

## Annex 3.2

### Activity Report of the Executive Director

Written by Jennifer Lewis

Over the past twelve months, the global conversation around the impact of climate change on agriculture and the need to build more resilient global food and farming system has intensified. Biocontrol has a key role to play in that, which is increasingly recognised by policy makers worldwide. In Europe political tensions have been high, with farmer protests over low returns and excessive red tape. Notably, 1300 tractors converged in Brussels in February 2024 leading to the initiation of the Strategic Dialogue for Agriculture. The European elections in June 2024 have ushered in a new Parliament, which is now working on appointing Commissioners who will shape the work programme for the 2024-2029 EU Commission. IBMA has been and continues to work to put biocontrol at the centre of the political debate, to make meaningful legislative change for the biocontrol industry. Delivering these desired changes are the backbone of the IBMA strategy.

In November 2023, IBMA members were invited to review IBMA's strategic themes and provide feedback prior to the Council strategy day in November. Members reaffirmed support for IBMA's two main pillars proportionate regulation and putting biocontrol at the centre of the debate. The six strategic themes from the 2020-2024 strategy were ranked.

- (i) **Proportionate regulation**
- (ii) **Demonstrating biocontrol**
- (iii) **Providing industry statistics and evidence.**
- (iv) **Engaging with the food value chain**
- (v) **Training**
- (vi) **Collaboration to amplify messages**

The top three priorities were achieving proportionate regulation for biocontrol, demonstrating biocontrol success and information provision for the industry as indicated above. Working with the food industry was seen as important, while training and collaboration were of lower importance. Some members commented that collaboration with key partners such as farmer organisations to achieve our core goals was indeed very important.

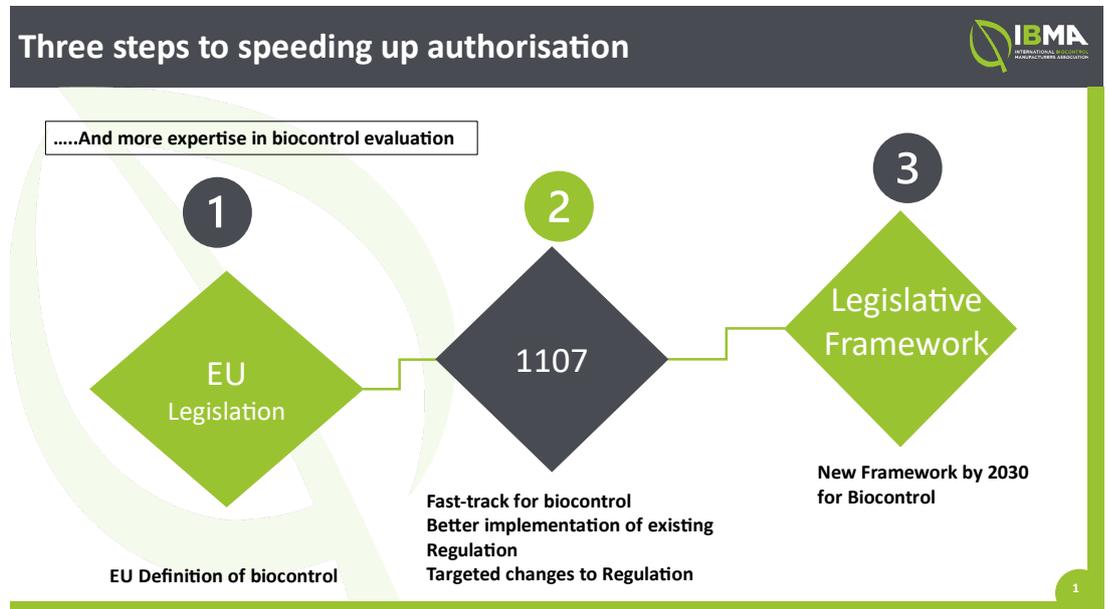
The workplan for 2024 was developed around these core themes and endorsed by Council in January 2024. The remainder of this report outlines the achievements in each of these areas.

