

ABIM 2020 — the daily blog

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Daily round-up

The second day of ABIM started with a training workshop on sustainability. Led by Lieselot Van der Veken of Proterra, she told the ABIM blog: “The vibrant dynamic sustainability discussions are proof of the growing interest and consciousness within the biocontrol sector to play their role in broader societal sustainability challenges.” Taking advantage of the digital format there were breakout rooms to hold discussions on specific questions such as: Where does biocontrol intersect with sustainability and where do you have evidence for that? Another question that arose: Are Cu-pesticides considered “bio” by all consumers (approved for “bio”/organic farming), even though they accumulate in soil and are Candidates for Substitution in the EU renewal process?

Panel discussions

In the Global regulatory harmonization session - European and global focus, Roma Gwynn said: “Regulation still represents the greatest financial and time burden for companies trying to get products into the hands of farmers. Companies recognise the importance of good regulation but maintain that it should be proportional to the risks of the biocontrol technology, at present there are few examples where this is so. Plus, across the world there are different approaches, standards and expertise in regulation of and for biocontrol technologies, each country being slightly different in their requirements. This means companies have to prepare new studies and dossier in each country, this adds to the burden for companies. By having dialogue between countries for regulations and working towards harmonisation this will reduce the burden for companies (many of who are micro and small companies) and result in many more biocontrol technology products get into the hands of farmers and in less time. Farmers need ‘Biocontrol First’ IPM solutions now to allow them to meet the challenges of growing food in resilient agriculture systems.”

When we asked what her summary message for the session would be, she told the ABIM blog: “Biocontrol technologies need to have good, proportional and harmonised regulations to reduce the time to market and financial burden on biocontrol companies and so get products into the hands of farmers and other users quickly. The environment and society is

best served if regulators work together to have a proportional and harmonised regulatory system for biocontrol technologies.”

Case studies

This afternoon there were presentations on case studies on the effective use of biocontrol. Contributions included from Piet Boonekamp (Artemis) on the Dutch vision for 2030 (from early 2019) which was launched to develop more resilient plant varieties/new biodiverse cropping systems in balance with surrounding nature.

Dr Brendon Neumann (Madumbi): *Healthy yields start with healthy soil and roots* – spoke on how biological products can play a significant role in promoting healthy root development but must be affordable to grower.

Dr Shimon Steinberg (Biobee): *Biologically-based IPM in greenhouse sweet pepper*. Discussed the importance of being able to feed a standing army of predators – this extends the lifetime of predator populations.

Dr Carol Langrand-Lerche (Bayer): *Pioneering a multi-technology solution for integrated nematode management* – the product VELUM offers a new mode of action against nematodes. It interrupts the energy supply from the mitochondria, the cellular powerplants. It causes nematodes to become needle shaped and immobile.

Panel discussions from yesterday

Rick Melnick, of DunhamTrimmer and 2BMonthly, chaired the session on “*Update on B. thuringiensis: A valuable biocontrol agent caught in the B. cereus debate*”

We contacted Rick and asked him to put the discussion in context:

“Many consider *Bacillus thuringiensis* to be the cornerstone of the biocontrol industry. With nearly 50 years of commercial use, the importance of the commercial strains of Bt is twofold: 1) Its powerful and highly specific insecticidal activity and 2) Its veritable lack of activity against non-target organisms (beneficials, birds, bees, fish, mammals). The technology is so safe, in fact, that Bti – a species of Bt used for mosquito control and vector management in the Public Health sphere – is approved for applications directly into drinking water! The challenges for the biocontrols and food industries are that Bt is closely related to *Bacillus cereus*, a known human pathogen, so much so that produce samples treated with Bt close to harvest are known to trigger false positives for Bc in the food lab. This creates a dilemma – particularly when growers and food companies, collectively, are progressing ever faster toward integrated production systems using both conventional and biological controls. The good news, as we learned from our panel of expert speakers today, is that steady progress is being made to develop new laboratory testing methods that will help us differentiate between Bt and Bc. We also learned that regulators and policy makers are active and collaborative in helping us find solutions.”

What's up tomorrow

Keynote address:

The role of biocontrol in delivering sustainable development and food system transformation

Dr Sally Uren gave the ABIM blog a brief taster:

“I’ll be taking a look at what the future might hold, sharing content from our newly published Future of Sustainability report, which shines a light on our complex and turbulent world, and makes the case for why transformation towards sustainability is needed, right now. I’ll then highlight a specific role and the opportunities for the biocontrol sector in delivering this transformation.”

Plus - IBMA Natural Substances Professional Group meeting (members only) / Innovations and emerging technologies for bioprotection / Training workshop on patents and IP / Keynote address – agrifood transformation and the role of biocontrol / Case studies around the globe relying on biocontrol in agrifood transformation / closing remarks

And finally, the thank-you board

Do you have colleagues who deserve a shout-out? Here’s where we will put messages from companies to thank people.

From the New Ag International team, we’d like to thank our conference producer Natalia Franca Rocha for making great research notes on the ABIM presentations and discussions.

Enjoy tomorrow – the final day of the ABIM conference and exhibition.



Meet the BASF team: Pavillion 2, booth number 2