



NFF Agricultural Chemicals and Veterinary Medicines (AgVet Chemicals) Policy

NFF policy position

Agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines (AgVet chemicals) are essential to producing food and fibre in Australia. Timely access to safe and effective AgVet chemicals is critical to Australian agriculture's productivity, sustainability, competitiveness, and supports food and fibre security.

The National Farmers' Federation (NFF) seeks an efficient, science- and risk-based regulatory environment that delivers world-leading access to technology.

Overview

Australian farmers use AgVet chemicals to protect against pests, weeds, and diseases, ensuring optimal yields and high-quality produce and supporting animal health and welfare. AgVet chemicals are crucial to biosecurity and environmental sustainability, while access to these products also ensures Australian agriculture's international competitiveness and the nation's food and fibre security.

Farmers adhere to guidelines determined by the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA) – Australia's robust, independent, and science- and risk-based chemical regulator – to use AgVet chemicals safely, responsibly, and effectively. Maintaining the trust of the Australian community and global trading partners is paramount, with industry continuing to invest in stewardship and sustainability across the supply chain as well as transparency around the use and benefits of AgVet chemicals.

The small size of Australia's AgVet chemical market limits commercial incentive for manufacturers to register products in Australia, creating barriers for Australian farmers to access AgVet products and uses approved in competitor countries.

These challenges are exacerbated by inefficiencies in Australia's regulatory system including delays in product registrations, inconsistent state-level control-of-use functions, a lack of systemic resilience, and unsustainable cost recovery arrangements.¹

Targeted reforms are needed to deliver the NFF's vision for Australia's regulatory environment: one that appropriately manages risk and supports agile, efficient access to AgVet chemicals to bolster productivity, manage threats to production systems, and strengthen Australia's food and fibre security.

¹ See DAWE 2021, Final Report of the Independent Review of the Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Regulatory System in Australia, Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, Canberra, April. CC BY 4.0.



Policy principles

1. Australian farmers require **timely, consistent and viable access** to agricultural chemicals and veterinary medicines that meet the unique needs of their production systems and farming methodologies.
2. The regulation of AgVet chemicals should be **science-based and reflect best practice**. The risk-based framework should be tailored to the Australian environment and responsive to scientific developments.
3. **Regulation should encourage innovation, investment, and registration of new or alternative products**, making Australia an attractive and competitive market.
4. **Continued investment in AgVet chemical research and development (R&D)** is needed to drive innovation, productivity, and sustainability.
5. **Safety is paramount: Australian farmers rely on the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)**, Australia's independent and science-based regulator, to determine which products they can use and how to use them safely.
6. **Public trust in the use of agricultural inputs must be proactively maintained**. Transparent APVMA decision-making and communication are key to community confidence in the use of AgVet chemical products and the broader agricultural sector.
7. **Consistency in regulation, use, and compliance** across states and territories is essential to reduce administrative burden and foster equitable access.
8. **All supply chain participants should engage in the responsible use, management, and stewardship of AgVet chemicals** across the product lifecycle from development to disposal.
9. Australia's unique production environments and AgVet chemical requirements must be recognised in **trade and market access arrangements and biosecurity preparedness and responses**.

Priority initiatives to deliver on the principles

Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority (APVMA)

- **Operational reform (principles 1, 5):** The APVMA should be empowered to meet its statutory timeframes and deliver timely access to AgVet chemicals.
- **Sustainable, appropriate resourcing (principles 1, 2, 3, 5):** The APVMA should be sustainably and appropriately funded and staffed. This includes public funding for areas of public good or market failures like minor use. Cost recovery settings should encourage investment and registrations.



- **Enhance stakeholder and public engagement (principles 2, 5, 6):** The APVMA and Australian Government should better engage with end users and the community to improve understanding of AgVet chemicals, the regulator, and its decisions.
- **Improving the predictability of data requirements (principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5):** The APVMA should clearly outline data requirements for registration and chemical reviews, and work with stakeholders to address any gaps in data or evidence to support best practice decisions.

System-level reforms

- **National consistency for the AgVet chemicals legislative framework (principles 2, 7):** Governments must achieve national consistency through the harmonisation of control-of-use functions across states and territories.

Access to products

- **Improve availability of products and uses (principles 1, 2, 3, 7):** Governments and the APVMA should reduce regulatory barriers and improve timely access to products, including by fast-tracking lower-risk products and expanding uses in line with international evidence.
- **Improve product access in emergencies (principles 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9):** Prioritise reforms to ensure timely access to AgVet chemicals in emergency scenarios, including emergent situations.

Stewardship and social licence

- **Promote best-practice methodologies (principles 2, 3, 4, 5):** Governments and industry should promote and invest in best-practice methodologies and innovative delivery technologies to minimise issues such as spray drift and resistance.
- **Industry-led stewardship programs (principles 5, 6, 8):** Industry and governments should expand industry-led stewardship programs that support environmental sustainability and responsible recycling of products.
- **Support the implementation of Australia's National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy (principles 1, 2, 5, 6, 8):** Governments, industry, and the community should implement Australia's *National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy – 2020 and beyond*.

Associated documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the NFF 2030 Roadmap; NFF Trade Policy 2020; NFF Animal Welfare Policy 2020; NFF Biosecurity Policy 2020; and NFF Connectivity and Digital Agriculture Policy 2022.

Endorsed: NFF Members' Council, Thursday 22nd of May 2025.