#### 1. Proportionate Regulation in Europe

The Sustainable Use Regulation (SUR) was voted through the ENVI Committee in the EU Parliament but was ultimately voted down by the European Parliament in November 2023. Despite the Council under the Belgium Presidency trying to salvage key elements of the SUR including biocontrol, these attempts were not successful, and the SUR was formally withdrawn by the College of Commissioners in February 2024. As a result, IBMA is now seeking a new legislative vehicle for the definition and to implement the fast track authorisation process. Advocacy efforts continue, focusing on the three key steps to achieving faster biocontrol authorisation:

- (i) EU wide biocontrol definition

- (ii) Fast track
- (iii) New regulation



In July 2024, the SCoPAFF initiated discussions on a proposed definition for biocontrol within the Uniform Principles of EU Reg No 1107/2009. This definition is being developed in collaboration with the Member States to help them prioritise biocontrol authorisations within their Member States, a task requested by the Single Market Enforcement Task Force of the EU. The biocontrol definition will serve as the foundation of any broader definitions in future legislation such as the upcoming Biotech Strategy, for which a proposal is expected in late 2025 or early 2026. IBMA made written input into the SCoPAFF, welcomed the definition and highlighted the importance of including minerals in the definition as per IBMA's definition. IBMA also indicated that, when a definition of biocontrol extends outside EU Regulation No 1107/2009, all four categories of biocontrol should be included in any wider definition.

Current indications suggest that biocontrol will be included in the Biotech strategy, though the final content will depend on the new EU Work Programme. It is also clear that Provisional Authorisation is seen by the EU Commission as a feasible and viable pathway to speeding up authorisation, aligning with step 2 of the proposed IBMA regulatory changes.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, IBMA's Advisory Regulatory Working Group has been developing an outline for a new framework for biocontrol regulation, representing step 3 of the proposed regulatory changes. A draft of this framework was shared with and endorsed by the Council in September 2024 and is now being refined into a more politically focused document by the IBMA Advocacy Working Group before use externally to IBMA.

The key elements of the proposed regulatory framework include:

Establishing a single biocontrol agency that takes decisions on both active substance and products, eliminating the need for national requirements or a zonal approach. Instead implementing a master label approach, which allows use of efficacy data from outside the EU. The aim would be to deliver authorisations within 2 years and to ensure a pool of expert evaluators through the single agency to streamline the process.

## 2. Biocontrol at the Centre of the Debate

### (i) High Level Political Support for Biocontrol

Following the cross-party political support for biocontrol within the SUR and its subsequent withdrawal, IBMA has actively advocated for continued support for biocontrol in the new Commission Work Programme. In particular, the Council of Ministers of Member States, during the Belgium Presidency was highly supportive of biocontrol with significant contributions. Targeted advocacy work of IBMA Belgium and IBMA member companies in Belgium was instrumental in achieving the prominent position of biocontrol in this phase of the political debate, once again demonstrating the strength of well-coordinated action at EU and national level.

In March 2024, IBMA organised an event, under the auspices of the Belgium Presidency, bringing together policy makers, NGOs and farmer stakeholders to discuss how to accelerate authorisation of biocontrol and emphasise the urgent need for alternatives for farmers to control pests and diseases. In July, IBMA met with the Secretariat General of the EU Commission which co-ordinates the new work programme. The discussion focused and emphasised on the need for inclusion of the fast track authorisation process for biocontrol to ensure immediate availability of tools in the farmer's toolbox and ultimately the need for a dedicated biocontrol regulation. IBMA has widely communicated to the EU Institutions the IBMA requests for the new EU Work Programme which include an EU wide definition for biocontrol as the base upon which the following are built:

- Fast track authorisation for biocontrol
- A new biocontrol regulation
- The inclusion of more tools for the farmers toolbox to support sustainable agricultural practices.

Throughout the spring and summer, IBMA collaborated with the stakeholders directly involved in the Strategic Dialogue for Agriculture to encourage a deeper understanding of the role of biocontrol in providing solutions. In particular, IBMA worked with the farmer associations COPA COGECA, CEJA, ELO and IFOAM who were part of the Strategic Dialogue for Agriculture, to discuss and explain the potential and the benefits of biocontrol for farmers, providing examples from Brazil as well as Europe. It was encouraging to see the conclusions of the Strategic Dialogue of Agriculture include a recommendation to accelerate biocontrol authorisations by the end of 2025.

