

CIBE PRESS RELEASE

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European sugar beet growers concerned about how to keep pace with innovation to overcome regulatory hurdles

The International Confederation of European Beet Growers (CIBE) held its annual technical and reception control committee (TRCC) meeting in Malmö, Sweden, hosted by Betodlarna (Swedish beet growers' association) on 17th of October, and chaired by Krzysztof Nykiel, President of the Polish sugar beet growers' association KZPBC. This meeting was followed by a technical visit to Nordic Sugar factory in Örtofta, where Nordic Sugar presented its Go Green Strategy.

The CIBE TRCC meeting brought together more than a hundred representatives of sugar beet growers from all over Europe to discuss the major issues facing sugar beet cultivation. Crop protection was (once again) on the top of the agenda. The latest results and knowledge were discussed with high level scientists from different technical beet institutes, notably Nordic Beet Research (NBR). *"We cannot but highlight the ongoing intensive work and the numerous R&D projects aiming to help growers face the objective to reduce plant protection products (integrated weed management for example) and the decreased availability of such tools to protect their beet crop. Having tested various strategies, of which the use of blended organic repellent molecules against aphids, a satisfactory control of harmful organisms remains a challenge. We still must wait a couple of years to see whether new tools and combinations of different levels will be effective. This slow development contrasts with the urgency of our situation, because the pressure of harmful organisms and the risk of resistance breakdown are increasing"* said chair Krzysztof Nykiel.

On a positive note, potential progress is slowly materializing in improving environmental sustainability: spot spraying - development of robotics - are emerging, notably in the cultivation of organic beet. Furthermore, innovative agronomic practices to reduce GHG emissions and sequester carbon are identified and the measurement of such reduction is becoming more standardized. European beet growers discussed in depth such practices and options, allowing them to achieve sustainability goals with a positive costs-benefit result. Finally, constant development in breeding programs allows some hope in the medium and long-term.

"We should not give up the intensity of the investments in R&D brought by all stakeholders, including breeders, to improve the sustainability of our crop. However, we stress the crucial importance to put in place an appropriate regulatory framework to allow innovation to materialize. For example, the current stalemate on the NGTs file cannot continue, innovation must not be stopped. Recurrent stagnating yields, crop failures, lower productivity and quality indicate structural issues, above climatic conditions, which can no longer be ignored" concluded TRCC chair Krzysztof Nykiel in his call on the EU Institutions.

About CIBE

Gathers national and regional associations from 14 European beet-producing countries as well as the United-Kingdom and Switzerland. It represents and defends the livelihoods of 130 000 sugar beet growing farmers, for a total production of around 16 million tonnes in 2022.

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