



## UK pollination goes native

Responding to demands from UK outdoor soft fruit growers and conservation bodies, Biobest and BCP Certis are the first to offer native British bumblebees for outdoor pollination.

### **What's the buzz?**

Bumblebees are important pollinators of wild plants and many cultivated crops. By pollinating our fruits and vegetables they not only help deliver your 'five-a-day', but they are also vital to overall food security.

Bumblebees are especially effective pollinators. They produce their own heat, which in combination with their furry coats enables them to fly early in the season when it is still far too cold for honey bees and other insects. They also differ from honey bees in that they 'buzz' or shake the flower to collect pollen, which makes them especially effective in assuring pollination.

### **Foreign cousin**

To guarantee high yields and high quality crops commercially reared bumblebees are now an integral part of modern agriculture. Currently, available bumblebee hives are of a European *Bombus terrestris* subspecies, a mainland 'cousin' of the British subspecies *Bombus terrestris audax*.

As the commercially sold bumblebees are not native to the UK their use has been restricted to glasshouse cultures and tunnels due to concerns they may negatively impact native bumblebee populations when used in the open field.

Bumblebees have been an important driver of a more sustainable agriculture. In crops like glasshouse tomatoes they have replaced the use of physical pollination or chemicals previously widely used to induce fruit-set.

In field crops, like strawberries, raspberries and currants, UK growers have until now been unable to share in the many benefits these pollinators offer. This puts them at a major disadvantage relative to their foreign counterparts.

### **Coming to a farm near you...**

As of this season this problem has been solved. Belgium company Biobest has been successful in rearing the native British bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris audax*). The native bumblebee will be available to outdoor fruit growers from Kent-based BCP Certis, as well as through Biobest's UK distributor Agralan.

The use of native bumblebees is a highly attractive option to UK growers as it allows them to expand the use of these top pollinators to crops grown in the open field. So when you are enjoying your British berries this summer, chances are that they might just be that little bit more British.

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **Biobest**

- Production and marketing of bumblebees for biological pollination;
- Production and marketing of beneficial insects and mites for biological and integrated crop protection;
- Registration, field development and marketing of biopesticides;
- Contract research (efficacy trials, residue trials, side effects on beneficials and bumblebees) of chemical pesticides and biopesticides;
- Marketing of monitoring and scouting systems.

### **BCP Certis**

- BCP Certis is a branch of Certis Europe BV, a subsidiary of Mitsui Agri Science and is based near Ashford in Kent
- Principle activities are production and marketing of insects for biological and integrated crop protection
- Marketing of bumblebees.