

Biological crop programmes offer flower growers a route to lower costs and tighter market compliance



As export markets tighten pesticide-residue requirements and production costs remain under pressure, Andermatt Kenya CEO Hamish Ker says biological farming can help growers produce premium-quality flowers more efficiently.

BY CATHERINE RIUNGU

Kenya's flower growers are being challenged to produce more with less as export markets tighten pesticide-residue requirements, production costs

continue to rise and buyers place greater emphasis on sustainable production.

For Andermatt Kenya CEO Hamish Ker, biological crop programmes offer growers a practical way to navigate

these pressures while maintaining the quality and profitability demanded by international markets.

Speaking to HortiNews at Ander-



matt's demonstration farm in Naivasha, Hamish Ker said the future of floriculture will increasingly favour growers who can consistently deliver premium-quality flowers while managing Maximum Residue Level (MRL) requirements and rising operational costs.

"The pressure on growers is increasing from every direction," he said. "Markets are becoming more demanding, freight costs remain high, inflation is affecting production costs and buyers want flowers produced with fewer chemical residues. Our role is to support growers to meet those requirements without compromising quality, stem length, head size, vase life or profitability."

Demonstrating biology under commercial conditions

Andermatt's demonstration farm has been established to give growers an opportunity to see biological crop management applied under commercial growing conditions. ➤

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Andermatt Bio-Crop Health

Multiple Modes of Action

Plant Extracts



Mevalone®

Reg No.PCPB(CR)1412

- Biofungicide based on natural active ingredients (Eugenol 3.2%, Geraniol 6.4% and Thymol 6.4%).
- Excellent disease control such as Botrytis and Powdery mildew both in preventative and curative applications.
- No withholding period or maximum residue levels (MRL).
- Suitable for organic use (FiBL certified).

Application Rate: 3L/ha or 60ml /20L via foliar application

Fungi



Eco-77® WP

Trichoderma atroviride strain 77B

- Bio-fungicide for protection of pruning wounds and diseases such as Botrytis and Eutypa.
- Quality product with consistent performance with a high spore concentration (2×10^9 cfu/g).
- No withholding period or maximum residue levels (MRL's).
- Suitable for organic use (EcoCert certified).

Application rate: 500g/ha or 10g/20L



Agrisil® K50

Contain Potassium silicate for ultimate silica supplement to aid building plant stress and disease tolerance

Application rate: Foliar application 2L/ha or 40ml / 20L and 5L /ha or 100ml/20L via drench



InCa

Calcium delivery system with CaT™ technology for optimizing the distribution of calcium in crops

Application rate: Foliar application 1L-2L /ha or 20ml - 40ml /20L



Cuperdem

Nutrition

Systemic copper inclusion for foliar spray and fertigation for the prevention and correction of copper deficiencies in crops

Application rate: 2L/ha or 40ml/20L via foliar spray and 3L-5L/ha or 60ml-100ml /20L via drench

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Andermatt Bio-Insecticides

3 MODES OF ACTION

1 Fungi

Broad Spectrum Contact



Eco-Bb® WP

Beauveria bassiana strain (R444)
1.0x10⁸ cfu/g

Reg No.PCPB(CR) 2308

- Suitable for organic use (EcoCert certified)
- Controls all life cycle stages of the target pest.
- Control Rose key major pests such as red spider mites, thrips, mealybugs, aphids, *Helicoverpa* spp. and multiple lepidopterans including FCM
- No MRL restrictions

2 Bacteria

Broad Spectrum Ingestion

Thuricide® HP

Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies *kurstaki* strain SA-12 Potency of 16000 international Units (IU) per gram

Reg No.PCPB(CR) 0105



- Broad spectrum lepidopteran control including FCM and *Helicoverpa* spp.
- Suitable for organic use (OMRI listed)
- Ideal tool for resistance management and IPM program
- No MRL restrictions

3 Virus

Target Specific



Cryptex® SC
FCM control

Plutex® SC
DBM control

Helicovex® SC
Helicoverpa spp. control

Littovir® SC
FAW control

Tutavir® SC
Tuta absoluta control

- Unique mode of action
- Organic certified under EU & NOP standards
- No withholding period or maximum residues (MRL)

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» “What growers are seeing here is what is possible through a complete biological programme,” Ker said. “We want farmers to see the results for themselves – as we say, seeing is believing.”

