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SAV SEDERT 2002



RIVER BIOSCIENCE celebrating 20 years

In the late 1990s the citrus industry looked very different, and faced significant challenges like false codling moth resistance development. By

Rob Elfick



Amidst increasing challenges around false codling moth (FCM) resistance development, the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) of Southern Africa approached a few determined scientists to address the pest. Thus, Cryptogran, a granulovirus to kill FCM larvae, was developed. The CGA then took a brave decision to establish its own crop protection company, River Bioscience, to commercialise this virus for accessibility to all Southern African citrus growers and other agricultural crops.

In the years that followed, the company introduced another virus for bollworm control. Attract-and-kill products for phytosanitary fruit flies were also made available to growers. But this was only the beginning.

For the past decade, River Bioscience has continued to serve its shareholders by bringing in new mating disruption products and developing national monitoring networks to assist growers in making informed decisions in spray programmes. Furthermore, River Bioscience continues to support the sterile insect programme for FCM and has revamped the XSIT production facility in the Western Cape, which is now one of the largest lepidopteran mass-rearing facilities in the world. All whilst delivering a return to our shareholders, contributing to industry research

in conjunction with the CRI, and ensuring that our product pricing contributes to responsible pricing in the market.

Twenty years on, the product that led to the founding of River Bioscience has treated over 750 000 ha of FCM-susceptible crops, with usage increasing every year as market access requirements become stricter. River Bioscience has several new products that will be hitting the market in future seasons, that will address various issues that growers have been facing. The organisation believes in contributing to industry sustainability by controlling phytosanitary pests, whilst managing residues to help drive sustainability.

That said, the past two seasons have challenged growers to the core, with failing supply chains, shifting global markets, evolving demand, and input costs increasing by over 50% in some cases. Add to this the EU Green Deal that is forcing the industry to adjust production practices to comply with their new standards, loss of key crop protection active ingredients, and the arrival of additional pests like Huanglongbing (HLB) – also known as citrus greening.

The CGA has sustainability as its core driver and the Vision 260 project outlines various work streams that will enable the citrus industry to remain sustainable in the short and long term. Currently, the River Bioscience mandate is fully aligned with, and supports Vision 260. The organisation focus is to identify, develop and commercialise sustainable crop protection products and programmes for critical pests, ensuring that growers have a crop protection basket of goods that is future-proof. This demands unwavering commitment and adequate resources, and consistently future-centric output by the 250-strong River Bioscience team.

Integral to the success of these efforts are growers' support, and strong partnerships with like-minded companies around the world.

Working together with growers for a sustainable future, 20 years on, River Bioscience is just getting started. 🍊



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