



**Written Testimony of Jay Vroom,
President and CEO of CropLife America
Submitted to the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
Re: May 25, 2016 Hearing Titled, “Food Waste from Field to Table”**

Chairman Conaway, Ranking Member Peterson, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony as part of the Committee’s hearing on food waste. I’m Jay Vroom, president and CEO of CropLife America, the trade association representing the crop protection industry in the U.S. I proudly come from a long line of farmers and maintain ties with my family’s farm in Illinois.

The problem of food waste is astronomic: the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization estimates that saving just a quarter of the food currently lost or wasted worldwide would be enough to feed 870 million hungry people.¹ This past September, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced our country’s first-ever national food waste reduction goal, calling for a 50 percent reduction by 2030.² Reducing this much waste will take engagement from stakeholders across the food production system, including growers.

As you examine where waste occurs, I encourage you to look at the farm level, listen to the growers and their needs, and consider the importance of crop protection products and biotechnology tools in decreasing food waste. Waste can be prevented starting from the field and continuing all the way to the consumer’s home. An all-too-common occurrence throughout the food waste dialogue is the absence of the farmer’s voice. As we build and improve systems that reduce food waste, it is imperative that we hear from growers and support their efforts to reduce food and crop loss. Growers are the ideal sources of information regarding what tools they need to fight threats to their crops and reduce food waste.

Globally, annual food loss and waste stands at: 30% for cereals; 40-50% for root crops, fruits and vegetables; 20% for oil seeds, meat and dairy; and 35% for fish.³ Notably, most food waste estimates do not include the amount of *potential* food loss, or crop loss, from produce that has not yet been harvested. For example, in a 2006 study, scientists from the Institute for Plant Diseases in Bonn, Germany estimated that pests alone could potentially cause the loss of half of the world’s wheat crops.⁴

From the beginning of the growing process, farmers deal with crop loss due to a multitude of factors, including weeds and other pests. After crops are harvested, in both storage and in transport to grocery stores or production facilities, mold and rot can damage and degrade food, decreasing the length of its shelf life. Mold and rot continue to threaten food until it is finally preserved or consumed, making it all the more important for farmers to grow fruits and vegetables that are as robust as possible. Thankfully,

¹ Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. [SAVE FOOD: Global Initiative on Food Loss and Waste Reduction: Key facts on food loss and waste you should know!](#)

² U.S. Department of Agriculture. News Release: [USDA and EPA Join with Private Sector, Charitable Organizations to Set Nation’s First Food Waste Reduction Goals](#). September 16, 2015.

³ UN FAO, [Key facts on food loss and waste you should know!](#)

⁴ Institute for Plant Diseases, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universitaet Bonn. [Crop losses to pests](#). The Journal of Agricultural Science, Volume 144, Issue 01. February 2006, pp 31-43.



farmers and others in the food production chain are successfully managing many of these threats through the use of modern agricultural technologies. And that fact means that were it not for farmers and the science-based technologies that they use, food waste today could be even worse than it is!

The crop protection industry's mission is to reduce food waste and crop loss starting from the first planting of a seed. Both conventional and organic growers use crop protection products to prevent insects, disease, mold and fungus from destroying food in the field, in storage, and in transport to grocery stores. Crop protection products and other technological advancements including biotechnology also help prevent food loss during the processing and packaging stages of food production. Additional technologies in the commercial development pipeline will further help farmers reduce food loss beyond the farm, such as the development of more robust root systems that resist drought, and soil health research.

When examining the issue of food waste, we also must consider the resources used to produce food, including water, land, energy, labor and capital. This past March, National Geographic reported that, "Globally, a year's production of uneaten food guzzles as much water as the entire annual flow of the Volga, Europe's most voluminous river."⁵ On the farm, many of our nation's highly advanced agricultural methods have led to increased efficiency, preventing resource waste. Precision agriculture technologies allow growers to use inputs and resources more effectively, increasing productivity in an eco-conscious way.

Today, we ask you to ensure our nation's growers continue to have access to vital and necessary crop protection products. They are elemental to preventing crop loss and reducing further resource waste throughout the food production system. We are concerned that recent steps taken by the EPA, in regards to efforts to change pesticide policy abruptly, are in reaction to misinformed political activism and are not based in sound science. It is of the utmost importance that regulatory decisions balance risks and benefits using solid data.

The successful reduction of food and crop loss, and therefore resource waste, in agriculture requires commitment from all stakeholders in the food production system. The pesticide industry continues to work on solutions to help farmers prevent loss and use resources more efficiently and sustainably. By doing our part at the beginning of the food production chain, along with farmers, we can increase the likelihood that nutritious food reaches your family's kitchen table.

We are now starting up a project at CropLife Foundation to do more research on the role of modern technologies in reducing food waste – and also to help advance innovation that will bring even more solutions. On behalf of CropLife America and our member companies, I'd like to thank you for giving your time and attention to the serious issue of food waste. We look forward to working collaboratively to address this issue.

⁵ Royte, Elizabeth. *National Geographic*. "How 'Ugly' Fruits and Vegetables Can Help Solve World Hunger." March 2016. <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/magazine/2016/03/global-food-waste-statistics/>