

Belchim Crop Protection starts its business in Bulgaria

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The official ceremony marking the entry of the Belgian multinational agrochemical company onto the domestic plant protection market took place at the Hilton Hotel in Sofia. The host of the presentation was Daniel Bozhanov, Head of the Sales Team of Belchim Crop Protection Bulgaria EOOD. The promotion of the company to interested Bulgarian stakeholders and influential agri-media involved executives from the headquarters in Belgium – Paul Yves Lantoine, General Manager, and François Riquebourg, Commercial Director for South-Eastern Europe and Coordinator New Markets. The management of the Romanian team was represented by Alin Stana, Andreea Bucur and Luminita Emilian. The event was honoured by Mr. Marc Fierman, Consul at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium in Sofia. The meeting was attended by future distributors, partners and clients. Present were key figures from the agrochemicals business and academia – Lyubomir Nikolov, Mihail Shevkenov, Nikolay Stamenov, Hristofor Bunardzhiev,

Professors Ivanka Lecheva and Tonio Tonev from the Agricultural University in Plovdiv, as well as officials from the Bulgarian Food Safety Agency. A welcome address to the audience gathered in the “Musala” conference hall was delivered by Mr. Marc Fierman. As Consul of the Kingdom of Belgium to Bulgaria, he noted the fact that Bulgaria is now on the map of Belchim Crop Protection, a very dynamically developing Belgian agrochemical company that is present on the market and operates in 27 European countries with developed agriculture. There are many Belgian companies that are developing successful business in Bulgaria. Belchim Crop Protection is here to join the Belgian investors in Bulgaria. The fact that the Embassy of Belgium is officially present at the inauguration of Belchim Crop Protection in Bulgaria is in itself indicative in several respects. Belgium respects its business and encourages its implementation abroad. It also shows that Belchim Crop Protection is a company with structural capacity and image in the European agribusiness. Agriculture and the industries related to it continue to receive support and a special kind of attention from the Belgian government. This is a protectionist policy, proof of support and solidarity.

Where we are today and where we want to be tomorrow – this was the topic of the presentation by General Manager Paul Yves Lantoine.

Belchim’s plant protection business was established in 1987 by Mr. Dirk Putteman, who continues to be the Managing Director of the company. At the beginning of 2000, after a powerful commercial expansion in the Netherlands, an extremely highly authoritative pesticide market, it was assessed that Belchim had great potential which had to be unlocked and developed beyond the Benelux countries. To achieve this ambitious and large-scale goal, Mr. Putteman initiated, managed to configure and to finalise a strategic partnership project with multinational corporations in the agrochemical industry – the American FMC and the Japanese ISK Biosciences. Owing to this strategic step towards very close cooperation, Belchim has direct access to the high technologies of these two leading global companies, promptly includes their latest developments in its commercial plans and policies, and defines highly effective and very specialised product portfolios. In other words: Belchim forms a powerful resource, generates new energy, and receives the key to implementing the idea of globality, flexibility and commitment. The company was renamed Belchim Crop Protection and has been successfully operating in 27 countries on the Old Continent, with their number continuing to grow, Bulgaria being the newest destination. The next good idea is the planned commercial “landing” in the Middle East. A few months ago, Belchim Crop Protection acquired one of the largest Indian pesticide plants. Belchim Crop Protection sells a wide range of state-of-the-art plant protection products, which also includes special products for the protection of agricultural crops. The commercial portfolio is adapted to the specific needs of each market. For example, in the Netherlands and Poland, the portfolio consists of pesticides for the protection of potatoes and vegetables, in France and Germany – vineyards, potatoes, oilseed rape and vegetables, etc. Belchim Crop Protection has its own research centre for field trials and testing of innovations, called Belchim Trial Station, located on 120 ha near the head office, not far from Brussels. The company also develops biological alternatives to chemical products – with new molecules, modern product profiles and application methods to reduce the negative impact on the environment. Paul Yves Lantoine informed that the corporate profile of Belchim Crop Protection

