

10 years of progress in representing biocontrol

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Where we came from

- Some people felt I was too critical of aspects of IBMA in the RELU programme
- But it need to improve to get the important biocontrol message across – and it has
- Great progress has been made but, as always, there is more to do and new challenges ahead
- There is now a good organisational platform to meet those challenges

10 years ago

- A lack of sophistication in relation to the task of representing the industry
- Of course, some things were being achieved through hard work and dedication, but often a lack of planning and analysis
- But the main skill of natural scientists is not understanding the complex political process of the EU (hard enough for me), it is developing new products

Missed opportunities

- The REBECA programme: <http://www.rebeca-net.de/?p=999>
- There were some good discussions of the regulatory challenges and worthwhile outputs
- But, speaking frankly, I think that the Commission was antagonised by unrealistic demands – final meeting

Regulation 1107/2009

- Of course, there were positive aspects
- Reduce the reliance of EU agriculture on traditional chemistry-based plant protection products as part of a broader drive towards IPM
- As always, the devil is in the detail and the way in which implementation takes place

Mixed progress

- Restrict traditional products that are harmful to human health and environment
- Facilitate registration and bringing to market of lower risk products
- Biocontrol industry has experienced frustrations and delays leading to loss of innovative products
- More effective pressure in first place?

The challenge of the political agenda

- It is always crowded – and even more so in recent years in the EU with the challenges of the eurozone crisis, migration etc.
- Focus in environmental policy to climate change, especially in run up to Paris summit
- Biocontrol has low profile with public – compare with organic - and there are limits to what can be done about that

Coalition building

- At the time of our project, many environmental groups were suspicious of biocontrol, often because they did not understand its potential
- But now there has been effective coalition building with environmental groups and others – farmers, food industry etc.
- Example of 4th EP symposium in November involving Greenpeace, PAN Europe etc.

Improved structure

- Office in Brussels which is an essential element of effective representation
- Contact point for governmental and intergovernmental bodies
- Has had a seat at the table at FAO, OECD negotiations
- Generally more professional approach
- Demand for products growing

What more could be done?

- Finding new ways of getting the message out both through conventional and social media
- Deepening the relationships with other stakeholders and ensuring that there is effective coalition building
- Seizing the window of opportunity which can appear when you least expect it.

Yet challenges remain

- Despite all the engagement and development of guidance the industry is still regulated by a disjointed regulation that is not fit for purpose for the needs of a growing industry
- Still insufficient recognition by decision-makers and opinion formers of the importance and potential of biocontrol