

George Sandros: “Our vision for a successful business is based on care from the seed to the rich harvest”

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Sandros company is a Greek trading company with long-standing experience in the agricultural sector. It is a leader in the sale and production of industrial planting material for tomatoes (seeds, seedlings) in Greece and the Balkans. Since 1996, it has been an exclusive representative of HEINZ industrial hybrid tomato seeds in Greece, and since 2011, it has been on the market in Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania. In 2020, Sandros decided to expand its portfolio by focusing on modern agriculture. Thus, they became representatives of ATLANTICA AGRICOLA, one of the leading agricultural companies in the field of plant nutrition products and maintaining healthy and fertile soil.

We talk with George Sandros, manager of D Sandros SA, about the company's goals, their policy, new products in their portfolio, and the future of agriculture. We met him in Starosel at a meeting of the Union of Fruit and Vegetable Processors, in the presence of Teodora Taseva – his exclusive representative for Bulgaria through the company Fito Terra EOOD

Mr. Sandros, could you please introduce us to the history of your company? What is your company's long-term vision? How long have you been successfully established on the Bulgarian market?

This is a family business, started over 40 years ago in a small office with the sale of tomato seeds for the canning industry. At that time in Greece, the tomato was a very well-known and preferred vegetable crop, which occupied a large part of the agricultural land.

In fact, since the beginning of 1996, we have been an official representative of HEINZ seeds, actively developing this business over time, expanding our activities to other Balkan countries such as Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, where we entered in 2011. Later, in 2015, we managed to complement our portfolio and added the trade of mineral fertilizers. Since 2020, we offer our partners and clients the entire range of products (biocontrol, biostimulants, symbiotic microorganisms, and microbial fertilizers) from the Spanish company Atlantica, which specializes entirely in biological solutions for growing agricultural crops. Their goal is to facilitate efficient and sustainable crop production with little to no environmental impact.

Atlantica's product range completely complements our vision for offering a comprehensive model for sustainable agriculture, because we provide not only the seeds or seedlings, but also guarantee their proper cultivation and efficient use of soil and resources. In our greenhouses in Greece, we have concentrated not only on the production of industrial tomato seedlings; we also grow other vegetable seedlings, which we offer to farmers from both our country and abroad. Here I want to emphasize that our goal is not just to profitably sell the seedlings, but to continue to care for them in the field throughout the season until the final product – a quality yield – becomes a reality.

In short, our vision for a successful business is based on care from seed to harvest. Sandros closes the loop of plant care by also offering the services of a team of agronomists who monitor crop development from transplanting, through vegetation, to harvesting. Our agronomists follow proven cultivation schemes (protocols) that guarantee a good and profitable yield and are specific to each crop.

It is important for us to work long-term with the same farmers and to create a sense of security for producers – to always be available, not only during the season but throughout the entire agricultural year.



George Sandros and Teodora Taseva

What are your main goals, and with which of your products do you want to expand your market in Bulgaria?

Our concept for efficient plant care is based on a strategy of prevention and prognosis. Our agronomists strictly monitor both the appearance of diseases and pests, as well as conditions that create abiotic and biotic stress in

plants. We do not offer chemical plant protection, but if needed, we use established brands.

Sandros' strength lies in biostimulants and microbial fertilizers, through which we emphasize strengthening the plants' "immune system".

We increasingly ask ourselves: Which product is most suitable for my field and the crop I will be growing?

The most important thing is for the farmers we work with to be able to change their mindset. We expect producers who choose our products to think globally. To look for products that are primarily aimed at enriching and maintaining healthy and fertile soil, so that plants can feed properly and consequently the need for conventional plant protection is minimized. Atlantica products, the "Atlanticell" line, are based on microorganisms that transform the soil into a highly effective living organism. They combine various endophytic and mycorrhizal fungi with bacteria of the genus *Rhizobium* and probiotic substances, activating mycorrhiza in the soil-root system and providing nutritional benefits for crops.

Thanks to mycorrhiza, the uptake of nutrients and water by plants increases, as does the plants' resistance to various types of stress (drought, heat, uneven rainfall distribution, the appearance of pests and diseases, transplanting, etc.). Mycorrhiza is associated with almost all plants in fruit growing, vegetable production, viticulture, landscaping, forestry, and field crops.

Do you offer the services of a team of agronomists to all your clients in Bulgaria?

Of course, this is part of our business concept. Farmers need to feel secure so they can do their job well. And for us, it's important to support them every step of the way during the agricultural campaign.

How do Atlantica's products, and specifically the "Atlanticell" series, differ from other similar products on the market?

The microorganisms from the "Atlanticell" line are created under maximum sterile conditions and scientific tests developed in Atlantica's factory laboratory. The concentration of microorganisms in each solution is many times higher than other similar products currently on the market. And therein lies our great advantage.

The other line from Atlantica, which I also want to draw attention to, are the biostimulants.

Undoubtedly, Razormin stands at the top of the ranking. It has a double action (root and foliar), designed for balanced activation of crops' internal metabolism during phases of intense vegetative and fruit growth, especially under conditions of high abiotic stress. Thanks to its complex formula with more than 20 different compounds, including amino acids, polysaccharides, NPK, micronutrients, and organic acids, Razormin is an excellent solution for any agricultural crop.

The other biostimulant we highly recommend to farmers is Floron. It regulates the distribution of photoassimilates in the crop according to its development stage. It is capable of controlling the vegetative growth of crops, depending on the phenological stage, by inducing flowering, homogeneous fruit set, and improving fruit growth. Its composition of hydrolyzed plant protein, formulated with NPK and micronutrients, can be used for foliar application or fertigation depending on the development stage and goals.

I will conclude with the “Raykat” series of biostimulants, which are designed to improve the physiological stages of crop development by acting on the main components that stimulate final yield: germination, rooting, plant growth, fruit ripening, and enlargement. Thus, “Raykat Growth” provides the necessary minerals required by each plant at its different stages of development.

While “Raykat Brix” improves the quantitative and qualitative indicators of fruits in their final ripening stage. Its combined composition of specific amino acids, absorbable potassium, polysaccharides, and organic substances, along with seaweed extract (*Ascophyllum nodosum*) and boron, enhance the metabolic mechanisms of fruit development, increasing yield, color, and sugar content ($^{\circ}$ Brix), thereby improving the qualitative commercial parameters of the fruits. Furthermore, it allows for uniform fruit ripening and improves commercial yield.

How do you see the future of agriculture?

For me, the future of agriculture lies in science, which is now so advanced that it can provide a solution to every problem that arises in practice. Therefore, I believe that agricultural products based on scientific research and aimed at restoring the balance in soil and the environment are the only path to success. I believe in Atlantica's products and am convinced that I will succeed in establishing them as a quality and reasonable choice on the Bulgarian market, of course with the help of Fito Terra company and Teodora Taseva, the exclusive representative for Bulgaria. You can contact her at tel +359 878 15 54 85 and email: fitto_terra@abv.bg