

IPM: Pushing back the frontiers at the Olde Barn, Marston, Lincs, on 15-16 October 2013

There can be no doubt that the EU Sustainable Use Directive will impact on everyone involved with crop production and crop protection in the UK over the next few years. The overall objective of the Directive is to ensure that pesticides are used



sustainably by reducing the risks and impacts of use on human health and the environment and encouraging the development and introduction of integrated pest and disease management (IPM). In short this will mean the replacement of broad spectrum pesticides with alternative approaches and techniques. The Directive requires the general principles of IPM to be implemented by professional pesticide users by 1 January 2014. In reality, this can only be achieved by the cropping sectors that were already using IPM when the Directive was announced. The UK's National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of the Directive has been prepared by the Chemicals Regulation Directorate (CRD) with strategic oversight by Defra.

Given the urgency for the implementation of the NAP, there can never have been a more appropriate time to draw together and pool the expertise of people currently involved with IPM. The Association of Applied Biologists (AAB), which has over 280 members with a special interest in IPM, organises an annual gathering of the IPM community at which policy makers, experienced researchers, young scientists and practitioners can detach themselves from their usual day-to-day pressures and totally immerse themselves in the subject. The recent 2013 conference, entitled 'IPM: Pushing back the frontiers', was organised in partnership with the International Biocontrol Manufacturers' Association (IBMA) with the specific aim of addressing issues associated with the implementation of the UK's NAP. The event attracted over 90 delegates from many different backgrounds.

Adrian Dixon, Head of Policy Implementation at CRD, provided legislative and policy background to the NAP and explained how IPM would be handled within the Plan. He also described changes to the UK biopesticides scheme announced in July 2013 and wider developments including the UK Agri-tech Strategy and the development of the UK strategy on innovation in crop protection. Dr Paul Sopp (Vice-Chair IBMA UK), who responded on behalf of the biocontrol manufacturers and distributors, welcomed the Plan and acknowledged that CRD had been working under difficult conditions due to funding cuts. However, the industry was disappointed at the lack of detail in the Plan and considered the promotion of IPM to be unclear and unambitious. In particular, Dr Sopp stated that future R&D needed to be more focused on applied

issues and indicators of success must be more clearly defined.

Prof Toby Bruce (Chair of AAB IPM Group) provided a UK research community perspective on the NAP. He stressed the need for the development of robust alternative control measures prior to the restriction of broad spectrum pesticide use. In most cases, the alternative measures are either not available or require considerably more development to reach the same level of efficacy as the pesticides they are intended to replace. Prof. Bruce welcomed the announcement of the Agri-tech strategy and hoped that it would tackle the need for innovation in crop protection.

Dr Sopp had commented that biopesticide development was still being held back by a regulatory system designed for chemicals. Dr Alison Hamer, who is a national expert on biopesticide regulation, provided a comprehensive guide to biopesticide regulation and registration in the UK within an international context. Dr Henrik Brodsgaard (Danish Ministry of the Environment) then presented a contrasting story from Denmark where the government's strategy for pesticide reduction already includes new regulations, advisory services, training, research, information transfer and a subsidy scheme for alternative pesticides. This is generally seen as a model for the rest of Europe.

Growers of protected edible crops, such as tomato, sweet pepper, cucumber and aubergine, have used IPM for over 40 years in the UK and now operate some of the most advanced IPM programmes in the world. Dr Rob Jacobson described the history of IPM in UK glasshouses and the forces that have driven growers down this route. He stressed that IPM is a knowledge-based system that requires a thorough understanding of all components as well as topical information based on crop monitoring to aid decision making. The IPM programmes include biological, physical and cultural techniques integrated with careful use of target specific chemicals. Dr Jacobson highlighted difficulties encountered by the protected crop industry and thereby provided guidance to other farmers and growers who are about to embark on this journey. He also stressed the complexity and additional costs of IPM and urged policy makers to have realistic expectations of what can be achieved without restricting the availability of home-grown