

FCI Trade Summit Miami Sets Stage for Record Crop Protection Sales

Crop protection sales expected to grow 8% in 2012; analysts and attendees prepare for sustained growth to meet burgeoning demand for food production.

Investment in food productivity is rising rapidly as the world prepares to feed more than 9 billion by 2050. The crop protection industry – major contributors to achieving better yields – met in Miami Aug. 6-8 for the industry's largest event in the Americas.

More than 500 manufacturers, formulators, distributors and registration consultants from 36 countries attended the 5th Anniversary FCI Trade Summit to source new crop protection products, meet new trading partners and build better product portfolios that they can offer retailers and farmers.

"The FCI Trade Summit is the most significant crop protection event of the year for our company because it allows us to meet our business partners, find new ones, and especially, to meet with friends of the industry in a nice atmosphere," says Diego Taube, managing director of Buenos Aires-based Chempro, a trading company that specializes in agrochemicals. "This was the best Trade Summit yet, and we look forward to more like this one."

The Need for Crop Protection

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently reported that cropland expansion is not a sustainable or practical option. Logistics continue to plague farmers in remote regions because infrastructure is unable to support the need to bring perishables to market.

The only way to effectively feed a burgeoning population is through intensification of current arable lands. Intensification – the use of modern seeds, fertilizers, crop protection products and other modern agricultural practices – will bolster yields per acre and allow farmers to be more profitable and feed more people. About 90% of the increase in required food productivity must come from intensification to be achievable and sustainable, according to the FAO.

"We are in a challenging and exciting time in regard to modern agriculture," CropLife America President and CEO Jay Vroom said during a panel discussion of legislative and regulatory experts from throughout the Americas. "More than 1 billion went to bed without enough to eat yesterday ... More than half of the world's farmers do not produce enough to feed their own families, and there is something troubling and profound in that, but it is also an opportunity for us in the crop inputs industry to address."

Vroom went on to say that while the expansion of urban centers and middle classes in emerging economies have brought immense pressure on the world's food production systems, farmers have adopted technologies in the past 50 years to help meet the burgeoning demand.

The so-called Green Revolution in the United States has helped farmers quadruple yields in key crops, including corn, rice and soybeans. Much of Europe followed suit, and India is amid a Green Revolution of its own. Food productivity in emerging economies, especially those in Africa, Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe, must increase to keep pace with food demand.

Some signs indicate that emerging economies are on the forefront of their own Green Revolutions. In India and China, the emergence of middle classes and higher wages for agriculture workers made chemical weeding more viable than hand cultivation for weed control. In the same way, greater adoption of food production techniques and technologies are being adopted in emerging economies at a greater pace than in developed economies, including the United States and EU.

“We saw a very positive market in 2011 with growth of almost 15%, and the key drivers for the chemical crop protection sector were better weather conditions in many regions of the world and also positive crop pricing – which made the farm economy stronger and purchasing power for agrochemicals stronger as well,” said Matthew Phillips of Phillips McDougall, a research consultancy for crop input companies. Phillips sees growth hitting 8% going into 2012.

Favorable crop prices continue to be a saving grace for farmers, many of whom are battling drought or rain events that make it more difficult to optimize yields. The U.S. Corn Belt’s wilting farmlands have received a great deal of international attention as eyes turn to the world’s top food exporter with hope that there will be enough surpluses to go around.

The FCI Trade Summit, with its intent to spread modern agronomic systems around the world, will organize its next event in December in Jakarta, Indonesia. For more information, contact *Farm Chemicals International* at dfrabotta@meistermedia.com.

About the FCI Trade Summit:

The FCI Trade Summit organizes business meetings for crop input producers and distributors. *Farm Chemicals International* believes that the proliferation of crop production technologies is instrumental to national prosperity and regional food security. The Trade Summit thrives on its ability to introduce a diverse group of crop input manufacturers to in-country distributors, thereby providing access to efficient, effective and affordable production technologies for the farmers and the communities they serve.

About Farm Chemicals International:

Farm Chemicals International creates real and virtual communities around crop input manufacturers, distributors, trading companies and registration consultants through its coverage and analysis of crop production news and trends, as well as coverage of trade policies, agronomic practices, crop reports, regulatory issues, company profiles and personality profiles of the world's most influential agriculture entrepreneurs and advocates for modern agriculture.

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