



## How the strategic dialogues can equip farmers with biocontrol for resilient and globally competitive agriculture.

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The [Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture](#) has been launched to address issues such as “a fair standard of living for farmers and rural communities” and “support agriculture within the boundaries of our planet and its ecosystems.”

Farmers are the backbone of the rural economy and must be placed at the forefront of the agricultural transition. A transition that needs to build on solidarity, stability, sustainability and food security.

Biocontrol technologies are tried and tested solutions that can equip farmers for this transition when it comes to regulating pests and diseases. A vital part of farming life, and indeed recognised by IBMA's joint road maps with [COPA COGECA](#) and [IFOAM Organics Europe](#), as part of the farming reality.

According to the Institute for European Environmental Policy, biocontrol provides alternatives to harmful plant protection methods enabling farmers to grow healthy food within planetary boundaries. In their paper on [drivers of food security](#), the European Union notes that “a systemic change on how pests are managed can be achieved with widespread implementation of Integrated Pest Management” which includes biocontrol.

When farmers use biocontrol, they are preserving soil health, safeguarding biodiversity and ensuring farms are productive and profitable. What's more, they are contributing to food security and meeting consumer demands for healthy food grown in an environmentally friendly way.

### **IBMA suggests the following be included in deliberations:**

- **Biocontrol for the farmers toolbox** – the EU Commission [5<sup>th</sup> July document](#) highlights the extensive list of 135 new biocontrol substances ready for submission. However, due to the slow pace of authorisation, these will not be available to farmers for up to 10 years. Furthermore, these timelines delay the return on investment for manufacturers and companies are increasingly discouraged from investing in Europe affecting jobs and job growth in the green economy.
- **Legislation to provide faster authorisation for biocontrol** is urgently needed to (i) provide the tools for farmers, many of which are already available in the rest of

the world and (ii) to encourage investment in biocontrol innovation in Europe. Enabling innovation through appropriate legislation provides certainty for the industry and can return the European Union to being the first choice for biocontrol investment. This requires systemic change since the current system is based on chemical regulation.

- **Dedicated experts on biocontrol within a dedicated regulatory track for biologicals.** Evidence from around the world and across the European Member States suggests that where there is a dedicated biocontrol team with a priority lane for biocontrol, the review process is more effective and efficient.
- **Funding for farmers to make the transition** – change in a business should come with incentive and reward. In EU regions where successful biocontrol change has been enabled by regional government advisers, funding and multi-stakeholder involvement, change has been rapid, effective and allowed productive and profitable farming to continue and the rural economy to flourish.

The benefits of biocontrol are proven when it comes to decarbonizing farming and restoring biodiversity. Farmers using biocontrol around the world are already seeing this. In short, if biocontrol solutions are not on the table, then neither is the strategic future of agriculture.