Biological control promotes declining use of pesticides in the last 50 years

The progressive introduction of methods of control or biological protection of crops has contributed to a significant decline in the use of pesticides and other chemical agents in agriculture, which has decreased worldwide by 50 to 90 percent in the last fifty years.

This important change in the way of production has been possible thanks to the incorporation of wasps and predatory mites, bacteria and fungi, among other biological agents used for the natural control of pests and diseases in both protected and open-air crops.

> The use of pesticides has diminished, especially, in the cultivation of tomato, cucumber and sweet pepper

In recent years, biological solutions have also been increasingly used in seed treatments, extensive crops, fruit crops and ornamental plants.

> The growing importance of food security and the need for sustainable and responsible agriculture have fueled the growing use of crop biological protection

All these data are endorsed by the studies carried out by the Dutch family company Koppert Biological Systems*, which in 2017 celebrates its 50th anniversary*. In these five decades of experience linked to the concept of sustainable and resource-friendly agriculture, *Koppert has gone*

from being a small and restless company with four employees to a multinational with an annual turnover of 190 million euros and 1,200 employees in 26 different countries, including China, Brazil, USA and Russia. Koppert Biological Systems currently exports to more than 90 countries.

Its founder, Jan Koppert, started with a single insect in 1967. A predatory mite to control a red spider plague in its cucumber crop was the humble beginnings of an enthralling personal and business adventure.

> Today, Koppert is a world leader in the biological protection of crops in horticulture and produces mites, insects, microorganisms, plant extracts, bacteria and fungi

Since 1988, this company has also been one of the most important promoters of natural pollination with bumblebees. Since the first prototype of the NATUPOL beehive, the company has developed important innovations to facilitate the employment of bumblebees and to increase the efficiency of pollination, *even in adverse climatic conditions.*

> Since the use of bumble bees is not compatible with many types of chemical crop protection, natural pollination has been another of Koppert's pillars to contribute to the important global decrease in the use of chemical agents

The Challenge of Outdoor Crops

Although many foods are produced in greenhouses, *most of the world's food is grown in open fields.* In greenhouses, conditions are easy to control, but in the open it is more difficult to work with beneficial insects and microorganisms, *which explains why chemical control agents are still mainly used in these crops, despite the increasing pressure exerted environmental and consumer organizations.*

To respond to this important challenge, *Koppert already produces and markets beneficial micro-organisms such as fungi and bacteria that are specific to outdoor crops.*

> The use of specific Koppert microorganisms for outdoor use increases crop resilience and enriches biodiversity and soil nutrient content

"Artificial fertilizers and crop protection have been too dominant in recent years, affecting soil life. This has to change and this is where fungi and bacteria can make a great contribution, "explains Paul Koppert, a member of the company's Executive Board.

Thanks to a growing battery of biological solutions, Koppert ensures that the use of chemical

protection can be significantly reduced in outdoor crops in the coming years. "We have to move towards agriculture and horticulture that does not work against nature but in harmony with nature. *We must obtain better and safer foods with less pressure on the environment*. This is what we try to achieve every day with our work, "says Henri Oosthoek, CEO of Koppert, *who confirms that the growing demand for safe food around the world is already unstoppable.*

> Koppert is committed to playing an important role in the global debate to promote an increasingly sustainable agriculture

To achieve this goal, the company works together with scientists, universities and public administrations. On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, the company has planned to hold numerous information and awareness activities to spread the need to change the current way of producing our food. Among the planned activities, it is worth mentioning *the organization during the next month of September of an international congress that will meet in Holland the greatest international experts in sustainable agriculture and biological control.*

Source: KOPPERT

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