Additionally, the Mission letter for the Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare included, for the first time, a mandate to accelerate the authorisation of biocontrol. This marks a significant milestone, as biocontrol's inclusion in the Mission letters establishes a clear priority and mandate for the Commissioners over the upcoming five-year Parliamentary term.

### (ii) Demonstrating and raising awareness on biocontrol

IBMA organised two field trips for policymakers and farmer associations on 12 and 13 September 2024, visiting two farms in Belgium and two in The Netherlands to demonstrate the use of biocontrol on their farms. Special thanks to our members who arranged farmer contacts and to Artemis, the IBMA National Association in The Netherlands who helped create an engaging visit programme. The visits were well received by the 50 attendees, and due to their success, similar events are planned for next year. A journalist was also commissioned to document the visits and to discuss the

benefits of biocontrol with policy makers, farmers and politicians The videos are planned for release at the end of 2024.

### 3. Industry Information Provision

#### Industry Survey

The annual industry survey of biocontrol was launched at ABIM 2023, the results of which were shared at the Annual Assembly in May 2024. We received a 65% response, which is a 20% increase on the previous year, and we look forward to an even higher response rate in the 2024 survey which will be released in ABIM 2024. The European market in 2022 for biocontrol was valued at 1.6bn Euro, representing approximately 10% of the overall crop protection market. The market has doubled since 2016, although growth slowed between 2019-2022. All four biocontrol categories experienced growth, with invertebrate biocontrol showing the highest increase with an estimated 65% increase in sales volume since 2019. This higher growth rate reflects the significantly shorter authorisation process compared to traditional plant protection products PPPs.

### 4. New Technology – peptides

IBMA's biocontrol definition document states it is a living definition and so is open to periodic review in light of new technological developments. In March 2020, the IBMA Scoping Committee (= IBMA Council + Regulatory Affairs Director (2020)/Technical Project Manager (2023)) made an initial review on peptides and, as a result, included a specific reference to peptides in the IBMA definition of biocontrol which more generally refers to natural substances **sourced from nature or nature-identical if synthesized**.

In response to requests from EU authorities and member companies, in 2023 the IBMA Council agreed to further review engineered peptides/proteins and enzymes, for potential inclusion in the IBMA biocontrol definition.

In November 2023, IBMA engaged Dr Andrea Chini from the National Biotechnology Centre in Spain to share insights into scientific advances in peptide research and nature-identity with the IBMA Scoping Committee. Dr Chini presented a summary of the scientific status of peptide science and research for crop protection. The discussion covered peptides, proteins, enzymes and antibodies. The paper highlighted challenges and grey areas in connection with applying the concept "nature-identical" to these product categories. In spite of an ever-increasing number of peptide- and protein sequences being available in databases, it is clear that only a small fraction of the total variation actually present in nature has already been identified. Chini also referred to the importance of protein structure as an important component that can be taken into consideration in the context of nature-identity.

The conclusion of the November 2023 scoping committee was that peptides and proteins for which the amino-acid sequence is demonstrated to be present in nature fall within the scope of "nature-identical". In addition, it was concluded necessary to further discuss peptides and proteins with limited variations in such amino-acid sequence whereby the peptide or protein is optimized while maintaining its overall 3-dimensional structure and biological function. The Natural Substances Professional Group was asked to develop further information as to whether such limited variations could lead to any unintended consequences in terms of risk profile.

Between January and June 2024, the definition working group within the Natural Substances group reviewed the peptide case with case studies from members and prepared a background paper which was discussed in the Natural Substances Workshop in Brussels in June 2024. The Natural Substances Professional Group agreed on a document with technical background and recommendations to the Scoping Committee in June 2024.

This document was discussed at length in the Scoping Committee and in September 2024, the Scoping Committee agreed on the following amendment to the natural substances section of the IBMA Biocontrol definition, adding the text in bold to the existing text (in italics).

