

Biobest marks a new era: Inauguration of a state-of-the-art facility and revealing of a new structure and name

Westerlo, Belgium, 4 April 2024

Biobest Group N.V. ("Biobest") was honoured to welcome David Clarinval, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Self-Employed, SMEs and Agriculture, Institutional Reforms and Democratic Renewal and Jo Brouns - Flemish Minister of Economy, Innovation, Work, Social Economy and Agriculture to officially open its new cutting-edge, predatory mite production facility – the latest milestone for the company at the forefront of global sustainable crop production. This event also provided the perfect opportunity to reveal the group's new name, BioFirst Group, and its structure and logo, marking a significant step in its evolution.

Established in Belgium over 37 years ago, today the group employs over 2,800 people worldwide, working with growers and farmers in over 70 countries. A key component of its growing portfolio of biological crop protection and crop health products, **predatory mites** are deployed by growers worldwide to control economically important pests and play a central role in the ecologically-sound production of high yielding, healthy crops. These tiny natural predators help **to minimise chemical pesticide usage** and satisfy societal demands for healthier, residue-free crops.

"Our 12m EUR investment in this new state-of-the-art, 4000sqm mite-rearing facility will greatly boost our production capabilities and house up to 50 employees," said Biobest Group CEO Jean-Marc Vandoorne. "Thanks to our highly skilled teams and our pioneering mass-rearing techniques for mites, this new facility stands at the forefront of biocontrol innovation. It enables us to scale up production to enhance our ability to fulfil customer demands."

Utilising the latest technologies and innovations, Biobest's new production facility is run entirely on **green energy** and is fossil-fuel free. It features a heat pump system, air handling units, a high-end heat exchanger to maximise energy recovery and a solar PV-installation generating 416.000 kWh per year equivalent to a **reduction of CO² emissions for the entire Westerlo site by 15% or 44 tons.**

"With sustainability at the heart of everything we do, these energy efficiency gains are part of the innovative approaches we are taking to minimise the Group's carbon footprint," said Jean-Marc.

Reflecting on the current legislative landscape, Jean-Marc said, *"while delighted to unveil our new state-of-the-art predatory mite production facility today, we continue to urge EU policymakers to shorten the lengthy registration processes for biopesticides where we are currently putting our European growers and farmers at a serious disadvantage in accessing solutions to counter increasing pest resistance to conventional pesticides. Registration of biopesticides currently takes between 6 to 10 years in Europe, while everywhere else in the world it takes only 1 to 3 years."*

Minister Jo Brouns adds: *"In a time, when Europe is being challenged on the very foundations of its cooperation, it is our responsibility to create the strategic autonomy that is needed to feed the next generations of European citizens. If we want to do that in a more sustainable way, which we should, then we must also give*

our farming sector the chance to develop and use the alternatives that are needed.”

New BioFirst Group name and logo unveiled

At the official opening, Biobest Group took the opportunity to unveil its new company structure, Group name and logo.

*“Following our recent acquisition of Biotrop – the Brazilian leader in biopesticides, biostimulants and inoculants for open-field row crops – Biobest Group has reorganised its structure to improve its operational efficiencies and agility,” explained Jean-Marc. “Rebranded as **BioFirst Group**, we now have a structure focusing on the horticulture market and a structure focusing on the open field market.”*

In the horticulture market, **Biobest** and its worldwide subsidiaries will continue to focus on the development, production and sales of beneficial insects, mites and nematodes to control plant pests in greenhouse crops. **BioWorks** will focus on the development, production and sales of biopesticides in horticulture crops and **Plant Products**, will comprise a number of one-stop shop distributors in the horticulture market. In the open field market, **Biotrop** will focus on the development, production and sales of biopesticides, biostimulants and inoculants in open-field crops worldwide.

The **BioFirst** name captures the group’s dedication to biological solutions and innovation (**BioFirst**) as well as its customer-first mindset (**BioFirst**). At the leading edge of sustainable crop management, the new, modern, fresh logo depicts environmentally friendly, healthy crops in fields and greenhouses using a colour palette inspired by nature.

Minister David Clarinval: *“Belgium has always been fertile ground for innovative, pioneering companies like BioFirst. With its biopesticides as an alternative to conventional pesticides, this company offers solutions for competitive, sustainable and high-quality Belgian and European agriculture. Our farmers need effective plant protection products to ensure sufficient food production and high yields. BioFirst therefore contributes to improving our farmers’ incomes, while preserving our ecosystem, and I’m delighted about that.”*

“With our added production capabilities and new organisational structure under the BioFirst Group umbrella, we are in good shape to achieve our ambitious goal to enter the top 10 of global crop protection companies, as a pure player in biological solutions in the next ten years”, concludes Jean-Marc Vandoorne.

For more details or press queries, please contact us at press@biofirstgroup.com.

About BioFirst Group

BioFirst has 32 local production and/or distribution subsidiaries strategically located worldwide, plus an extensive network of local specialised distributors located in an additional 50 countries. A global player in biological pest and disease control and bumblebee pollination of high value greenhouse and berry crops, BioFirst exports weekly to over 70 countries worldwide.

The BioFirst Group organisation is structured to serve the horticultural market and the open field agricultural market. **Biobest** (and its subsidiaries) focuses on the production/sales of biocontrols to control plant pests in horticultural crops. **BioWorks** for the production and sales of biopesticides - microorganisms to control target plant pests and diseases in horticultural crops, and biostimulants. **Plant Products** offers one-stop shop distribution for the horticulture product portfolio. **Biotrop** for the production and sales of biopesticides, biostimulants and inoculants for open field grown row crops.

Employing 2800 employees worldwide, our extensive production, supply chain, sales and technical advisory network provides an efficient global service delivering quality products to countries every week using our highly specialised cold chain logistics.

Today our product portfolio features a comprehensive range of IPM solutions - including beneficial insects, predatory mites, bumblebees, insect pathogenic nematodes, biopesticides, biostimulants, biofertilisers and inoculants as well as monitoring, scouting, high-tech IPM tools and pheromone products.

Our highly skilled technical team – comprising over 600 in-house expert advisors and 250 distributor advisors – assists growers and farmers worldwide by providing best-in-class customised technical advice. To further enable the best possible results for growers, BioFirst continually invests in R&D programmes to innovate and improve our products and solutions as well as to develop digital tools to help growers and farmers collect and record information on pest and disease incidence, severity, and distribution.

To learn more about BioFirst, please visit BioFirstgroup.com.