

**Dr. Willem Ravensberg, President, and Mr. David Cary, Executive Director, IBMA**

**Last year marked a milestone with attendance at ABIM exceeding 1,000 delegates for the first time. As you continue to grow, do you anticipate reaching a plateau in the future? How will you continue to accommodate the growing attendance?**

*DC: The ABIM Steering Group have been in discussions with Basel Messe to ensure that growth of the conference and exhibition can be encouraged and facilitated in a smooth way. We recognized with the layout of the exhibition we have supported for past years we could not accommodate growth in exhibitors. We have therefore moved the exhibition and have concentrated on providing efficient and attractive linkage between that and the conference to meet the needs of all, be they sponsors, exhibitors or delegates. We do not want to restrict access to ABIM in any way as its main focus is networking and for that attendee growth should be encouraged.*

**This year marked a change in the exhibition hall venue. Was this change made with the objective of accommodating more exhibitors? How does inviting more exhibitors help to enhance ABIM's offering to delegates?**

*DC: As stated ABIM have changed the venue. We have done this to allow growth and to facilitate interaction between exhibitors and delegates. All exhibitors are in one location now which enables delegates to have simple and unconfused access to all exhibitors. All food and the cocktail networking events will be served in this hall to encourage interaction with the exhibitors.*

**In September, IBMA published a joint press release with Copa-Cogeca on the new "Roadmap for Collaboration" on biocontrol solutions. What work has begun on the four platforms outlined in the roadmap?**

*DC: IBMA is very proud to have linked up with Copa and Cogeca for a long-term commitment to delivering sustainable tools to European farmers from now until 2025. It shows a confidence of both parties that we see the future in continuing to work together. The first three platforms have been already in place in the original roadmap and work is ongoing and achievements already made. The fourth platform is new. Work has already started and evidence of this will be available at ABIM. Particularly so is the White Paper on improving regulation of biocontrol substances and products in Europe. This will be available at ABIM and serves to achieve the objectives of this new platform. We have hit the ground running!*

**In February 2017, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for faster access to the European market for low-risk pesticides. At last year's ABIM, you reported the commission was delaying action on the resolution. What further progress has been made in this area over the last year?**

*WR: IBMA continued to put pressure on all European Institutions and the Member States to take action on the resolution. There seems to be an unwillingness to execute the resolution. The EU Commission has started its REFIT program of Regulation 1107/2009 evaluating its effectiveness and shortcomings. Unfortunately, it is not intended to provide recommendations in case some deficiencies will be found, and they will. Only in a next process between the three EU institutions a procedure may be started to develop recommendations and make improvements. It is clear that many years will pass before the current law will be improved. IBMA believes this is unacceptable for our industry as well as our farmers and our society. IBMA has taken a second route attempting to improve the situation. We have written a White Paper, which proposes a complete new regulation for bioprotectants, a term we want to introduce as well replacing biopesticides. This new legislation could be based on other EU legislations for regulated products such as medicines, food and feed additives, cosmetics and chemicals (non-PPP). They contain building blocks that can be used to design a much more appropriate and efficient procedure to get bioprotectants faster to the market. We will start lobbying for such an approach in the very near future, and we already received signals that support our view.*

**During ABIM last year, IBMA discussed with members its ongoing discussions with EBIC to explore common initiatives and areas for collaboration. Can you provide any updates on these talks?**

WR: Indeed, at last year's General Members Meeting an ample majority of our members supported by voting the continuation of the investigation of a closer collaboration with EBIC. The EBIC General Members Meeting a few weeks later had a very similar outcome. This led to the organization of what we called "Phase 2". The two boards, known as the Inter-Board, designed a roadmap to further explore the closer collaboration/potential merger. Three Inter-Member Task Forces were set up on critical topics: the IMTF Strategy, IMTF Organization and IMTF Finance and each one consisted of four member representatives of each association. Altogether 24 members, a cross-representation over all members, participated in two-day meeting held in April where well-structured discussions were held in each IMTF and at plenary meetings. Each group was tasked to develop a proposal on its topic that the Inter-Board was going to evaluate soon after this meeting. The outcome of all our deliberations was presented to both EBIC and IBMA members mid-May this year. Particularly at organizational structure and financing of operations we had unresolved differences that prevents to make formal proposals to our memberships on merging or other forms of close collaboration. Instead we decided to work on building an alliance and collaborate on ad hoc items where we see mutual benefits for both biopesticides and biostimulants.

**BioProtection Global (BPG) has grown to eight member associations since its founding. What are the main objectives for BPG in the coming year?**

WR: It is more appropriate to ask the current President Tom Mason or the IPP Rick Melnick. I can only respond on what IBMA sees needs to be done. IBMA thinks that we need to strengthen BPG more and develop it into a more professional organization soon. Biocontrol is developing that fast all over the world that for BPG it is essential to work on harmonization, prevent overlap of activities of stakeholders, and lobby for appropriate regulatory systems for our products.

**This year marks the fourth time the Bernard Blum Award has been presented. How has the competition evolved since it was initiated? Have the criteria for judging changed?**

DC: The Bernard Blum Award was introduced to honor Bernard's contribution to our industry in the best way by highlighting innovations that can make a difference and enter the market as successful biocontrol tools. This year we have had a good spread of entries and the judges have deliberated on them using the same criteria as we have in past years. They have to be innovative, scientifically sound and be judged to be commercially practical and successful. This year Owen Jones our head judge will highlight some of the memorable inventions in session seven of ABIM. He will also guide future applicants as to what the judges are looking for.

**2BMonthly and New Ag International will be organizing Biocontrol LatAm in Medellin, Colombia on 14-16 November 2018 in conjunction with IBMA. How do you see this event as a key opportunity to spread the message about biocontrol technologies to emerging markets?**

WR: First of all, I hope the location is inviting enough to draw attendees from the region, from Central and North America as well from the Caribbean Region. I just returned from a trip in India and I have witnessed that biocontrol is making huge progress demonstrating that in emerging markets biocontrol it is working, and moreover that there is a huge need for new IPM systems. I am convinced that in the Americas the need and the potential for control is similar and we can learn from experiences from all over the world that our products and systems contribute to food safety and food security. The international speakers list also shows this and I am sure the meeting will provide a key opportunity to spread the message and that we will continue to organize such meetings for that goal, and for the benefit of the people on our planet.

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