*Natural substances consist of one or more components that originate from nature, including but not limited to: plants, algae/microalgae, animals, minerals, bacteria, fungi, protozoans, peptides, proteins (e.g. enzymes, antibodies), viruses, viroids, and mycoplasmas. They can either be sourced from nature or are nature identical if synthesized. This definition excludes semiochemicals and microbials, **which have their own definition.***

***Among natural substances, IBMA considers that peptides and proteins containing sequence modifications of a peptide/protein sourced from nature are deemed nature-identical provided all of the following conditions are met (1) they contain only naturally occurring amino-acids (2) such modifications do not change the 3-dimensional structure (3) such modifications do not change the biological function and (4) the biological breakdown occurs in a predicted way according to a natural pathway.***

IBMA anticipates to conduct a detailed review of other categories of natural substances for which additional clarification of the IBMA biocontrol definition in the light of technological developments may be required.

## 5. National Associations

The Council of the Ministers of Member States are co-legislators with the European Parliament for any piece of proposed legislation from the European Commission. The role of Member States and their Ministries is therefore key in agreeing any final text of a legislative proposal, which in turn means the role of IBMA National Associations is key to ensuring the IBMA messages are heard in the Member State Ministries. Joint working between IBMA Global and the IBMA National Associations will be crucial as the new Commission progresses to a legislative proposal for the acceleration of authorisations of biocontrol and the eventual Parliamentary and Council adoption of the final negotiated text.

During 2023 and 2024 the IBMA Council has had extensive discussions on the membership model which outlines the requirements of an IBMA National Association, drafting a proposal which was then extensively discussed with the National Groups to reach a consensus. The final model was agreed by IBMA Council in April 2024. In September, IBMA is particularly pleased to have welcomed BioCrop as the tenth IBMA National Association. BioCrop was established in Greece in April 2024 and following BioCrop's General Assembly and a review against the new membership model, the IBMA Council voted to accept BioCrop as the IBMA National Association in Greece. Discussions are ongoing with two other country National Associations who are considering joining the IBMA network. In addition, there are early-stage discussions on two regional IBMA Associations.

The IBMA National Associations meet online monthly on the second Tuesday of the month. In addition to a meeting to discuss the membership model, nine monthly meetings of the National Associations have been held online during 2024 and two at the end of 2023. During these meetings, information around advocacy and technical consultations was shared and discussed. The annual in person meeting was held in September 2024. Each National Group discussed their strategy and their requirements for input and support from IBMA Global.

## 6. Global Policy Input

### OECD Expert Group on Biopesticides – IBMA has Observer Status

The OECD Expert Group on Biopesticides (EGBP) is a group of representatives of pesticide regulatory authorities from the OECD countries who discuss and agree OECD policy and guidelines for biopesticides. IBMA and two other crop protection industry associations have observer status in the EGBP. These observers can comment on documents and policies but are not part of the decision making and voting, which is the domain of the governments represented at the meeting, which include the EU Commission. The mission of OECD in the five years of 2025-2029 is to work towards a cooperative global approach on the regulation of pesticides. The proposed goals for the period include: (i) mutual recognition of pesticide reviews to become the basis for international cooperation of pesticide regulatory bodies (ii) work sharing among regulatory authorities of OECD countries to lead to resource savings and mutual trust (iii) IPM to become the accepted approach in all OECD countries. These goals are consistent with IBMA's goals on improving and accelerating authorisations of biocontrol, highlighting the strategic relevance of IBMA's role in OECD EGBP.

Since March 2023, IBMA has contributed and/or commented on the following OECD documents:

- Innovating Microbial Pesticide Testing: Conference Proceedings. Series on Pesticides No. **109**
- Second Edition released in 2023. OECD Issue Paper on Microbial Contaminant Limits for Microbial Pest Control Products. Series on Pesticides No. **65**
- Guidance document on Baculoviruses as plant protection products. Series on Pesticides No. **111**
- Overview of approaches used by member countries to handle the issue of antimicrobial resistance potentially related to application of microbial pesticides. Series on Pesticides No. **112**
- OECD Guidance Document on addressing minor uses. Series on Pesticides No. **113**
- Consensus documents on *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens* and *Beauveria bassiana*.

