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Executives Speak

David Cary, Executive Director of IBMA

This year is ABIM 10th anniversary and IBMA's 20th anniversary. How has ABIM served IBMA's purposes during the past 10 years?

I could answer that question in 3 words: Networking, networking, networking. The strength of ABIM has been that it is the place to meet for the biocontrol industry. It enables members to meet and discuss and has grown at a similar rate to our association. Both are vibrant and represent the future of crop protection.

Are you setting new records for attendance to the ABIM conference this year? Do you anticipate bigger numbers in attendees at the ABIM conference also in the future, despite the challenge posed by the high Swiss Franc?

Every year we see a few repeated trends with ABIM registrations. Firstly, registrations are slow and accelerate rapidly as we approach the cutoff time for the early bird discount in the summer. Secondly, the registration patterns are getting later each year. Thirdly, we have seen a significant year on year increase in those registering to attend at each stage. Finally, there are always registrations at the event on the day and we see no reason that this year is outside these trends. We therefore look forward to our 10th ABIM being the best attended yet! The job is then harder for next year to go even better!

It appears that ABIM will continue to take place in Basel also for the next three years. Do you see any drawback in not moving the conference to other places around Europe, where, for example, exhibitors could invite their local distributors to visit the exhibition?

There are many good locations for conferences around Europe. One can easily make a case for moving the event each year. However, there are good reasons to maintain a permanent venue. Familiarity enables all those attending to plan their time effectively without surprises from knowing the transport to that favorite restaurant etc. As organizers we get familiar with working with a good and dedicated team that are proactive and committed to the experience of sponsors, speakers, exhibitors and delegates being a good one. We have everything in house to facilitate networking and exposure to the exhibitors. Lunches are provided where delegates can eat and work at the same time. Each year we can tweak the offering to improve on the year before knowing that nothing has slipped. There is still room for ABIM to grow in Basel, which is important for us as we see the event as the premier event for biocontrol.

Do you have a goal to have more top scientists from academic circles presenting at ABIM in the future? E.g. on natural mechanisms which plants use to combat biotic stress. Or will ABIM remain focused on addressing the business and commercial side of biocontrol?

Plenty of events are focused on bringing science to industry. Our focus remains that of an industry event. However, we have in the past included sessions or headed up sessions with input from the scientific community. Our



success though is that we have concentrated on what we believe in that being the biocontrol industry. We debate areas of scientific interest and discuss its place in biocontrol and implications for regulation but feel others are better equipped to present the latest science.

This year, for the first time the “Bernard Blum Award” will be presented. Can you remind our readers who Bernard Blum was and his importance to this industry and ABIM?

Our industry owes a lot to Bernard Blum. He saw the need 20 years ago to establish an association to represent an industry that he had the vision to see would expand rapidly to be viewed as the preferred pest and disease control systems for agriculture of the future by everyone from policy makers to farmers. He was able to communicate at all levels with those setting global programs to researchers, farmers and other stakeholders. What better way to honor him than to initiate an award for biocontrol innovation?

How many entries did you have for the award and what have been the criteria to select the winning bid?

There have been 13 entries and judging is coming to fruition as we speak. The criteria have been simple in that the entries have been judged on their scientific and

innovation value alongside the commercialization potential.

Would it be wise to broaden the impact of the Bernard Blum Award by creating several categories beyond the current one that is only “novel biocontrol solutions”? E.g. one for the best scientific findings and one for the best adoption campaign?

At this stage we think it best to have only one category and I am sure Bernard would support the idea that a biocontrol input should be scientifically sound but above all be commercial in application. He was keen to see biocontrol introduced and used and it is appropriate as an industry association that it does get applied in the field.

Are there innovations or new aspects that you will like to add to ABIM in the forthcoming years?

The ABIM Steering Committee is always looking for the next innovation or idea to implement. Last year, we brought an app, this year we bring an overflow screen to Basel. We will certainly bring more innovations in 2016. On that note we listen to the feedback so please complete the survey form and tell us what you want and let us know if something isn't working, after all we will start in November to make sure ABIM 2016 is even better than ABIM 2015!

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