Happy New Year 2020!

Time is flying - 2020 has already started with many activities for all the industry. In this newsletter, we give a recap of the Q4 2019 events and 2020’s list of activities so far. It has not yet been a year that I speak to members as Executive Director for IBMA Global, but the many discussions I have had highlight how innovative our industry is - and the huge growth potential!

There is still much to be done. In 2020, we will work for proportionate regulation with new tools and new partners. Society is asking for sustainable food - we have the technology for farmers to produce it. The interest has never been greater - and governments are recognizing that biocontrol technologies are core to any sustainable and resilient agriculture in the future.

In 2020 Marcelo Morandi’s (General Manager of EMBRAPA Environment) quote which I shared at the AGM in 2019 is more pertinent than ever: “Biological control is no longer the ugly duckling of plant health. It is today a robust and recognised service”.

The message for 2020 is: the time for biocontrol is now!

Jennifer Lewis
IBMA Executive Director

Current News: Time to make your voice heard!
European Commission Consultation on the Farm to Fork Strategy Roadmap – Examples from members valued

I invite you to participate in the public consultation by the European Commission on their “Farm to Fork” Strategy Roadmap. This strategy sets out the regulatory and non-regulatory measures needed to create more efficient, climate-smart systems that provide healthy food, while securing a decent living for EU farmers. The EUCOM has invited stakeholders to provide feedback which will be taken into account for further development and fine tuning of the initiative.

As an industry association, IBMA has submitted its comments to the online Farm to Fork Strategy Roadmap Public Consultation. Our key points are: Biocontrol is a reality but to make it grow we need proportionate regulation and farmers to farmers networking and knowledge sharing among all stakeholders.

To reinforce the position of the industry, it will be very valuable if individual members could upload their best biocontrol examples to show that biocontrol is indeed a reality, by answering as well to the online Farm to Fork Strategy Roadmap Public Consultation, by 16th March.

You find the consultation via this link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2020-941864_en

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any support to submit your comment.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration on this crucial public consultation!

ABIM, the unrivalled meeting place for the biocontrol industry
2020– the time for Biocontrol is now

ABIM 2019

Annual Biocontrol Industry Meeting - October 2019

ABIM 2019 was held from 20-23 October in Basel. There were 1227 attendees from 52 countries representing 536 organisations. We had 60 exhibitors of which 57 were members. A big thank you to our sponsors whose presence and support help us progress the event and provide a platform for members to do business and demonstrate the importance and growth of the biocontrol industry.

Detailed presentations on regulation of biological products now and in the future were made by each of the relevant European Agencies (EUCOM, DG Santé and DG Agri) as well as a workshop with the regulatory bodies Ctgb (NL) and HSE (UK), highlighting points to preparing a high quality biological active substance dossier.

The key according to the regulators is to show what happens to each of the breakdown products and metabolites with data or a justification supported by literature references. This is not always easy to do but good advice. Due to high demand, this interactive regulatory workshop was held in the large auditorium and was attended by more than 150 people.

Product presentations and examples of new innovations helping the industry were also the subject of the ABIM conference sessions. However, looking at the buzz around the stands and the 1-2-1 meetings, ABIM is a conference in which business is conducted rather than hours spent in auditoriums. Thank you to those who provided feedback to us on the conference both via the app and via the national group calls.

Bernard Blum Award 2019

This award for the year’s novel biocontrol product, given in commemoration of IBMA founding president Bernard Blum, went to the product Tutavir from Andermatt Biocontrol. The product contains Phthorimaea operculella granulovirus (PhopGV) for selective control of Tuta absoluta, the tomato leafminer.

The silver award went to Ailantex, a microbial herbicide for the control of highly invasive neophyte Ailanthus altissima, produced by Biohelp GmbH in cooperation with University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, BOKU, Vienna, Austria; followed by Gowan’s EcoSwing, a botanical, biologically based fungicide which won the bronze award.

