

MEDIA RELEASE
24 November 2014

Australian researchers receive advice from international fruit fly expert

Some of Australia's leading research agencies are better equipped to manage the nation's major horticulture pest Queensland fruit fly (Qfly) after receiving advice from international expert Dr Kostas Bourtzis at a recent Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited (HIA) workshop.

Based in Austria as the Leader of the Genetics Group at the Joint FAO/IAEA Insect Pest Control Laboratory, Dr Bourtzis presented to the stakeholders of SITplus – a \$22M research partnership committed to a strategic, coordinated and national approach to Qfly management.

Funded by HIA and several core co investors, the SITplus partnership aims to develop the capability to use Sterile Insect Technology (SIT) – a well known technology that could transform the way Qfly is managed in Australia and potentially New Zealand.

According to Dr Bourtzis, Australia is on the right track to managing the endemic pest in a more sustainable and environmentally friendly way.

"There is a strong commitment by all SITplus stakeholders to achieve the outcome of Qfly population control," Dr Bourtzis said. "There has been promising progress on all levels, from applied research and development to the design of the mass rearing facility in Port Augusta to produce sterile insects.

"To ensure the partnership's continued success, technical, managerial and logistical prerequisites should be met including availability of genetic sexing strain(s); relevant entomological baseline data; assessment of mating competitiveness of sterile insects and availability of back up strains; timely and thorough data analysis; feedback mechanisms; public awareness and education; and regular reviews by independent experts. The overall success of SITplus depends on the success of each of the project's components."

According to Dr Bourtzis, the development and successful application of SIT requires a sound knowledge of the biology, genetics and ecology of any target species, including Qfly, as well as mass rearing, release and monitoring methods.

"SIT is management intensive and requires long term commitment by all stakeholders," he said. "I am really pleased to see that the SITplus partnership is taking all the necessary steps and actions to achieve a successful outcome."

Further information

David Moore, General Manager – Research & Development
Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited
Tel. +61 2 8295 2330
david.moore@horticulture.com.au

About SITplus

SITplus is a \$22 million research and development partnership comprising Primary Industries and Regions SA, Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited; the CSIRO Biosecurity Flagship; Plant and Food Research Australia; NSW Department of Primary Industries and Macquarie University.

About the FAO/IAEA Insect Pest Control Subprogram

The Insect Pest Control Subprogram of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have pioneered the development and application of SIT, always as a component of Area Wide-Integrated Pest Management (AW-IPM) programs for the population control of insects of agricultural, veterinary and medical importance. Objectives of the IPCL include helping Member States control pests and diseases, reduce animal and crop losses, reduce or even eliminate the use of insecticides, facilitate international trade in agricultural commodities, protect the biodiversity and the environment and supporting the Member States in field applications.