



Unlocking the potential of Biocontrol

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IBMA, the voice of the biological control sector, had the pleasure to co-host an enriching event entitled “Unlocking the Potential of Biocontrol” together with IEEP, the Institute for European Environmental Policy and IBMA France. Discussions looked into facilitating a widespread use of biocontrol, essential to achieving the EU Green Deal’s objectives for nature, climate and sustainable food systems. The debate offered in-depth insights on barriers to biocontrol that are slowing down its adoption and the role of EU policy instruments to unlock the agroecological transition.

As shown by the current crisis, the resilience of the food system requires a fundamental re-orientation of EU agriculture towards more sustainable practices and a reduction of dependence on inputs, including pesticides. The Biodiversity and the Farm to Fork strategies have paved the way to these changes, but to reach the targets of reduced pesticides use and increased organic farming, farmers need effective and easy-to-access solutions.

Even though the reform of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive was postponed last week, it is the right time to boost the uptake of alternatives to chemical pesticides, such as biocontrol, and enable farmers to access them easily and without further delays. As highlighted by IBMA Executive Director Jennifer Lewis: *“A harmonised definition of biocontrol and a positive target are the first much-needed steps in this direction since they will bring regulatory clarity and pave the way for simplified approval procedure. A 75% target by 2030 for biocontrol use is the right level of ambition to underpin a successful transition towards agroecological farming, while reducing concerns over risks to food security.”*

Furthermore, **co-organizer IEEP External Impact Director Faustine Bas-Defosse underlined: “The Green Deal is our unique compass today and even more so in these highly turbulent times. Biocontrol is a key enabler for the European Green Deal implementation and in particular Farm to Fork”**

The value of biocontrol has been recognised by the European Commission in its *Communication on Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food security* and its indication to come up with new rules to facilitate placing on the market of plant protection products containing biological active substances. As declared by European Commission, DG Santé, Health and food audits and analysis Director Ms Maria Pilar Aguar Fernandez

on their ambition for biocontrol to enable agri-system change *“For the European Commission, the aim is to make chemical and hazardous pesticides the last resort option. The availability on the market of biological controls is a critical element, and we rely on the industry to develop new and safer products to meet the challenge of pest resistance. We are willing to play our part.”*

The sector is ready to play its part too, providing farmers with the necessary tools to secure production, ecosystems and long-term food security. IBMA hopes the reform of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive will be published before the Summer, as anticipated by the Commission, so that all stakeholders can work together for a successful transition towards agroecological farming.

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