Speakers of the 2019 ABIM Regulatory Affairs Seminar
2020– the time for Biocontrol is now

AGM 2019

Annual General Meeting during ABIM 2019

In keeping with tradition, the IBMA AGM was held on the afternoon before ABIM.

At the AGM, the new budget was proposed and the new strategy presented.

The Strategic Plan 2020-2025 sets a goal of 25% biocontrol within the PPP market by 2025 which in Europe is estimated as 2.5 bn€ sales.

This is a challenging target which will require proportionate regulation of biocontrol to be quickly adopted in Europe. It will require biocontrol technologies to be fully integrated into the EU “Farm to Fork” strategy.

The 6 strategic objectives focus delivery in 2 key areas:
1. showing that biocontrol is a reality and
2. ensuring proportionate regulation of biologicals.

The first actions for 2020 for each of the 6 objectives are:

Show that biocontrol is a reality

- **Information Source - Provide basic industry statistics:** Conduct a black box survey to determine industry size.
- **Demonstrate biocontrol is a reality by showing best practice examples with economic and technical data that show biocontrol works:** Prepare and share examples of best practice examples in an easy to communicate form.
- **Work with the food value chain to show the role of biocontrol in sustainable cropping:** form a partnership with sustainability NGO Forum for the Future to create biological programmes in key crops with the Food Industry using members products in pe-competitive space.

Proportionate regulation for biocontrol technologies

- **Proportionate regulation pushing for the dual approach of changes to data requirements within 1107 and a new biological gelation:** deliver decision trees on microbials, natural substances and semiochemicals and revise IBMA White Paper in light of new context.
- **Training and Education – train members and attract young people into the industry:** train members in key matters relevant to the industry.
- **Collaborate with organisations able to assist IBMA in delivering these six goals:** build COPA-COGeca and IFOAM partnerships to deliver more of the roadmaps and build new links to digital agriculture and food industry Associations.

As a members organization, these strategic objectives were built with the Board and the approval of the EXCOM, and they need more member endorsement. We have 253 members today and I will talk to as many of you as possible over the next months to review the objectives and what it will take to achieve them. With the help of the Board and members I will work up a 5 year plan and what it would take to deliver these objectives in the way members want.
External meetings and activities

European Commission News

EU Experts meeting on Biopesticides – 7 November 2019 – IBMA Team Members Ulf Heilig, Jennifer Lewis, Roma Gwynn, and Rüdiger Hauschild (APIS) attended.

The experts meeting followed a day of Member States (MS) only with the European Commission (EUCOM) in which they discussed the data requirements for the microbials (part B of 1107/2009). On 7 November the draft IBMA microbials decision tree was presented and MS/EUCOM presented their first thoughts on data requirements. Many areas of common ground were identified. IBMA has been asked to highlight any potential areas of difference between IBMA decision tree and the MS/EUCOM data requirement outline proposal and to justify the IBMA rationale with published references.


The meeting reviewed the status of the microbial decision tree and agreed to provide an updated version before the next Biopesticide Expert Group meeting on 12 March 2020.

DG Santé representatives asked for market size of biocontrol and IBMA agreed to provide their survey results as soon as available in April. They also asked for all publications relevant to proportionate regulation of biocontrol and the adaptation of data requirements and within that context the sensitisation paper (cf. right column) will be shared once available in the autumn of 2020.

Costs of unforeseen studies and timelines of registration and examples of the sensitisation position of members states were also requested by DG Santé and will be provided by IBMA. In addition, IBMA raised concerns that IUCLID use in GFL implementation was not designed with biological PPPs in mind and was not workable.

EU COM agreed to help clarify the position. Subsequent to the meeting, DG Santé has provided the comments from MS members of the Expert Biopesticide Group on the early draft of the decision tree, and the AMR document for final comment. IBMA agreed to take these into account in the next version of the microbial decision tree.

