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The Farm to Fork Strategy must include bioprotection – all biocontrol technologies – to enable Europe’s shift to restorative agriculture

Why bioprotection matters

Bioprotection is a biological alternative to chemical crop protection with positive environmental, health and climate impacts for a sustainable food system. Bioprotection and biocontrol technologies, also described as bioprotectants or biologicals, are integral to holistic agricultural systems.

An enabling EU regulatory environment for biological pest control and integrated pest management requires scaling up application of biologicals. Biologicals will help restore habitats, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, enhance natural biological processes, and over time help rebuild ecosystems and restore soil biodiversity, supporting sustainable crop productivity and sustainable food systems.

Bioprotectants are an effective and innovative alternative to chemical pesticides with lower health and environmental impacts. Made from nature, identical to nature when synthesised, they comprise microbials, semiochemicals (pheromones), natural substances and invertebrate biocontrol agents (macrobiols).

IBMA provides an enabling environment for bioprotection innovation in Europe with 71 SMEs and 76 micro- entrepreneurs among 165 members in 17 Member States.

The role of incentives, innovation and regulatory certainty to boost the transition to restorative agriculture.

1. Regulatory certainty for bioprotection products

The EU must create an enabling regulatory environment so biological products can reach farmers faster. A new bioprotection specific regulation should cover microbials and other bioprotectants with a fast tracking approach such as provisional approvals for benign bioprotectants, while ensuring consumer and environmental safety. Capacity building for bioprotection assessment is needed within competent authorities at European and Member State levels, using the BTSF Better Training for Safer Food model.

The REFIT of EU1107/2009 provides an opportunity to manage quick fixes in the existing regulation including adaptation of data requirements and use of derogations (Article 53) for bioprotection products, especially for arable. Part B should be adapted for microbials and Parts C and D created for new data requirements for semiochemicals and botanicals, a natural substance.

2. Support mechanism to enable farmers to transition to restorative systems

Farmers should receive financial incentives to adopt more ecological ways of farming. Changing to agroecology or IPM requires adaptation of farming systems to new norms based on observation and monitoring of soil, crops and animals, facilitated by digital techniques and new farmer skills, especially for the new generation. The process is gradual and occurs field by field. The farmer should be supported in making the transition. New networks led by farmers for farmers will facilitate farmer to farmer development and sharing of best practice. These new networks should be CAP funded.

Farmer to farmer networks should benefit from experts, manufacturers and researchers to help build knowledge and provide state of the art solutions for immediate implementation. Farming is a business so any change to operations is a financial risk and potentially a social risk. The time needed to do each job or the sequencing of operations may change, which may cause stress and change the financials. Farming should promote agroecologically based IPM systems, such as organic, with biological control mechanisms that directly and indirectly help manage soil biodiversity and plant biodiversity.

3. Research fund to scale innovation in restorative arable systems

The EU should offer a multi-annual fund for field development into new ways of integrating biological approaches to pest and disease control and crop nutrition, to build resilience into agricultural cropping systems. Eventual demonstration of successful examples of biological based approaches should involve all members of the food value chain so that (i) practical implementation is effective and profitable for farmers (ii) wider benefits in food nutritional quality, biodiversity, water management and land use are recognised.

Alignment across EU policies to boost regenerative agriculture

The SDG goals on food and nutrition require a resilient agricultural system, effective soil management and carbon sequestration through nutrient cycling. Investing in restorative agriculture and bioprotection technologies will benefit farmers, nature and biodiversity in Europe as well as support global climate and development ambition.

Biologicals. Control pests. Protect nature

Furthermore, please find here [IBMA supporting document](#) to this written submission.

***N.B:** This is the extensive version of IBMA Contribution to the European Commission Public Consultation on the Farm to Fork Strategy Roadmap. Due to upload technicalities, we had to reduce the EC online version and put some additional elements in the supporting document.*