In addition, IBMA is actively contributing to several OECD projects and discussions including:

- Leading the project on the “Review and applicability of the calculation method presented in OECD ENV/JM/MONO(2017)33 for the determination of the natural background levels of semiochemicals”. This project is also of great interest to the EU Commission and updates are given by IBMA at the EU Commission biopesticide working group.
- Follow up ‘EGBP Conference on Innovating Microbial Pesticide Testing’ (September 2022): IBMA has submitted comments on the project proposal from EPA/PMRA to establish new OECD testing Guidelines for Microbials based on the existing OPPTS Guidelines (*Test Guideline for testing oral, dermal, inhalation and injection toxicity, pathogenicity, and infectivity of microbial pesticides*).
- OECD Harmonised Templates (OHTs) and IUCLID for biopesticides: IBMA continues to participate in the EFSA Working Group developing IUCLID for microbials.
- OECD seminar on “Problem formulation for the risk assessment of biopesticides” (26 February 2024) included a presentation from IBMA on peptides as a case study. The

regulation of peptides will be further discussed at the February 2025 OECD EGBP, to which IBMA will contribute.

### **FAO/WHO Joint Management of Pesticides Meeting: IBMA Observer Status**

The FAO/WHO Joint Management of Pesticides Meeting is an advisory body to FAO and WHO on the lifecycle management and use of pesticides and new developments such as alternatives. The group is mandated to develop guidelines on pesticides, including biocontrol, which then provide a basis for Low and Middle Income Countries (LMIC) to develop appropriate and effective guidelines at regional and/or national level. Panel members are experts in their own right on life cycle management of pesticides. IBMA, Crop Life International and Pesticide Action Network are Observers. Observers can attend meetings and discussions, comment on documents and guidelines but do not make the final decisions on the documents, which are made by the panellists. Many of the guidelines are focussed on minimising harm from chemical pesticides and only have limited consideration of the needs for regulating and promoting biological alternatives. The role of IBMA is to bring the biocontrol expertise into the discussions.

FAO aims to reduce the reliance on pesticides by promoting IPM and agroecological practices. In 2024, IBMA has attended two intersessional meetings and one in person meeting. In October 2024, IBMA Kenya and a Kenyan farmer were invited to present biocontrol examples at the meeting to demonstrate the successful implementation of biocontrol on farm in Kenya.

IBMA is involved in the Kenyan pilot programme of the **FARM Global Project**. The FARM programme is a five-year 37 million USD programme managed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) within UNEP, aiming to catalyse a framework for regulatory and financial investment in the agriculture sector to reduce the use of harmful pesticides and plastics in agricultural production and encourage the adoption of low and non-chemical alternatives including biocontrol. IBMA, with the Indian biocontrol Association PMFRA, who represented Bioprotection Global, attended the kick-off in March 2024. IBMA is working with FAO and IBMA Kenya to input biocontrol practices and demonstration into the Kenyan project.

## **7. Organic Regulation**

Since Q4 2022, the IBMA Secretariat has been working with IBMA Members and stakeholders to understand the extent of biocontrol products impacted, so we can work with DG AGRI Organics Unit to ensure that organic products grown using biocontrol products exclusively authorized in third countries can be readily imported after the end of the transition period on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

To ensure this happens the Secretariat issued multiple calls to IBMA members to look at their portfolio and report to the Secretariat any microorganism and natural substance that could require an annex VI dossier. IBMA communicated a list of the reported substances and products to the Commission. This list allowed the EGTOP (Expert Group for Technical advice on Organic Production) and DG AGRI to understand the potential impact of the regulatory change and work on a solution to mitigate its impact. The IBMA Secretariat provided assistance to members on how to build an Annex VI dossier. This included help with contacting control bodies and COLEAD so they could help in building and submitting the dossiers. Two webinars and regular updates to members were made.

It became clear that for natural substances, an application would still need to be submitted to the EGTOP by a control body, using a specific application template provided by the European Commission. The microorganism dossier, however, evolved positively with DG AGRI working on a proposal allowing straightforward authorisation for microorganisms

including viruses in Annex VI (with potential limitations). Although IBMA can be satisfied with the positive evolution of this dossier, the proposal still needs to be discussed in the Committee on Organic Production, go through an interservice consultation and a public consultation. The final endorsement is expected to happen after the end of the transition period. As timelines remain a challenge, IBMA is committed to keep a close dialogue with DG AGRI and explore solutions in collaboration with its partner stakeholders to ensure no trade disruption will occur after the transition period.