Expert Review—Sensitisation review paper

In response to labelling restrictions placed on all microbials in some member states, due to sensitisation concerns, IBMA has commissioned a sensitisation review paper to be prepared by Basketter and Kimber, both well respected international toxicologists, to review the evidence around microbials and sensitisation. The paper should be available in September 2020.

FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Management

IBMA Team Members Jennifer Lewis and Roma Gwynn attended the meeting on 18-21 November for IBMA as an industry observer. Much focus in this meeting was on alternatives to pesticides particularly to highly hazardous pesticides (HHIP) and a move to more sustainable agriculture. Inputs from IBMA were made on adaptation of FAO guidelines on pesticides to accommodate biopesticides.

The conclusions of the meeting relevant to biopesticides were (i) to update the FAO registration toolkit to include data requirements and testing and evaluation guidance for biopesticides and (ii) to work with other stakeholders to organise a global workshop to train users and regulators in biopesticides. IBMA will work with FAO on these recommendations.
2020– the time for Biocontrol is now

External meetings and activities

7th SUD Symposium IOBC/IBMA PAN Europe 2019
The 7th SUD Symposium in collaboration with IOBC and PAN Europe was held at the European Parliament on 12 December 2019. The 7th Symposium jointly organised by IBMA and PAN, was opened by Martin Hojsik (MEP – Renew Europe) and chaired by Thomas Garcia (former European Commission DG Agri Civil Servant). Presentations were made on policy and farming experiences with IPM.

Three policy academic presentations; 1. Florence Jacquet, Research Director INRA made a summary of policy and technical tools in France and their effectiveness, 2. Erik Mathijs, Professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics at University of Leuven, Belgium spoke about the importance of framing the transition to sustainable agriculture within a business context to make transition attractive to farmers, and 3. Helle Orsted Nielsen from Aarhus University in Denmark shared a detailed behavioural sciences study on farmer motivations to change.

IBMA and PAN presented IPM uptake estimates and a call for better data on IPM uptake, respectively. Farmer examples of IPM use in vines in the UK, rice in Italy and arable in France were presented by farmers themselves. A final summing up was done by IBMA Special Advisor David Cary.

The event was well attended by European Commission representatives (DGs ENVI, AGRI and SANTE) as well as MEPs and their staff.

External meetings and activities

2020 – the time for Biocontrol is now

Ibma Executive Director Jennifer Lewis speaking at the 2019 SUD Symposium

Links to all presentations can be found on the IBMA website (https://www.ibma-global.org/en/events-1-1) and recordings of the Symposium in English and French on the IBMA YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4A7NDhYe_4) Last but not least, our partnership IBMA-IOBC-PAN Europe also launched the updated version of the IPM – Working with Nature booklet: https://www.ibma-global.org/en/ipm---working-in-nature.
2020– the time for Biocontrol is now

External meetings and activities

IBMA France 6th Annual Colloque

IBMA France ran a very successful colloque (6èmes Rencontres Annuelles) on 21 January 2020, attended by IBMA Team Members Jennifer Lewis, Isabelle Pinzauti Babrzynski as well as IBMA Global President Sylvia Plak and IBMA treasurer Karine Grosbeau.

The event was opened by the French Minister of Agriculture Didier Guillaume. Jennifer Lewis participated in the Round Table discussing biocontrol in the morning event, alongside French farmers, co-operatives, DEPHY-ECOPHYTO and DGAL representatives. More information can be found on IBMA France 6èmes Rencontres Annuelles web page: https://www.ibmafrance.com/rencontres-2020/

Launch of IBMA IFOAM Collaborative Roadmap

The IBMA IFOAM Collaborative Roadmap was officially launched, with the 6 joint platform to implementation of sustainable agriculture through biocontrol, namely:

1. proportionate regulation of bioprotection products
2. support for substances with a small market segment (minor uses)
3. timely addition of substances to the EGTOP (EU organic list)
4. Encouraging IBMA members and producers to include organic agriculture listing in their development process
5. Building competence in natural product PPP evaluation within competent authorities
6. Support of the EPPO positive list of macrobial PPPs as the basis for the evaluation of their use in organic systems.

