

Copa and Cogeca, representing EU farmers and agri-cooperatives, and IBMA trade association, representing the manufacturers of biocontrol solutions, hosted a symposium at the European Parliament to discuss the necessity of expanding farmers' toolboxes. The symposium was hosted by MEPs Annie Schreijer-Pierik (EPP), Pavel Poc (S&D) and Ivan Jakovčić (ALDE), with the participation of ministry representative from the Netherlands. The symposium featured presentations by both farmers and industry representatives, and delegates had the opportunity to hear and debate best ways to apply integrated pest management (IPM) principles, based on good farming and agricultural practices, as well as solutions on how to prevent the reduction of farmers' toolboxes. Schreijer-Pierik said low-risk pesticides of biological origin form an important integral part of farmers' toolboxes in modern pest and plant health management. "The EU can lead the way in the world market of innovative biological pesticides, by facilitating not delaying their development and use," she noted. Poc added that the European Parliament and all the relevant stakeholders are aligned on the need for an immediate fast-track for low-risk biological PPPs. "The European Commission should better acknowledge the broadly supported call for action and advance the process. On the European Parliament's side there is a positive cross-party support, as well fruitful collaboration between the ENVI and AGRI committees. I hope we will soon see positive steps forward in ensuring a better environment for the future development of more sustainable plant protection." Meanwhile, Jakovčić stressed that it is time for a big and determined turning point in treating the land for agriculture. "The way that farmland has been treated for decades has exhausted the resources and therefore we need new regulation and new policy. I hope that European institutions, interested companies and farmers will recognize the need for co-operation and creating synergies that will open another aspect of land use in the coming decades in a completely new way." Copa and Cogeca's Secretary General Pekka Pesonen emphasized the importance of this event and said European farmers are the guardians of the land and are ready to continue investing in further improvement of the sustainability in the sector. "Unfortunately, despite the interest from EU farmers to apply low-risk PPPs, the availability of such products is clearly far from envisaged. For the EU farming community, it is crucial that investments keep going into this area to bring new and safe products to the market, adapted to the EU agricultural system." IBMA Executive Director David Cary reiterated that the IBMA "remains committed to make proportionate regulation of sustainable biological plant protection inputs a reality by working with all parties to pursue the calls within the EU Parliament motion for resolution with support from society, farmers, IGOs, NGOs and industry stakeholders."

Published in February 2019 edition of 2BMonthly