includes several key characteristics for sustainable growth. Responsiveness. With its crop-oriented approach, Belchim Crop Protection is fully aware of growers' needs. The company develops modern solutions in line with customer requirements. Proximity to the market. Belchim Crop Protection works in close cooperation with its distributors. The company provides a high level of objective information along the entire chain of the commercial process. Each Belchim Crop Protection company in the different countries incorporates well-defined policies in its management vision. One such policy is that each company independently decides all key issues of its business – building its product portfolio, marketing and advertising, distribution, sales, strategic partnerships. Innovation is a central theme in the corporate calendar of the Belchim Crop Protection corporation. The company's partnership with the world leaders in the agrochemical industry FMC and ISK ensures fast access and technological implementation of all their cutting-edge scientific developments. Belchim Crop Protection has extremely efficient systems for their excellent commercialisation and market positioning. Daniel Bozhanov promoted the initial commercial list of Belchim Crop Protection in Bulgaria. He confirmed what Mr. Lantoine had said, namely that the Belgian company is extremely dynamic, entirely field-oriented, with concrete solutions for achieving a high health status of individual agricultural crops. The two-tier management structure activates adequate technical support and a multifunctional logistics practice, allowing problems to be solved very quickly and directly, and enabling the formulation of solutions and steps for real action. Lentagran 45 WP /45% pyridate/ is an excellent herbicide against annual broadleaf weeds during the vegetation period in brassica and onion vegetable crops. Its selectivity is based on physiological mechanisms, which enhances the qualitative characteristics of the product. Lentagran 45 WP is a contact herbicide, absorbed through the leaves. Mildicut is a unique product of ISK – Japan, a new generation for the control of downy mildew in vineyards. Its outstanding multifunctionality is achieved by two active substances previously unknown in global practice – cyazofamid, which provides long-lasting protection regardless of rainy conditions. The complete systemic action of the product is due to disodium phosphonate. This attractive formulation expresses its exceptional qualities best when used preventively. It perfectly protects the new growth and young clusters, has protective and curative functions, very good rainfastness, translaminar action and very long-lasting protection. Ranman is the next product from the star series that Belchim Crop Protection will offer on our market in 2014. This fungicide of ISK – Japan guarantees to the maximum extent double protection against late blight in potatoes (*Phytophthora infestans*). It is a stable combination of cyazofamid + adjuvant. The formulation has very high efficacy against the causal agent of the disease. The active base belongs to the group of imidazole fungicides with a unique, unparalleled mode of action. Ranman is the best preventive fungicide in the period of active growth, with incomparable efficacy also against *Phytophthora infestans* on tubers. Why should Ranman be used at the beginning of the season? It has a very high threshold of resistance to wash-off – tested at a rainfall amount of 80 l/ha. Uptake time – when applied under dry conditions, Ranman is rainfast 15 minutes after application. Ranman “grows” together with the new leaves – it provides the same level of protection on the new growth as systemic fungicides. Strong protection of the leaves – it ranks among the leading preventive fungicides, with a protection level of 3.6 in the Hamar table from 2008. Early protection of tubers – it is known that spores of *Phytophthora infestans* can survive in

