BeSure! Launches Annual Stewardship Campaign to Help Protect Pollinators During Planting Season

Industry-Wide Effort Unites Farmers, Applicators and Retailers to Promote Best Management Practices When Applying Neonicotinoid Products on Crops and Urban Landscapes

(March 23, 2020) BeSure! – the industry-wide effort to help protect pollinators and other wildlife during planting season – today launched its second annual stewardship awareness campaign to promote best management practices when using neonicotinoid products on farms and urban landscapes.

BeSure! uses print, radio, digital and social media efforts to offer a wide range of tips and resources to farmers, crop protection applicators, agricultural supply retailers and others to ensure label directions and responsible stewardship measures are followed for neonicotinoid products, minimizing any potential impact on pollinators and other wildlife.

“The seed industry has a longstanding history of working closely with growers to ensure the safe and effective use of treated seed. We’re excited to once again partner with the BeSure! initiative, which last year reached more than 100 million stakeholders in the agricultural community,” said Jane DeMarchi, vice president of Government and Regulatory Affairs for the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA), one of numerous industry organizations partnering with Growing Matters, a coalition of companies that is spearheading the BeSure! initiative. The campaign has been endorsed by the National Corn Growers Association, the American Soybean Association, the National Pesticide Safety Education Center (NPSEC), CropLife America and the Agricultural Retailers Association, among others.

In its first year, BeSure! focused its messaging on major crops in the Midwest that utilize neonicotinoid-treated seed, such as corn and soybeans. This year, the campaign is expanding to include neonicotinoid foliar sprays, soil drenches, and granule uses on fruits, nuts, vegetables, turf, trees and ornamental plants, as well as extending outreach to include the citrus industry in California and Florida. Neonicotinoids have been very effective in stopping invasive pests, such as the Asian citrus psyllid that spreads a disease that is decimating Florida’s citrus industry and has cost the state more than 8,000 jobs and $4.5 billion in the last five years.
“Neonicotinoids are widely used in agriculture and in a variety of landscape and nursery settings,” said Tom Smith, executive director of NPSEC. “Regardless of the specific use and method of application, product label directions should always be followed and responsible stewardship practices used to protect pollinators, such as avoiding conditions where product drift may occur and avoiding making applications when pollinators are actively foraging.”

This year’s campaign will direct farmers, applicators and others to GrowingMatters.org/BeSure, an interactive website with up-to-date stewardship tips and information. The BeSure! site also integrates ASTA’s Guide to Seed Treatment Stewardship, which includes videos and brochures to show how treated seeds can be used in a way that avoids exposure to pollinators and other wildlife. Additional links explain how other neonic applications can be used responsibly, including the comprehensive Insect Pollinators and Pesticide Product Stewardship Guide. Two downloadable fact sheets with five quick tips to guide best management practices during planting season, one for growers and one for applicators, are available on the website.

“As a soybean and corn grower, I use and fully understand the value that neonic seed treatments provide to the farmer. They are a pinpoint tool that, when properly used, can provide safe and effective control of crop pests,” said Wayne Fredericks, a northern Iowa grower. “The BeSure! campaign provides a great roadmap for farmers to follow when using these products and will lead to better protection of our bees and wildlife through practical stewardship practices outlined both in this campaign and on product labels.”

The campaign officially launches today on March 23, 2020, and will include targeted tips and updates over the course of various planting seasons through July. Over the coming weeks, the campaign will share relevant updates and best management tips via social media content (search using hashtag #BeSure), radio programming, outreach via industry trade groups, and a variety of digital content. For more information, please visit: GrowingMatters.org/BeSure.

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**About Growing Matters**

Agriculture and horticulture are key to nourishing families and communities. Feeding a growing population, enhancing the beauty of our surroundings and a sustained commitment to environmental
Crop protection are fundamental needs that matter. Crop protection products, both natural and synthetic, are important tools that protect plants from tough and invasive pests that can devastate crops and urban landscapes. Growing Matters is funded by a consortium of companies committed to open and healthy scientific discourse on stewardship, benefits and alternatives to neonicotinoid insecticides in North America. Consortium members include Bayer, Syngenta, Valent U.S.A., BASF and Mitsui Chemicals Agro, Inc.

Go to www.GrowingMatters.org for the information, reports, videos and infographics on the benefits of neonicotinoid insecticides.

About American Seed Trade Association (ASTA)
Founded in 1883, the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) represents over 700 companies involved in seed production, plant breeding and related industries in North America. ASTA is the leading voice of action in all matters concerning the development, marketing and movement of seed, associated products and services throughout the world. The association’s broad membership offers varieties from alfalfa to zucchini and all production types including conventional, organic and biotech. ASTA promotes the development of better seed to produce better crops for a better quality of life. Go to www.betterseed.org.

About National Pesticide Safety Education Center (NPSEC)
The National Pesticide Safety Education Center serves and supports extension Pesticide Safety Education Programs in all states and US territories. NPSEC works to strengthen this national system by improving the quality, consistency, and accessibility of educational offerings, promoting collaboration and leveraging of educational resources and learning assessment tools. For more information, go to www.npsec.us.

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