

BIOBEE PROVIDES THE FULL IPM PACKAGE

Israeli firm BioBee, based in the northern Jordan Valley, comprises three different, but complementary, branches, all in the field of non-chemical plant protection. The first produces biological pest control items, the second multiplies and markets bumble bees, and the third, BioFly, produces sterile Mediterranean fruit flies.

BioBee products are marketed abroad (60 per cent) as well as used locally in Israel. Today, approximately 70 per cent of the sweet pepper crop in Israel, some 1,500ha, utilises integrated pest management (IPM) based on BioBee products.

"The most important aspect," says R&D chief Dr Shimon Steinberg, "is that our package includes technical advice on product usage, as well as a full scouting service for the eight months of the crop. We make available courses to farmers, scouts and the greenhouse working team, with full training on biologically based IPM. We believe no-one has more exposure to the individual plants than the greenhouse labourer who, if adequately trained, can provide the most efficient early-warning system."

The company is working on new species of predatory mite for outdoor use, mainly on fruit trees, while also researching a parasitic solution to mealybugs, which remains a major problem for peppers in both Almeria, Spain, and in Israel. *_GK*



AgraQuest targets growth in Europe

CALIFORNIA—Growing consumer concern over food safety has led to a rise in demand for biopesticides, while US firm AgraQuest sees Europe as the next area for expansion.

by Tom Joyce & Gerry Kelman

Davis, California-based biopesticide company AgraQuest sees further development in the European market as key to maintaining its current level of growth, which stood at an impressive 40-45 per cent last year. The company's Serenade fungicide, for which it has an international distribution partnership with BASF, is currently available in Italy, France, Turkey, the UK and Switzerland, and there are now plans to introduce it in Morocco, Spain, Greece and Portugal in the near future.

The product is described by Ashish Malik, senior vice-president of marketing, as "highly effective with low potential for development of resistance". It is complemented in the US by Serenade Soil, which counters disease in the soil as opposed to the foliar. "We intend to release this product in Europe in 2014," he tells *Biologic*. "It builds a barrier around the roots to protect them and promote plant growth, increasing yields of crops like tomatoes and potatoes by as much as 12-14 per cent."

AgraQuest also has two new biopesticides, dubbed Sonata and Requiem, both of which are scheduled for launch in Europe by 2014. Such rapid commercialisation is testament to the rising demand for environmentally friendly solutions in Europe, what Malik calls "the new green revolution" in agriculture. "These days, consumers



LEFT—Ashish Malik, senior vice-president of marketing at AgraQuest

are becoming increasingly sophisticated about things like MRLs [maximum residue levels]," he says, "and they are encouraging many supermarkets to go even more restrictive than the regulations. Regulators are also looking at the environmental impact of chemical products, with many products being de-listed due to concerns about impacts like run-off water contamination."

As more and more synthetic products are removed from the list of available options, farmers have fewer products to choose from, raising the risk of resistance for the remainder. "This is why biopesticides are so popular," Malik explains, "since they protect the plant in different ways. Biopesticides are also as effective, and won't sacrifice yields. Increases in yield will be vital for feeding a rapidly growing population, so we're going greener without sacrificing productivity. You can have the best of both worlds." 