COPA-COGECA-IBMA Joint Workshop on Biocontrol Technologies

On 23 January 2020 IBMA jointly organised a workshop with COPA-COGECA hosted by COPA-COGECA within the scope of the COPA-COGECA Phytosanitary Group and open to all Copa-Cogeca members. The meeting was opened by Pekka Pesonen, Secretary General of COPA and COGECA and Jennifer Lewis. Sylvia Plak chaired the research session in the afternoon.

The European Commission representatives from DG AGRI and DG Santé presented the status of biocontrol technologies in current policy considerations and young farmers from the Netherlands -protected vegetables and fruits- and France -arable crops- presented their best practices examples. The afternoon provided information on research from institutes around Europe and a summary of policy asks and best practices on biocontrol given by Jennifer Lewis.

Links to all presentations can be found at https://www.ibma-global.org/en/events-1-1

Copa-Cogeca Secretary General Pekka Pesonen with Jennifer Lewis at the joint workshop on biocontrol technologies
2020 – the time for Biocontrol is now

Internal meetings and activities

New Macrobials Co-Chairs

The vote conducted for the Macrobials PG Chair was a draw so we have welcomed co-chairs Caroline Reid (Bioline Agrosciences) and Sandro Frati (Biobest Group). They will form a triumvirate with the vice chair Johannette Klapwijk (Koppert) to lead the Macrobials PG. Thanks and congratulations to all three.

Macrobials Co-Chairs Caroline Reid and Sandro Frati

New Semiochemical Vice-Chair

The vote conducted ahead of ABIM for the Semiochemical chair confirmed Alessanda Moccia (Suterra) as chair for another term, this time with Manuela Cigolini (CBC Europe) as vice-chair. Thank you to both of them for taking up the job!

ABS Webinar

On 21 February IBMA organized for its Members a special webinar on a very important topic for our industry: The Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing. Speakers Johannette Klapwijk (Regulatory Affairs Specialist Koppert B.V.) and Dominic Muyldermans (Senior legal advisor ABS-int) explained the latest developments, interpretation and future implementation and answered participants’ questions.

Executive Committee and National Groups Meeting

The Executive Committee met on 4th February, followed by a very creative National Groups meeting on 5th February 2020. National Group heads engaged with the Executive Committee members in a brainstorm how to build on biocontrol success stories to drive agriculture that is sustainable for the consumer and the environment.

The brainstorm was animated by Lesley Mitchell from the NGO “Forum for the Future” helping to define all areas in which biocontrol technologies contribute to sustainability. During lively discussions in teams we came up with creative ideas on how to ensure all actors of the food chain work together to deliver sustainable food to the consumers in the spirit of the EU’s new “Farm to Fork Strategy”. The “Farm to Fork strategy for Sustainable food” is the European Green Deal’s part aiming at making European food the global standard for sustainability.

National Groups exchanged on their best examples for successful biocontrol use and updated on their key priorities for 2020. It will be a busy year on all levels (national and global) and I am looking forward to using all the member examples of successful biocontrol to demonstrate that biocontrol is a reality – and a key asset for sustainable future agriculture.

Workshop on sustainability at February’s National Groups meeting in Brussels
2020– the time for Biocontrol is now

Closing remarks

Upcoming activities

This year will be again a busy one, with important industry events such as Biocontrol Africa starting 6 April, Going local – Slovakia: Ecological transition seminar at the university of Nitra, Slovakia (date to be confirmed after Coronavirus travel restrictions resolved), our Annual Assembly on 14th May in Brussels, GreenTech Amsterdam in June…

You can find the list of upcoming events on our website: https://www.ibma-global.org/en/events-1-1

I look forward to seeing you at these events and wish you all a fruitful 2020!

Best regards,

Jennifer Lewis

Executive Director