The programme starts below the soil surface, with a focus on soil biology and root health.

“The root system is the engine of plant growth,” Hamish Ker explained. “Before you focus on what is happening above the soil, you must first power the soil and the root zone. Healthy roots produce healthier plants, and healthier plants are naturally better able to withstand stress, be it biotic or abiotic.”

The approach combines soil and root-health management with biological crop-protection products, biostimulants and carefully timed interventions throughout the crop cycle.

For Hamish Ker, the emphasis is not on replacing conventional crop protection overnight, but on building an effective Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system in which biological and conventional tools complement each other.

“It is not about biology versus chemistry,” he said. “It is about using the best biological solutions together with the best chemistry at the right time.”

Such an approach, he believes, can allow growers to reduce their dependence on conventional chemistry while continuing to achieve the quality specifications required by demanding export markets.

Looking beyond the price of the input

One of the challenges facing biological crop programmes is the perception that they can be more expensive than conventional alternatives.

Hamish Ker argues that comparing products purely on their purchase price fails to capture the economics of the entire production system.

“When growers improve



“When growers improve plant health naturally, they often produce stronger crops with better quality, fewer losses and greater market acceptance,” he said. “The overall production system becomes more efficient.” The potential benefits, he added, extend beyond reducing chemical applications. Healthier and more resilient crops can help growers manage production risks while meeting increasingly stringent residue requirements.



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The potential benefits, he added, extend beyond reducing chemical applications. Healthier and more resilient crops can help growers manage production risks while meeting increasingly stringent residue requirements.

“The objective is not simply to reduce chemical use,” Hamish Ker said. “The objective is to produce flowers that buyers want – flowers that comply with residue requirements while maintaining excellent vase life and appearance.”

For an industry operating under constant pressure to control costs while meeting exacting quality specifications, that distinction is important. The value of a biological programme, Hamish Ker suggests, should ultimately be measured by the performance of the crop and the returns generated across the production cycle rather than by the price of an individual input.

From floriculture to regenerative agriculture

Hamish Ker sees the shift towards biological production as part of a much broader transformation taking place across agriculture.

Population growth, urbanisation and rising incomes are increasing demand for high-quality food, while the amount of productive land available per person continues to come under pressure.

Future farming systems, he argues, will therefore need to produce more from every hectare while maintaining the health of the resources on which agriculture depends.

“We need healthier soils, healthier plants and more resilient farming systems,” Hamish Ker said. “Nature already provides many of the answers if we work with it instead of against it.”

The principle applies across different agricultural sectors, he added – from vegetables produced for increasingly urban consumers to roses grown for international markets.

Healthy soils support

healthy crops; healthier crops are better equipped to withstand stress and may require fewer corrective interventions; and more sustainable production systems can ultimately benefit growers, consumers and the environment.

A wider role for biological solutions

Hamish Ker believes the role of biological solutions will also extend beyond individual farms and crops.

Through international partnerships and initiatives targeting destructive agricultural pests such as Fall Armyworm, Andermatt is contributing to broader efforts aimed at improving agricultural productivity and food security while reducing dependence on conventional inputs.

For Kenya’s flower industry, however, the immediate challenge is closer to home: producing flowers that meet the increasingly complex demands of international buyers while keeping production commercially viable.

As residue standards tighten and sustainability becomes an increasingly important part of market access, growers will need production systems that deliver consistency as well as quality.

“As market requirements continue to tighten, growers will need production systems that can consistently deliver quality while reducing residues and improving sustainability,” Hamish Ker said.

“We firmly believe biological programmes will play an increasingly important role in helping growers achieve exactly that – the future is most definitely working with biological farming solutions and adopting regenerative principles on farm.”

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