

The ARIB project for safe use of plant protection products was presented to agronomy students in Sofia

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This topical issue was the focus of a special meeting organized by the Association of the Plant Protection Industry Bulgaria (ARIB) with fourth-year students majoring in Plant Protection and Agronomy from the Faculty of Agronomy at the University of Forestry in Sofia. The event organizers were represented by Neli Yordanova, Executive Director of ARIB, and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Miroslav Tityanov, a lecturer at the Faculty of Agronomy of the University of Forestry and General Manager of the trading company Summit Agro Bulgaria. Neli Yordanova presented to the future leading specialists in crop production the macro-framework of the "Initiatives for the Safe and Sustainable Use of Plant Protection Products" Project. Its conceptual strategy was launched by the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) in 2002 to present agricultural producers and

operators with possible options for structuring a toolkit for the safe and efficient use of PPPs, aiming to guarantee the protection of public and plant health. The safe use of pesticides program, initiated by the global agrochemical industry over a decade ago, demonstrates how knowledge transfer can broadly disseminate good practices as part of a wider Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy.

Currently, the agrochemical industry has projects in 17 countries, including Bulgaria. What are the key characteristics of the module developed in Bulgaria with the help of the expert competencies of ARIB members? This module is authentic and reflects all national specifics of the plant protection model and its intensity level. The module has already been successfully tested in the country. It includes 12 key components that structure and position the parameters, details, and steps of all practices for the responsible use of PPPs.

The start of this creative approach begins with reviewing and familiarizing oneself with the product characteristics of pesticides, their application and spectrum of action, the degree of risk, and safety measures. An informed choice is an important detail for subsequent profitable and effective treatment with maximum effect and minimal undesirable side effects.

The storage of PPPs in places with limited access, according to the manufacturer's instructions, is the next component of the project. Special emphasis in the module is placed on protection with personal protective equipment, the good condition of PPP application machinery, and the special approach to empty packaging. This approach includes three steps – proper rinsing, safe storage, and handover to collection points. The collection of empty pesticide packaging is completely free of charge for agricultural producers and is financed by PPP manufacturing companies - members of ARIB. It can be noted that in Northern Bulgaria the system has been successfully launched, with over 400 contracts already signed with large agricultural producers.