the soil for several months. In cases of early symptoms of infection (soil or climatic conditions), it is reasonable to choose a fungicide with combined protection – protection of the new tuber growth. Ranman is the only fungicide with such a broad-spectrum capacity. Ideal distribution on the leaves – Ranman ensures uniform distribution of the active substance over the leaf blade. It can be used with low water volumes – study results show that Ranman has the same efficacy regardless of the amount of water (which is important when spraying large areas). Many fungicides do not have such functionality. The portfolio of the Belgian company for our market also includes the fungicide Proxanil against potato late blight and Nuflon (linuron), a selective soil and foliar urea herbicide against a very large number of annual broadleaf weeds in sunflower and coriander. Daniel Bozhanov did not fail to draw the professional attention of the audience to some new products whose premiere Belchim Crop Protection Bulgaria has scheduled for 2015. Chikara, for example, is a specialised herbicide with exceptional selectivity for the control of grass and broadleaf weeds in vineyards. The active substance flazasulfuron is a new active ingredient. Chikara is a soil herbicide that destroys the entire weed spectrum with the exception of black nightshade. Flazasulfuron mixes easily with glyphosate, and such mixing activates a synergism between the two active substances. Teppeki is the newest insecticide against aphids in various crops. This innovative product has an integrated management capacity – it kills the aphids harmful to the crop while sparing beneficial insects. In this way, nature and chemistry together protect the plants. Mr. François Riquebourg had reserved for himself the right personally to make a special presentation of the emblematic master-class product Samson Extra 6 OD. He reminded the highly professional audience that the active substance nicosulfuron is a patent of ISK – Japan. Many products with the active substance nicosulfuron are offered on the world market. Their formulations have very different concentrations and various adjuvants. What are the advantages of Samson Extra 6 OD? The content of nicosulfuron is 60 g/l, which is considered the optimum amount necessary to achieve a highly powerful and very reliable herbicidal effect during the vegetation of maize against annual and perennial grass weeds (incl. rhizomatous johnsongrass) and some broadleaf weeds. The OD formulation (oil dispersion) ensures better coverage, improved adhesion and more complete uptake. Despite the high concentration of active substance in Samson Extra 6 OD, no adjuvants or co-formulants are included. The high content of active substance in the product does not affect its selectivity – 98%, proven by Belchim Crop Protection on 300 maize hybrids. Its stability is also highly competitive. Thanks to the advanced technology, the absorption of Samson Extra 6 OD takes place through the leaves and the effect against weed vegetation is lightning-fast. The accelerated elimination of weeds removes competition in the early stages of maize development, which is an extremely important advantage given that the crop is very vulnerable at the beginning of its vegetation. Samson Extra 6 OD is a benchmark in the control of grass weeds in maize, which is a well-known fact. From a professional point of view, it is interesting that the Extra 6 OD technology introduces an important detail in the product's spectrum of action and its striking power against broadleaf weeds. It has a very good effect against pigweed, shepherd's purse, wild radish, mustard and chickweed, and a good effect against field bindweed, common lambsquarters, jimsonweed, *Fumaria officinalis*, dead-nettle, knotgrass, annual meadow-grass and speedwell.

Belchim Crop Protection is launching in our country its corporate project for market presence and key positions in the trade in plant protection products. What made Bulgaria visible and attractive to the Belgian agrochemical company? According to expert assessment, Bulgarian agriculture has great potential and the prospects for its further development as part of the European agri-space are promising. A very interesting trend is also observed. The terroir – the combination of geographical location, climate and soil – is extremely favourable for a restart of vegetable growing, fruit growing and viticulture. There are serious indications of institutional engagement and managerial will to transform the existing asymmetry in the crop production sub-sectors. With such further orientation and specialisation of agricultural production, according to analysts at Belchim Crop Protection, a real need will arise for multifunctional, modern and highly intensive plant protection in the so-called minor crops. The pesticide market will undergo diversification, new locations will be activated, exciting challenges will be initiated, and interesting commercial demands and visions will be formulated. Belchim Crop Protection has a highly professional capacity, key competences in the field of market strategies and concepts, flexible management schemes, strong partnerships, and the ability to attract support and to continuously develop dynamically at a very fast pace. Belchim Crop Protection is capable of launching plant protection into a new, higher orbit; it is not afraid to be different, unconventional, provocative, aiming high and far. Will this powerful machine work on Bulgarian soil? This will become clear over the course of this year; expectations for the Belgian company are high. Incidentally, Mr. Paul Yves Lantoine announced in a very serious tone that the first success of Belchim Crop Protection in Bulgaria is already a fact. “We have won to our cause Daniel Bozhanov, a good specialist and a promising manager. He is already part of our team and together, I am sure, we will experience many exciting moments, we will create memorable things,” announced the top executive. (PP)