## 8. Professional Groups – other activities

Professional Groups have continued to address regular consultations and actions from the EU Commission. In particular, the EU Biopesticide Working Group provides a forum within which IBMA has a strong voice in front of all MS and EU COM regulators and is able to present the views of the Professional Group and progress matters important to the industry.

### Biopesticides Working Group

IBMA participated in the Biopesticides Working Group meeting organised by DG SANTE on 10-11 June 2024. Six presentations were given, sharing IBMA positions and contributions to various topics of concern for the industry. IBMA responded to DG SANTE initiatives such as the new provisions on microbial consortia, presented ZAPID outcomes and results of recent questionnaires. We thank members for their input to the questionnaires.

### Labelling Regulation (Regulation (EU) No, 547/2011)

IBMA has met with and formally written to the Commission to explain that the proposed labelling requirements which include a colour scheme that does not differentiate biocontrol, if implemented would be damaging of the industry. The scheme is now under further review within the EU Commission and IBMA is following closely on this point. Under the same regulation particular attention has been given to removing unnecessary wording on sensitisation potential for microbials and removing negative bee labelling. This discussion is ongoing.

### Central Zone Steering Committee Working Document on Ecotoxicology

A new Working Document (WD) on ecotoxicology applicable to the Central Zone from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 was issued, with no opportunity for stakeholder comment and an unworkable implementation date. The document included profound changes to data requirements specific to one regulatory zone, which is not within the spirit of Regulation (EU) No 1107/2009. IBMA raised this at the Central Zone Steering Committee meeting in June and the Biopesticide Working Group. It was agreed that IBMA should provide comments within two months and the IBMA Professional Groups worked together to review the document and submit multiple comments. The overriding conclusion was that many points across the Working Document were inappropriate and meaningless for biocontrol ecotoxicology risk assessment, demonstrating it was written for single entity synthetic chemicals. Considering this, IBMA recommended that a clear exclusion should be made for biocontrol to avoid misinterpretation when conducting risk assessments for biocontrol and to avoid misalignment with the other two zones. Comments will be examined at a Central Zone Member State Ecotoxicology meeting in January 2025.

In addition, during the year **IBMA Professional Groups** have worked on:

- **Semiochemicals**
  - OECD study on background levels of semiochemicals for use in risk assessments.
  - RATION background document on the biology and use of semiochemicals

- Organic status of semiochemicals with possible removal of restrictions to traps and dispensers only
- **Microbials**
  - Microbial sensitisation and how to address this
  - Initial thoughts on the boundary between biocontrol and biostimulants so that the microbial list is expanded within the Fertilizer Product Regulation (FPR) without causing problems for biocontrol. In June 2024, at the request of Austrian Institute of Technology who are conducting the study on the addition of microbials to the positive list of the FPR, IBMA joined an online workshop on the addition of microbials to the positive list on biostimulants to communicate their support of innovation but to point out that any additions should be without causing problems for biocontrol. Prior to the meeting IBMA reached out to EBIC to ask for a discussion to share thoughts but this request was declined.
  - Follow up on the studies and lists of actions from the OECD seminar on microbial testing in 2022, including pathogenicity and infectivity guidelines; aquatic testing and consensus documents on *Beauveria bassiana* and *Bacillus amyloliquifaciens*.
  - Mid-year workshop with joint session on fermentation products (eg dead microbial cells) and a discussion on best regulatory practice for these products. This was held jointly with the natural substances PG.
- **Natural Substances**
  - Peptides have been reviewed and presented to the Scoping Committee (see above)
  - Survey of members to share regulatory challenges in ecotox and e-fate for natural substances. These have been shared with the EU Commission for priority resolution and with partners of the RATION project.
  - A training course on natural substances is under discussion for development.
  - Mid-year workshop to review case studies in natural substances and the likely data requirements for different types of natural substances.
- **Macrobials**
  - Scientific paper on the relevance of native versus non-native species presented at the Costa Rica IOBC conference which the IBMA macrobials PG co-chaired.
  - Mid-year workshop reviewing key topics including native species and a discussion on transport challenges for beneficials.

