EcoSyn insecticide synergist research progresses

The EcoSyn project being run by a consortium of EU-based companies and research organisations to develop insecticide synergists for agricultural, household and public health use is progressing well utilising the expertise of each member. It received funding of some €1 million ($1.3 million at the current rate) from the European Research Commission in October 2013 (*Agrow* No 676, p 13).

Italian agrochemical company Endura has utilised its experience with the synergist, piperonyl butoxide (PBO), to synthesise over 50 potential new synergists, of which five seem "quite promising". UK-based research centre Rothamsted Research is guiding the chemical synthesis programme using computer modelling studies that have identified the structures most suited to bind with receptors within the insect and by testing these hypotheses in vitro. Italian university Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore is carrying out further laboratory trials in vivo against whiteflies and aphids to verify the in vitro findings.

The next step will be field trials against insect pests, which are planned for the end of 2014 and early 2015 and will be organised in the UK, central Europe and Turkey by UK company Agchem Access and other Ecosyn participants. One important factor to evaluate is the impact of the synergised formulations on bees and other beneficial insects, EcoSyn says. European bee populations have been declining in recent years and it is hoped that the use of synergists will help reverse this trend by allowing for lower levels of insecticide to be used. In addition to the work in agriculture, Hungarian company Babolna Bio will also study the efficacy of the new synergists against household pests such as flies and cockroaches.

The consortium members will meet the EU Commission and a technical auditor in October 2014 to review progress of the project at the half-way stage.

EUROPE NEWS IN BRIEF

EFSA safety clearance for Bollgard II cotton import

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has given a positive safety assessment for applications for the import of Monsanto's genetically modified insect-resistant Genuity Bollgard II (MON15985) cotton. The company has submitted two applications covering: the import, processing and use in food and feed for the GM cotton line; and the renewal of approval for food additives, feed and feed additives produced from the cotton. The EFSA's opinion goes forward to the European Commission and member states for a decision on approval. MON15985 produces the *Bt* Cry1Ac and Cry2Ab2 toxins. The established GM line holds cultivation approvals in countries such as the US, Brazil, Australia and India, and import authorisations in several countries in Asia. Monsanto has combined MON15985 with Syngenta's COT102 (Vip3Aa19) trait in its next generation Bollgard III.

Sucrose to gain EU basic approval

Sucrose is close to completing the process for EU agrochemical approval as a basic substance. Such substances are not predominantly used for agrochemical purposes but are considered useful in plant protection. French research institute, Institut Technique de l'Agriculture Biologique (ITAB), submitted its application in April 2013 for use on apples against codling moths (*Cydia pomonella*) and on sweetcorn against European corn borers (*Ostrinia nubilalis*).The proposed approval was cleared by the EU regulatory committee in July and requires formal adoption by the European Commission. This would be the second basic substance authorisation for ITAB, which received EU approval for Equisetum arvense earlier this year (*Agrow* No 690, p 11).