities for women farmers to pursue additional educational, business and family opportunities. CPRI issued a conservative estimate that the use of herbicides would reduce handweeding labor by 24 billion hours and result in a 40 million ton increase in crop yield.

“The impact of the weed problem in Africa has been overlooked because weeding is oftentimes seen as work of little importance,” said Leonard Gianessi, director of CPRI and author of the report. “Huge investments are being made in improving seeds and promoting fertilizer use by smallholder farmers; yet, the potential of these technologies will not be achieved without solving the yield-robbing effects of weeds.”

The report also highlights current industry efforts to demonstrate the value of herbicides and introduce herbicide technology to smallholder farms. As part of the project, CLF has partnered with CNFA and a number of the developers and manufacturers of crop protection products. These organizations planted research plots in Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania which drew over 3,000 farmers to witness the results of herbicide use firsthand. Maize plots treated with herbicides produced a 26% increase in crop yield, with a

reduction of 150 hours per hectare in handweeding. In addition, the cost of herbicides was 50% lower than the cost of handweeding labor.

"Herbicides are registered for use in Africa and are widely used by large-scale commercial farmers, yet the smallholder farms have been denied the choice of herbicide technology due to insufficient training and education," said Jay Vroom, chairman of CLF. "CPRI's latest report helps to educate and raise awareness of this overlooked issue, and helps introduce labor-saving technology at a time when the demand for food continues to rise."

DuPont Crop Protection, who participated in the test plots, was excited to help introduce herbicide use to the farmers. "DuPont has a long history of bringing herbicides to farmers around the world to help improve their productivity and profitability," said Jim Collins, president of DuPont Crop Protection. "DuPont is very pleased to have a role in CLF's efforts in Africa to demonstrate to smallholder farmers the value of this technology."

The CPRI report received financial support through CropLife International (CLI), a global federation representing the plant science industry. CLI President and CEO Howard Minigh praised the report, saying that, "CPRI's study is a timely reminder of the daily realities of farming in Africa. By improving the education of smallholder farmers we can offer more choices to boost yields and improve the lives of the women who perform the backbreaking labor."

CLF is a non profit, non-advocacy organization created to advance the understanding of crop protection products through research and education. Full results of the African weed study can be found online at [www.croplifefoundation.org](http://www.croplifefoundation.org). A summary of the study will also appear in an upcoming issue of *Aspects of Applied Biology*, published by the Association of Applied Biologists.

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CropLife Foundation is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable and research organization. CropLife Foundation was created in 2001 to promote and advance sustainable agriculture and the environmentally sound use of crop protection products and bioengineered agriculture.