## 9. Working Parties

Five of the seven IBMA Working Parties have been active during 2024

- **Advisory Regulatory Working Group (ARWG)** works on horizontal regulatory matters that cross all Professional Groups. The ARWG held 10 meetings during the year, including a two day workshop and with wide member consultation on the workshop output (three calls in May and June) to discuss the draft of the “Framework Document”. Following these discussions, the final version, entitled “IBMA Vision on a New Regulatory Framework for Biocontrol in the European Union”, was completed and reviewed by the Council. The Council thanked the working group for the extensive work and very much appreciated the paper content and ideas. The next step is for these to

be summarised and put into the political context by the Advocacy Working Group in a shorter paper for use outside the organisation

- **Finance Committee** The Board requested input from the Finance Committee in relation to the necessary funds to support the 2025 proposed activities of the Association. Finance Committee members met on the 20<sup>th</sup> August and 17<sup>th</sup> September to discuss proposals from the Board and Secretariat in relation to the funds needed for 2025 activities. The views and input from Associate members was sought during the 17<sup>th</sup> September meeting.
- The **Amateur Use Group** was formed in 2023 with 8 members to provide a voice for the amateur use of biocontrol in the EU policy debate. The group met twice prior to the demise of the SUR to agree a way to ensure home and garden use is not excluded in the SUR. Since the SUR the working group has not been active.
- The **Advocacy Working Group** was set up with 12 members to ensure wider visibility and ownership of the IBMA advocacy work by the members. The working group was regularly informed of IBMA key work and met to discuss some key advocacy news, both for biocontrol and in general at EU level. More regular meetings are planned post European Elections, both online and in person to discuss messaging and advocacy actions in the new political and institutional landscapes. The group recently reviewed the messaging for the new Parliament and the various nuances needed for different political parties, institutions and stakeholders. In September, the Advocacy Working group was mandated to summarise and review the output from the Advisory Regulatory Working Group to propose a more political position paper on the subject.
- The **Bumble Bee group** has met twice and been involved in
  - Follow up on compliance issues with transport regulations.
  - Develop a producer's best practice commitment to ecologically sound practices.
- Biostimulant and Communications working group have not been active in 2024

#### 10. RATION – Horizon project on Risk Assessment Innovation for Low Risk Pesticides ([Website Link](#))

This is the second year of the RATION project in which IBMA receives funding as a partner in the Horizon Project reviewing risk assessment approaches for microbials, semiochemicals, natural substances and RNAi. Several member companies are also partners in the project. IBMA is working with other partners to frame the work and has provided insights into the potential risk assessment. IBMA has responsibilities in the Work Packages (1) Setting the scene through development of a questionnaire for authorities (2) Risk assessment for microbial pesticides and microbiomes (3) Risk assessment for plant extracts, pheromones and other semiochemicals (5) Harmonized RA for LRPs and assessment of associated socioeconomic impacts (6) Dissemination, communication and exploitation of project findings.

The project's third stakeholder's forum was held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 and the annual review of the project was held from 25-27<sup>th</sup> September 2024 in Madrid, where a status update on the development of the project was made and a series of presentations were delivered by project partners on various topics. Detailed presentations on the RATION project will be made in ABIM workshops where all interested delegates can attend.

## 11. Other activities and consultations

IBMA initiated new stakeholder collaborations, presented at multiple stakeholder meetings and responded to multiple consultations during the year. Some of these included:

### Technical Consultations – in addition to those listed above

- Zonal Authorisation Procedure Improvements and Developments (ZAPID) Dec 2023, IBMA joined a ZAPID workshop along with 80 representatives from Member States, the European Commission, the European Food Safety Authority, CroLife Europe and the European Crop Care Association. We ensured the perspectives we gathered from IBMA members helped shape IBMA positions presented in various discussions.
- IBMA Contribution on EFSA evaluation performance 2017-2024. On April 8th, IBMA delivered feedback from biocontrol applicants regarding EFSA's performance from 2017 to 2024. The IBMA contribution was derived from input provided by a range of IBMA members, who shared their views based on their experience with EFSA.
- IBMA has an expert seat in the Commission expert group on fertilising products and attended the meeting in March 2024. The next meeting is in autumn 2024.
- DG AGRI - Civil Dialogues Groups and EU Food Chain Observatory: IBMA has been selected and is actively participating to these key platforms of discussion on broader sustainable agriculture topics with the European Commission
- Minor use coordination facility – Spring meeting - The IBMA Secretariat attended the Horizontal Expert Group (HEG) meeting of the Minor Use Coordination Facility on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Discussions were held on the possible formation of a sub-group within the HEG to develop a common European definition of minor crops based on specific criteria, the drafting of a dRR Part A template and prioritisation between the two projects.
- Global Minor Use Summit (GMUS IV), Madrid : The Secretariat participated in this summit where for the first time, the GMUS IV addressed biocontrol comprehensively, featuring a breakout group discussion, a panel session and field visit. Key takeaways include a rapid increase in registration approvals for biological control, signifying an increasing shift from chemical solutions and the evolution of crop protection with the integration of products into IPM programs.

### Stakeholder Events

IBMA Board, Council members, Secretariat and supporting members participated and presented in multiple stakeholder events and conferences, including but not limited to the following:

- FARM Global Project | Kick-off Meeting in Kenya, March 12, 2024
- Belgian Presidency – Flanders Region Open Food Conference Trade offs and small steps: Food security vs. sustainable food transition, March 12, 2024
- Hosting High-level Discussion under the Auspices of the Belgian Presidency | Speed-up Biocontrol Authorisation | Knowledge, Know-how & Biocontrol for Farmers Now, March 19, 2024
- ELO, the European Landowners Organization dinner debate, Improving time-to-market for biocontrol, April 23

- 5<sup>th</sup> Bio Agtech World Congress – North Carolina, USA, Industry Perspective: EU Biopesticide Regulation and SUR update, April 24
- IFOAM EU lead TP Organics event “Soil health and global food security: Research & innovation for productive and sustainable agriculture”, April 25
- IPMWORKS European Policy Seminar “Boosting IPM implementation in the EU” at COPA COGECA premises, Biocontrol solutions for plant protection, May 13
- IPM Conference 2024 - Holistic IPM: Reducing Pesticide Use, organised By IPMWORKS & IPM Decisions, Biocontrol session, May 14
- Hosting meeting including Farmer organisations Copa- Cogeca, IFOAM Organics Europe and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Brazil. - What Europe can learn from Brazil, a biocontrol powerhouse, May 30
- Salinas Biologicals Summit (California, USA), Regulatory Panel: June 24-25
- Farming Without Harming: Policy Action for Resilient Agriculture (NGOs Symposium to make the transition between Belgian Presidency and Hungarian Presidency), June 26
- European Commission DG Agri Civil Dialogue Group on International Aspects of Agriculture, Biocontrol and International aspects presentation, October 9

#### **Press Articles, Joint Statements and Political Comments**

- MEP Irène Tolleret, Renew, and other cross-party MEPS, sent a written question to the European Commission on the subject of Biological Pest Control, February 2024 .
- Biocontrol solutions included in Renew Europe Action plan for a sustainable, competitive and fairly rewarded EU agriculture, April 2024 .
- Copa-Cogeca and IBMA – Joint letter to the EU Commission asking to ensure biocontrol solutions are made available to farmers without unnecessary delays, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2024.
- IBMA and IFOAM Organics Europe Call for Policies to Promote the Uptake of Biocontrol, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2024.
- Biocontrol featured in POLITICO Pro Morning Agri and Food, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Politico highlighted the joint asks to speed up the approval of biocontrol solutions and how current EU authorisation process are slowing sector growth. This included the joint statement from Copa-Cogeca and the results of the member survey on biocontrol.
- Subsequent to the SCOPAFF (Standing Committee of Plants and Animals, Food and Feed meeting information that Member States were asked to comment on the placing of a biocontrol definition in the Uniform Principles for the evaluation of Plant Protection Products, Euractiv contacted IBMA and published: EU seeks tweaks to pesticide rules to fast-track sustainable solutions, September 2024.